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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

Nicely done, Rob. I found the names of the people you quoted from BFFD post. It's a public group and public post, so it's not unreasonable.



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'Your job is completed, your duty is done.'

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 Comrades honor Capt. Larry Clark, who died following  
3 nearly 60 years of service with the Bellows Falls Fire Dept.

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Dozens of firefighters, in full dress uniform and from  
6 departments in both Vermont and New Hampshire, honored  
7 Bellows Falls Fire Department Captain Lawrence S. "Larry" Clark  
8 in a solemn funeral procession on Oct. 11.  
9 Clark, 74, died on Oct. 4 after a long battle with cancer.

10            Though he never married or had children, Clark's lifelong  
11 service to the community in several capacities — firefighter, fire  
12 safety instructor, school guidance counselor, uniform services  
13 grief counselor, scuba diver, and local history expert — literally  
14 saved lives and positively impacted hundreds of young and old  
15 community members.

16            Fittingly, it was his department that announced on social  
17 media the news about Clark, who had served with the BFFD for  
18 58 years, starting when he was just 16.

19            “Captain Clark joined the department in November of  
20 1967,” the fire department posted online, “and was pinned with  
21 his badge in December of the same year, something that he took  
22 great pride in.”

23            He grew up and went to schools in both Westminster  
24 and Rockingham. His father was a printer, photographer and  
25 teacher, his mother a journalist.

26            An older brother, Richard Clark, of California, survives,  
27 as do numerous local cousins.

28            Clark lived in North Westminster as a young child, but  
29 his parents bought a house on Steuben Street in Bellows Falls,  
30 where he grew up. He lived in his family home the rest of his life.

31            He graduated from Bellows Falls High School in 1968.  
32 He then attended the University of Vermont, where he served in  
33 the ROTC there. After graduation he joined the Army, serving  
34 overseas, and upon his discharge he returned to spend the rest of  
35 his life in his home community.

36            Clark would serve for 35 years as a guidance counselor  
37 at Bellows Falls Union High School and Bellows Falls Middle  
38 School. During that time, he continued his education and  
39 eventually earned his master's degree.

40            The outpouring of hundreds of comments this past week  
41 on social media gives a great cross section of the people Clark  
42 helped in a variety of ways.

43 “Oh my gosh, he was the best counselor I had in  
44 school!” one former student, Taylor Dufield, commented on the  
45 BFFD’s post. “He was always so amazing.”

46 “One of the best,” wrote another former student,  
47 Samantha Barth, who said Clark’s counseling “helped shape my  
48 education.”

49 “He remembered the details that you would mention in  
50 passing even years down the road,” she wrote.

51 Several mentioned that Clark helped them to choose  
52 their careers. Many of his former students would become  
53 teachers, and several would eventually work with him as  
54 colleagues.

55 Firefighters who worked with him wrote of how well he  
56 served as a fire safety trainer.

57 “His wisdom helped keep me safe all these years,” wrote  
58 one firefighter, Nicholas J. Koloski.

59 Another, Kevin Rumrill, said of Clark, “I will always  
60 remember you taking the new guys on the department under your  
61 wing and making sure we were trained. I will always remember  
62 you as a mentor.”

63 Clark’s service to his community was constantly  
64 mentioned in the condolences and memories shared, and  
65 another theme emerged — that he was overwhelmingly viewed  
66 as a “really good man,” whose kindness, intelligence,  
67 compassion, and humor helped make his community a better  
68 place to live.

69 Going back to 1968, the comments about Clark in his  
70 high school yearbook speak of his sense of humor and love of  
71 puns. He was described as “never in a bad mood.”

72 “Larry lived a life of service,” wrote fellow educator  
73 Susan Lockerby in a comment on the BFFD Facebook post. “He  
74 touched countless lives and remained so very humble. The  
75 response to his passing is testament to a life well lived. Rest in  
76 peace, Larry.”

## A career shaped by a tragedy

Over and over, Clark's friends and fellow firefighters say one traumatic event in particular shaped his career in the department.

On the night of Dec. 29, 1981, Clark was the first on the scene at the Star Hotel fire on The Square in Bellows Falls. Other early responders to the blaze included Brent Lisai, Terry Brown, and Dana Fuller. The three men entered the building together to search the upper floors for residents of the hotel who might be caught inside. Very quickly the fire and smoke became too much for them.

