



**Boston Firefighters
Local 718**



International Association of Firefighters

Professional Firefighters of Massachusetts



DON'T BE ME

My name is Bob Kilduff. I have been a firefighter for 34 years. Were it not for some help from above, marvelous medical people and dumb luck I would well be on my way to an early death due to occupational cancer. I am telling my story in the hope that another brother or sister firefighter will not have to share my experience.

Like many of you reading this, I only went to the doctor when hurt. You know the drill: burns, cuts, smoke inhalation and the many orthopedic injuries that come part and parcel with our job. For reasons unknown the thoughts of retirement age prompted me in May of 2003 to get my first physical exam in 30 years. I felt the best I had in years and the test results bore this out. All was well. The doc however advised that I have a colonoscopy due to my age. Not really thrilled, I acquiesced. The procedure was a piece of cake; however, the test revealed a large tumor in my colon which needed to be addressed. Twenty days later a section of my colon was removed. I had to undergo a 6 month chemotherapy program which could have been avoided with early detection. It now appears that my cancer is in remission and the doctors predict these procedures will help save my life.

The issue here is why go to the doctor and learn you're very sick when you can go to the doctor and keep from getting very sick. I have learned the hard way that you must act prudently if you want to see your grandkids grow, have a chance to retire, golf, fish, hunt, go to the track or whatever. If you don't have regular medical checkups your odds of enjoying a longer than normal life are greatly diminished. Early detection of cancer is paramount in successful treatment. This will allow you to do what you want to do and not what your doctor will allow you to do.

In 1990 a cancer presumption law was passed by the Legislature in Massachusetts. This followed hundreds of hours of research by Jack McKenna of Local 718 into the prevalence of cancer in firefighters and an intense lobbying effort by Mike Mullane, Third District IAFF VP, Bob McCarthy, President of the PFFM, Larry Curran of Local 718, Ken Donnelly and John Fallon of the PFFM along with many others. This law was not a gift but a hard fought victory. The reason it was signed into law was that it has been shown that firefighters have a serious problem with cancer. Numerous studies have pointed to the fact that there are over a dozen cancers that attack firefighters more often than the general population. Our exposure to the products of combustion and the resultant carcinogens are the reason and we must be more proactive in protecting ourselves

through cancer screening. The Boston Fire Department's Medical Examiner Mike Hamrock deals with cancer and firefighters daily. From his observations, firefighter cancer screening should take place if there is a family history of cancer. For example, colon screening normally scheduled for a fifty year old should take place at age forty due to our higher incidence of the disease. Firefighter deaths due to occupational diseases are far more common than the number of line of duty deaths caused by other means and we must take them seriously.

Longtime union activist and dear friend J.J. Jennings left this world with our profession a much better place through his efforts. His endeavors were to always help union members and their families. It is my hope, through this program, to leave our job a little bit better and saving just one life will be worth the time involved. I ask that you take a few minutes to examine your efforts to help yourself stay healthy. Think for a moment about my experiences over the last ten months and if necessary take the action necessary to help you avoid my fate. Remember, DON'T BE ME.

God Bless and stay safe.....BK

**Brother Kilduff Died in The Line of Duty on March 13, 2008
from Occupational Cancer
He accomplished so much for so many**