

A TRUE FIREFIGHTER: Final respects paid to long-time Medora Fire Department's Melvin Bowman

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BRIGHTON - Medora Fire Department Capt. Melvin Bowman is a man who devoted the majority of his life to being a firefighter, in fact, a total of 55 years.

Bowman's run ended when he succumbed to a battle with cancer and on Thursday, area fire departments made sure he had a proper send off from **Targhetta-Wooldridge Funeral Home in Brighton.**



Multiple area fire trucks and ambulances led Bowman's casket back to Medora for burial with the lights on Thursday. Onlookers watched the casket on top of the **Medora Fire Truck** drive by and head to the cemetery. Bowman was often behind the wheel of the fire truck of the Medora Ambulance Service, so it was fitting for him to ride on top of the fire truck for his final ride. Bowman, 82, also served four years in the Air Force.

Medora Police Chief Tommy Ruyle and Bowman were extremely close. Ruyle worked side by side with Bowman for 27 years in his police role.

"Melvin was active to the very end with the fire department," Ruyle said. "His cancer was discovered less than a year ago. Until that point he was on the majority of ambulance runs as a driver and was active at fire scenes and training, helping the younger firefighters."

Being a firefighter had to be in Bowman's blood because Medora has an all-volunteer crew.

Bowman constantly shared his experiences with the younger firefighters.

"The firefighters learned things from Melvin that you can't learn in a book," Ruyle said. "He was always there to support and teach the younger firefighters."

Brighton, Medora, Jerseyville ambulance and Shipman firefighters were represented on Thursday at the funeral. Melvin's great nephew, Jason, is fire chief in Brighton and a paramedic with Alton Memorial Hospital.

Medora is a town with a population of 450. Ruyle described Medora as "a wonderful community."

"Melvin spent his entire life here except for his time away in service," Ruyle said. "His death is hard on the whole community. We knew it was coming, so it was a little blessing that we had a chance to visit him and share our feelings with him. We knew this day was coming, but it is still not easy."

Melvin Bowman was instrumental in helping to create a strong mutual aid bond with neighboring small communities and was highly recognized in every location.

Ruyle said Melvin Bowman's leadership and guidance will be missed in the community and with the other members of the fire department.

"Melvin loved the fire department and the firemen and will always be a part of it," Ruyle said.



