

THE LITTLEST FIREMAN

Emergency agencies personnel – police, fire department, rescue and ambulance services – are known for their commitment to the safety and welfare of people; it's what drives them to the choice of their careers. Their compassion is often demonstrated in performance of their duties. Here is an example:



In 1981, Frank "Bopsy" Salazar, a 7-year-old dying of leukemia, became the first "wish child" helped by the Make-a-Wish Foundation. This boy from Phoenix, Ariz., had three wishes: to be a fireman, to ride in a hot-air balloon and to go to Disneyland. He ultimately achieved all three. The fulfillment of his first wish, the fireman one, was described by the Make-a-Wish Foundation in its account of events:

The Phoenix Fire Department made sure Bopsy had an experience truly befitting a fireman – making him the first honorary fireman in Phoenix history. A full uniform, complete with a yellow coat and a helmet, was custom-made just for him. Bopsy scrambled around the back of Engine 9's ladder truck, and turned on the horn. Following the ride, he doused a few cars with water from a 75-pound hose. At the end of the day, Bopsy was pinned with an official firefighter's badge.

Bopsy went on to experience his hot air balloon ride and a trip to Disneyland. While in Anaheim, Calif., he was treated with every courtesy a visiting fireman could wish for from his Southern California colleagues, including being chauffeured to and from the Los Angeles airport in a fire truck and escorted around the park by two of his fellow firefighters from the Anaheim fire department.

Bopsy's condition worsened not long after returning from California, and he had to return to the hospital. As he slept in his third-floor room, someone suddenly knocked on his window and opened it, and in came five of his fellow Phoenix firemen. They had parked their ladder truck below.



As his colleagues continued to crawl through the window, Bopsy – now fully awake – could not contain his laughter. Bopsy shared a few laughs and stories with his friends before going to sleep with a smile on his face.

Later that evening, Bopsy passed away – but not before seeing all three of his fondest wishes come true.

It is amazing what love can accomplish, even in the face of adversity and death. It is the kind of love that is on display every day in the centers of Life Care and Century Park, and in the work of Life Care at Home.

– Beecher Hunter