

JOSEPH BRAKEL

Cedar Rapids Firefighter Joseph Allen Brakel, 29, of Nora Springs, Iowa, died on November 25, 1999, after a 1½-year battle with cancer. Members of the Cedar Rapids Fire Department Honor Guard were involved in the funeral service and served as honorary pallbearers. A large number of fellow firefighters, along with the Fire Chief and several other members of management, attended the funeral of their fallen brother.

Brakel joined the Cedar Rapids Fire Department on August 18, 1997, along with classmates Rick Halleran, Matt Hilliard, Tom Clearman, and Mike Nesslage. After Brakel completed his training, he was assigned to Station #7. Halleran said, "Joe really loved his job and he loved Iowa football. He was the kind of person who didn't want people to feel sorry for him."



When Brakel joined the Department, he completed a "Meet Our New Firefighter" questionnaire in which he stated that his hobbies included biking and fishing. In answer to the question of who he most admired, Joe stated he admired Larry Brown, author and former firefighter, for his candid observations about life and firefighting. Brakel said that the quality he thought that was most important in a person was dependability, stating that he got great satisfaction from knowing that people could count on him to come through for them.

In a Thank You card to the Department, Brakel's parents, Jim and Deb, wrote, "Thank you for letting Joe be a part of such a class act as the Cedar Rapids Fire Department. You cannot possibly realize how much of a comfort it was to have you there as part of Joseph's memorial service. Joe had nothing but good to say about everyone he worked with. We only regret it was such a short time."

