

# Robert H. Brady

March 9, 1923 - January 5, 2009

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## Life Legacy

Robert H. Brady, age 85 and a lifelong resident of Wilmette, passed away Monday, January 5th at NorthShore University Hospital: Skokie. Bob was born in Evanston on March 9, 1923 to the late James J. and Helen (nee Herbon) Brady. He grew up in Wilmette and graduated from New Trier High School. Bob entered WWII and served with the Army Corps of Engineers in Australia, New Guinea and the Philippines. Upon his return from the war, Bob purchased his own cab and worked throughout the North Shore with the 303 Cab Company. He later began working for the Wilmette Public Works, before beginning his long career with the Wilmette Fire Department in the early 1950s. During his career with the fire department Bob worked his way up the ranks, eventually becoming Fire Chief, a position he held for 10 years, until his retirement. Bob's proudest accomplishment as Fire Chief was instituting the paramedic program for the department. Upon his retirement, he went to work with the Wilmette Police Department as a crossing guard at Skokie Blvd. and Wilmette Ave.

Altogether, Bob worked for the Village of Wilmette for 50 years. In his free-time, he was an avid gardner who specialized in growing roses, and was also a long-time former softball enthusiast. Bob was also a lifelong Cub fan, who along with his wife Mary, was a frequent attendee at Ho Ho Kam Park in Mesa, AZ for annual spring training. He is survived by his wife of fifty-four years, Mary (nee Nohelty) Brady; father of Ellyn (John) Warner; grandfather of Lindsay Warner; brother of Jean Caselli; uncle of many nieces and nephews. Visitation Thursday, January 8th from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Donnellan Family Funeral Home, 10045 Skokie Blvd. at Old Orchard Rd., Skokie. Funeral Mass Friday, January 9th, 10:00 a.m. at St. Joseph Church, Lake Ave. & Ridge Rd., Wilmette. Interment Memorial Park Cemetery, Skokie.

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Robert H. Brady, 1923-2009:

Former Wilmette fire chief

By Patricia Trebe, Chicago Tribune,  
January 9, 2009

Former Wilmette Fire Chief Robert H. Brady taught his firefighters how quickly something that seemed routine could become catastrophic.

It was a lesson driven home in 1978, when Wilmette firefighters were sent to battle a house fire. The place turned out to be a virtual fireworks factory, and an explosion in the basement leveled the home, killing the homeowner and injuring nine others, including several firefighters and police officers.

"It was a lesson that Chief Brady went on and taught at seminars for the fire service, and a great point was made: 'Expect the unexpected,' he would say," said current Wilmette Fire Chief James Dominik. "I've been in the fire service for 24 years and this [example] is still used at times."

Mr. Brady, 85, died, apparently of a blood clot in his lungs, Monday, Jan. 5, in NorthShore



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FACTS

Born: March 9, 1923

Death: January 5, 2009

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University HealthSystem Skokie Hospital, said his wife, Mary.

A lifelong resident of Wilmette and a graduate of New Trier High School, Mr. Brady served in the Army Corps of Engineers during World War II. After his discharge, he bought a car, converted it to a cab and drove for 303 Cab Co.

He worked for the Wilmette Public Works Department for a few years and then in 1952 became a probationary firefighter.

"He felt a strong desire to help people, and he had no fears," said his wife, whom he married in 1954. "He had a couple of close calls, but that was always his ambitionâ€”to help."

In 1976 he became the department's fourth fire chief. During his tenure he began the department's paramedic program, one of the first in the area, Dominik said.

"He really saw that this was going to be a very vital element for supporting the community and any advancement that can be made in the medical field provided a higher level of service," Dominik said. "I look at a lot of things we do today, and they were things he put in place."

Mr. Brady retired from the Fire Department in 1987 but maintained an attachment to the firehouse.

"Up until a month or two ago he would come to the fire station weekly and have coffee," Dominik said.

Mr. Brady worked as a crossing guard at Skokie Boulevard and Wilmette Avenue until 1999, completing 50 years of employment with the village.

"He liked children and he had a great deal of joy being a crossing guard. He really loved it," said his wife.

Other survivors include a daughter, Ellyn Warner; a sister, Jean Caselli; and one granddaughter.

Mass will be said at 10 a.m. Friday in St. Joseph Catholic Church, Lake Avenue and Ridge

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Department remembers former fire chief

January 8, 2009

By KEN GOZE kgoze@pioneerlocal.com

Wilmette firefighters this week are honoring the life and career of the department's former chief, Robert H. Brady, a man they say is responsible for modernizing the village's fire service.

Mr. Brady, a lifelong resident of Wilmette, died Monday at NorthShore University Hospital in Skokie. He was 85.

Mr. Brady is remembered as one of the department's longest-serving and most dedicated firefighters, working his way through the ranks after returning from World War II and maintaining an interest in the department long after his retirement as chief in 1987.

"He was a real gentleman. He was an inspiration still to this day to many of us," said Chief James Dominik, who along with about a third of the current department was hired by Mr. Brady. "His heart was always in the fire service and Wilmette."

Mr. Brady entered the service in an old-time tradition. He followed in the footsteps of his

firefighter father, James, an Irish immigrant who had made his way to Wilmette from New York. The younger Mr. Brady entered World War II and served with the Army Corps of Engineers in Australia, New Guinea and the Philippines.

He joined Wilmette's Public Works Department in 1949 and then the Fire Department in 1952. By 1955, he had made lieutenant, and worked his way through the ranks, becoming chief in 1976, a job he held until retirement in 1987. Dominik said Mr. Brady created the department's paramedic service.

Early in his tenure, Mr. Brady dealt with a call that would become department and local legend. On St. Patrick's Day 1978, firefighters responded to 1221 Cleveland Ave., for what appeared to be a routine house fire. Within minutes, the house exploded with enough force to lift trucks off the ground. It turned out the homeowner, George Yule, who later died from burns, had been running a massive illegal fireworks factory out of the home. Firefighters and police at the scene were spared, although a number were injured in the blasts.

"He actually went around the country with the slide show teaching other fire departments, and his theory was: Expect the unexpected," Dominik said.

In retirement, Mr. Brady worked for years as a crossing guard at Skokie Boulevard and Wilmette Avenue. He stopped by the Fire Department for coffee on an almost weekly basis.

On Friday, firefighters will take part in the funeral and procession at 10 a.m. at St. Joseph Church. Visitation is from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. today (Jan. 8) at Donnellan Family Funeral Home, 10045 Skokie Blvd. at Old Orchard Road, Skokie.



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