

Fallen Cold Bay Fire Chief Fred E. Barnett to be Recognized 52 Years Later

They are the unsung heroes. They live with us in our communities, and when a fire breaks out, they don't hesitate to risk their lives to protect ours. With that in mind, on Sept. 11, 2016, many Alaska firefighters across the state will gather for a special ceremony in Anchorage to honor Alaska's Fallen Firefighters. This year, a Cold Bay Fire Chief will be recognized during the ceremony, 52 years later, after dying while battling a fire at the FAA Power Plant.

On September 9, 1964, there was a two alarm fire at the FAA electrical power plant in Cold Bay. According to former Sand Point Police Officer Michael Livingston, PhD, who spent several months researching the circumstances surrounding the event, hot embers from the exhaust of the power plant caught the roof of the building on fire. While Cold Bay FAA Fire Chief Fred E. Barnett fought the fire, he died of a heart attack.

Years later, Chief Barnett's name and his sacrifice to protect his community were mostly forgotten. However, thanks to Livingston's tireless efforts to research an event that occurred in

Cold Bay so long ago, a community where Livingston grew up, Barnett will finally be recognized for

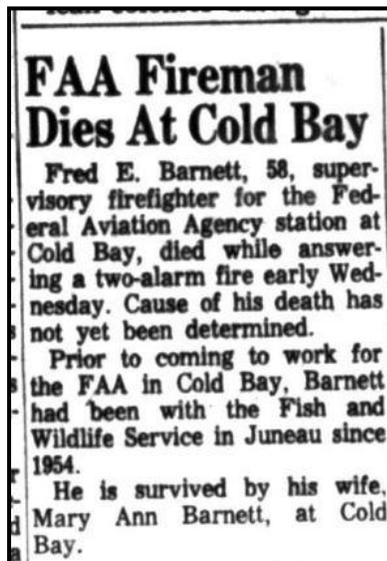
paying the ultimate price. Livingston's research included filing a freedom of information request with the FAA, locating Barnett's death certificate at the Bureau of Vital Statistics, gathering statements from people who remember details from the 1964 fire as well as obtaining a newspaper article from September 10, 1964, which documented that Chief Barnett was fighting a fire when he passed away.

"That was a crucial piece of the puzzle necessary to nominate Chief Barnett to the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial," Livingston said.

In April 2016, Livingston submitted his ten pages of documentation to the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial. An



Cold Bay FAA Fire Chief Fred E. Barnett, who died while fighting a fire at a power plant in 1964, will be recognized for his sacrifice at the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial next month.



The Anchorage Daily Times published a brief article in September 1964 announcing that Barnett died while fighting the power plant fire.

approval committee then reviewed the information to determine whether Barnett's name should be included. Livingston said on August 10th, he received the following email from the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial Committee:

"We will be adding Fred Barnett from the FAA Cold Bay Fire Department to the Memorial at this year's September 11th ceremony at our memorial site in Anchorage."

The decision to include Barnett's name was very straightforward.

"It was actually pretty easy for a number of reasons," said Mark Barker, member of the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial Committee. "Mike Livingston's package was so complete, and on the fellow's (Barnett's) death certificate, it said he died due to fighting the fire."



Barnett's plaque will be installed at the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial during a special ceremony on Sept. 11, 2016 in Anchorage.

Barnett is one of three firefighters who will have his name engraved into a plaque this year. The plaques will then be installed at the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial during a special ceremony on September 11, 2016 in Anchorage.

"It is part of Unangax (Aleut) cultural values to honor those who die while protecting our communities from harm and honor them in memorials, songs, statues and other forms of public display so their sacrifices will be remembered for generations to come," Livingston said.

Livingston might not have stumbled onto the missing piece of the puzzle surrounding the circumstances of Barnett's death if it were not for a trip he made in May 2010 aboard the M/V Tustumena ferry. As he was passing through Cold Bay, he decided to visit his family's homestead on the north bank of Trout Creek. While there, he found a wooden grave marker deteriorating into the ground.

