

Maheer praised for 30 years of selfless service

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The Intelligencer

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Jan 21/00
p. 2*

An honour guard of firefighters from across the region said good-bye forever to a friend, yesterday, former Thurlow fire chief Vincent Maheer.

Outside St. Joseph's Church, in a blustery snowfall, a Thurlow fire truck was draped with dancing flags to mark Maheer's 30 years of selfless service, an era which ended Sunday when Maheer died at Belleville hospital aged 78.

Inside the church, as many as 100 family, friends, firefighters and dignitaries gathered around Maheer's casket draped in a creamy-white pall in the centre of the church as Maheer's nephew, Father Michael Reed, gave an emotional eulogy.

"Uniforms seem to be a part of Vince's life. Leo and Red in army — Dad in the air force, Vince in the Navy. Seemed only natural after to move to the firefighter's uniform," said Reed. "When he put on those uniforms, he identified himself with the others who served."

Reed said Maheer prided himself on using his life to protect his country, his neighbours.

"In his navy uniform he stood in solidarity with the others to do what was necessary to let freedom reign in our land. As his firefighter's uniform was put on, he stood in solidarity with others to save property and lives."

Maheer began his tenure with the Thurlow Fire Department in 1969 and retired as chief in 1990.

Father Reed said family was what mattered most to a man whose heart never stopped giving to his community.

"Family was important to Uncle Vince...The importance he held for family spilled over into the care and concern for what can be called the extended family, the family of community. Even here when he saw a need, he was there as his hard work and dedication with the volunteer fire department showed. He saw a need and helped organize, raise funds and was there for the township, serving as the first chief."

After yesterday's service, the Maheer family gathered at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 99 in Belleville for a reception. Maheer is survived by wife Aileen, son Gerald and his wife Carole, daughter Lynn Campbell, daughter Joyce Coles and her husband Paul Wiseman and four grand children and one great grandchild.