Lisai was able to escape the building, and all the residents were safely evacuated, but the other two were trapped on the upper floors and perished in the blaze when their oxygen tanks ran out.

Brown was 21 years old. Fuller was 25.

Their deaths were a shock to the community, and Clark took it very personally. It became one of his life missions to protect the lives of firefighters by training them in fire safety.

"Captain Clark became an instructor for the Vermont Fire Academy, working on new curriculum, teaching classes and spreading his knowledge of the fire service with others," the BFFD wrote.

Even after he stepped down as captain in 2002 and Shaun McGinnis took over as chief, Clark remained a safety officer for the department until his death.

He was interviewed about the Star Hotel tragedy in a 2021 documentary, *Called to Duty*, which honored the firefighters' memory. Being able to talk about it, his friends say, proved therapeutic to Clark.

"Larry was a dear friend and mentor to us all," the department concluded. "He will be missed not only at the kitchen table in the firehouse, but on fire scenes as well."

110 Clark was also instrumental in creating a memorial to the  
111 fallen firefighters. The Brown and Fuller Memorial Park, on the  
112 site of the tragedy, was dedicated in 2021.

## 113 **Town historian and master** 114 **diver**

115 Clark had a passion for local history and starting in the  
116 early 1990s, he volunteered for the Bellows Falls Historical  
117 Society (BFHS). He served as its vice president.

118 He focused his considerable intellect and prodigious  
119 memory on collecting and preserving as much of the area's  
120 history as possible, right up to his death.

121 Cathy Bergmann, the organization's president, referred to  
122 Clark as a "walking encyclopedia" of local history.

123 "All the questions about local history would always  
124 come to me," Bergmann said, "and I relied on Larry for the things  
125 I didn't know. I know a lot about local history, but I couldn't keep  
126 up with him, not by a long shot!"

127 Clark used his computer expertise to help the historical  
128 society digitize its collection of antique photos as well as his own  
129 considerable collection of hundreds of glass slides. He was  
130 working on that project right up til his death, and it still needs to  
131 be completed.

132 He also used his computer experience to help the BFHS  
133 organize its board meetings remotely when Covid interrupted in-  
134 person meetings.

135 "What Larry focused on, he was passionate about," said  
136 Bergmann. "And the people he worked with at the schools, the  
137 historical society, and the fire department, they all became his  
138 family. We're really going to miss him."

139 Annette Spaulding, a BFHS director and world-class  
140 scuba diver, echoed that idea. Spaulding said that she and Clark  
141 had been close friends for decades, sharing a passion for both  
142 local history and for scuba diving and exploration.

143 Spaulding and Clark “trained and dove a lot together,”  
144 she said. They did so for area water search and rescue teams, and  
145 they also enjoyed the water recreationally.

146 “We had adventures all over the place,” Spaulding said.

147 Clark and Spaulding also trained other divers and  
148 worked as safety divers for numerous scuba diving courses.

149 When Clark had to go into hospice in the final weeks  
150 before his death, Spaulding said she visited him every day.

151 “Larry was a really, really private person,” Spaulding  
152 said. “And he was the kind of guy who wanted things done right  
153 or not at all.”

154 That became even more clear in his final weeks.

155 “All he talked about at the end were the things he  
156 wanted for his slides, for the BFFD, for the Fire Academy, and the  
157 Historical Society,” Spaulding said. Clark wanted to make sure  
158 that his collections and work would end up in the right places.

159 Spaulding said that Clark didn’t let go of life “until he  
160 knew everything was taken care of.” Once he was reassured of  
161 that, he passed within a very short time.

162 On Saturday, following his funeral at St. Charles Catholic  
163 Church, Clark’s ashes were silently transported to the Bellows  
164 Falls Fire Station on a fire engine swathed in black and purple  
165 bunting and followed by lines of dress-uniformed firefighters and  
166 first responders.

## 167 **Last call at the station**

168 There, Clark’s “last call” was announced, and the station  
169 bell was rung, “signaling that Captain Clark has returned back to  
170 the station.”

171 Captain Clark was then buried at Oak Hill Cemetery  
172 with full military honors.

173 Later that day, Westminster Fire and Rescue posted an  
174 online tribute to Clark.

175 “Rest easy Captain Clark,” the firefighters wrote. “Your  
176 job is completed, your duty is done, we will take it from here.”

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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