

The Seattle Fire Department and its Community Loses a Legend

Seattle Fire Department: Remembering Our Fallen

FIREFIGHTER MATTHEW T. RUNTE ENGINE CO. 25



PHOTO 1: Assigned Driver of Engine 25 B-Shift, Matthew Thomas Runte. Matt served 14 years at Station 25 on B-Shift. Photo courtesy of Fire Dog Photos.

“The following excerpt was written by Retired Battalion Chief Mike Nakamichi, Retired Lieutenant Toby Graves, and Firefighter Joe Stout”

“Matthew Thomas Runte was appointed Firefighter in the Seattle Fire Department in 2002 and dedicated 19 years to serving the Seattle community. He first served as a Firefighter on Ladder 5, then Engines 26, 20, and 13. In 2007, he transferred to Engine 25 B-shift, where he would remain for his last 14 years and his final assignment as the driver of Engine 25, succeeding Driver Randy Blylock and under the leadership of Lieutenant

Toby Graves. Matt thrived at Engine 25 with his two mentors and became a leader throughout the Seattle Fire Department in his own right, earning the 2015 Firefighter of the Year Award and the 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award.

His daughter, Emma, was born on August 28, 2007. She was two months premature and had a prolonged stay in an incubator. Matt was by her side the whole time. Emma is now 16 and still called the ‘Miracle Baby.’

Matt served in Iraq with the US Army, leading

him to join the Walter Kilgore Seattle Firefighter's Honor Guard in 2007. In 2014, Matt was elected as the unit's Commander, which changed its complexion. His leadership put the unit at the forefront gaining respect and recognition throughout the state and viewed as an example of what an Honor Guard should be.

July 27, 2013, was a tragic day for Matt. After being relieved early and heading home on his motorcycle, he was struck after only a few blocks by a delivery vehicle that failed to stop for a red light. His crew had not been relieved and responded to the scene to render care. He suffered a severe left foot injury, eventually requiring the amputation of two medial toes, multiple skin grafts, and a prosthetic device to walk.

The family had been through much, but Matt always had his signature smile, nonetheless. Matt's determination kept him running even with his 'device.' He entered the Firefighter Stairclimb, the Big Climb, and Ragnar annually with his prosthesis.

Everybody that met or knew him was instantly enthralled because of his smile and demeanor. He routinely greeted people with a big hug and a



PHOTO 3: Matt running in the Annual Ragnar Race with his prosthesis showing no signs of slowing down.



PHOTO 2: Honor Guard Commander (2014-2021). Photo courtesy of Fire Dog Photos.

'Love you, Brother/Sister' and Matt meant every word of that phrase. He always displayed an overwhelming attitude.

Sadly, at 0630 on December 8, 2021, before signing onto duty at Engine 25, Matt succumbed to a massive heart attack while on a run before his shift. The members from D-Shift at Station 25 responded. The crews performed CPR, and he was transported to Harborview, where he was pronounced dead. The Seattle Fire Department lost a Legend that morning. His death resonated throughout many departments in the area. Matt's death was in the line of duty, and his name will be etched into the granite walls of the IAFF Memorial in Colorado Springs in 2024."

LOVE YOU, BROTHER.



PHOTO 4: Matt with his wife Shannon and daughter Emma “The Miracle Baby” at Station 25 in Capitol Hill.



PHOTO 5: Matt and his wife Shannon enjoying one of the many things they would share with the tight knit group at Station 25.

ALL REASONABLE EFFORTS WERE MADE TO ENSURE ACCURACY AS WE TELL THIS IMPORTANT STORY. SEND ANY CORRECTIONS TO SFD OPERATIONS TRAINING.