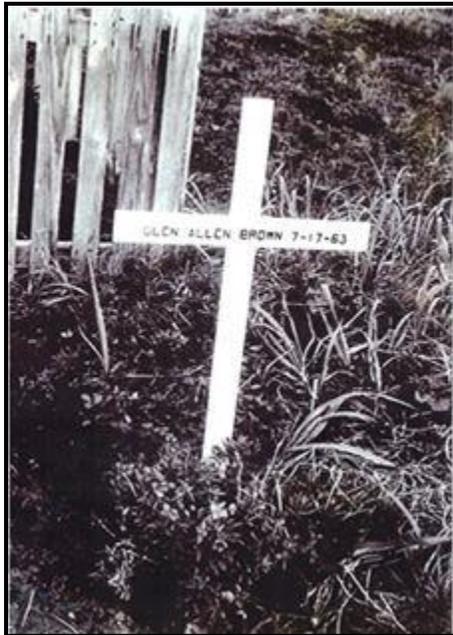
"The name, Glen Allen Brown, painted in white, was still visible, but I knew the cross would not survive much longer in Cold Bay's wet and windy weather," Livingston said.



Michael Livingston found this deteriorating wooden grave marker on his family's property in Cold Bay. Photo courtesy: Michael Livingston

He uploaded the picture of the wooden grave marker to www.findagrave.com. However, he didn't expect to hear anything more about it. Five years later, in December 2015, Livingston received a correction for the online memorial he created about the year of death. He learned that

the wooden grave marker was the site where a full-term stillborn was buried after a Navy doctor had delivered the infant in Cold Bay on July 17, 1963. Livingston learned from the baby's mother, Joan Brown Dodd of Dutch Harbor, that after the infant was baptized, Cold Bay FAA Fire Chief Fred Barnett had offered to build a small coffin and cross marker and then buried the infant on the hillside outside of Cold Bay. Barnett later took a photo of the grave and mailed it,



Barnett took a photo of the cross where he buried a stillborn infant. He then sent the picture to Joan Brown Dodd, the baby's mother.

along with a compassionate letter to Brown Dodd, expressing his condolences for her loss. In the letter, Barnett described the location where her son was buried, surrounded by wildflowers in a beautiful area. He told Brown Dodd that after her son was buried, a priest came through and offered a blessing for her son. Barnett also told her that he visits the spot from time to time. She has kept the letter for 53 years. Brown Dodd (author of "Cow Woman of Akutan") told Livingston she had just become familiar with her son's burial location while conducting research for her second book.

It was a year after Barnett had buried the infant, that the Cold Bay Fire Chief died in the power plant fire.

"It's hugely important that we honor our fallen firefighters," said Mark Barker, of the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial Committee. "It's important for the families, and it's important for the community. These firefighters got out of bed and drove to a fire to protect the rest of us. They didn't get back in their car and drive home. The fire truck went back to the station with one person missing. These firefighters gave their all to protect us."

For Livingston, helping to bring recognition to Barnett, meant uncovering another story. Its connection to Barnett shed light on the fallen firefighter's compassion for a mother's loss a year earlier as well as the sacrifice he made for his community when he died in the fire a year later.



Barnett's plaque will be added to a wall at the Alaska Fallen Firefighter's Memorial in Anchorage on Sept. 11th.

"Glen Allen Brown, the stillborn baby, played a pivotal and clear role in bringing recognition to Cold Bay Fire Chief Fred Barnett," said Livingston. "Although the two never knew each other in this world, they are strongly, spiritually and directly connected in the afterlife as a powerful public symbol for recognizing those who take the time to reach out and help strangers who need comfort during times of great sorrow."

Firefighters and members of the public are encouraged to attend the Alaska Fallen Firefighter Memorial ceremony at 5 p.m. on September 11, 2016. The memorial is located at the corner of 5th Avenue and A Street in Anchorage.