

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” John 15:13

Firefighter Richard Sheltra, 20, laid down his life while battling a three-alarm blaze on Saturday, April 30. Richard was a kind soul with a quiet demeanor and a servant’s heart. He was selfless, a protector and fiercely loyal to his family and friends. Therefore, it was natural he chose as his life’s calling a profession that puts serving others at its core and personal safety at risk. While we grieve the loss of our son, brother, grandson, nephew, cousin and friend, we are comforted that he died doing what he loved and that he has gone to a place prepared for him by his Heavenly Father.

Survivors include parents Michael and Linay Sheltra, sister Tyler Sheltra, grandparents Rod and Joyce Sheltra and Richard Thomas along with a tight-knit family of uncles, aunts and cousins.

Born and raised in Charlotte, North Carolina, Richard graduated from South Mecklenburg High School where he played football and lacrosse and was active in Key Club and Young Life. Immediately after high school he turned all of his focus and energy toward becoming a full-time firefighter. He took classes in Fire Science at Central Piedmont Community College and joined the Pineville Volunteer Fire Department. Richard followed the legacy of both mother and father who are retired volunteers of Carolina and Carmel Fire Departments. A diligent student and faithful volunteer, Richard earned A’s in classes toward his degree and accumulated firehouse accolades, including Most Training Hours and Rookie of the Year. Richard was in his fifth year as a volunteer firefighter and in the final stage of the application process for the Charlotte Fire Department.

Richard was born to be a firefighter. His father is a former Chief of the Carmel VFD and his mother rolled on calls in the early stages of her pregnancy with Richard. Nicknamed “Bam-Bam” for his “sometimes less than graceful” mannerisms, Richard made a habit of showing up to his sister’s pretend tea parties in full junior firefighter gear as a young boy.

The consummate southern gentleman, Richard loved his country, his boots, chocolate chip cookies, country music and Alabama football. He loved the outdoors and working out. He had a strong, quiet Christian faith that showed itself in his desire to serve his community and his caring for others. When asked why he wanted to be a firefighter, Richard wrote that he wanted to be there for people who may be experiencing the “worst day of their lives.”

There will be a Celebration of Life service Saturday, May 7, 2016 at noon at Forest Hill Church, 7224 Park Road, Charlotte, NC 28210. For those who are unable to attend the celebration, we welcome you to view Richard’s service at <https://livestream.com/foresthilchurch/events/5326195>.

In lieu of flowers, the family has asked for any donations to be mailed to the Charlotte Fire Department Credit Union, 2100 Commonwealth Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28205. These contributions will go towards a cause close to Richard’s heart, The Richard Sheltra Memorial Fund. Funds will be used for firefighter turnout gear and educational resources.

In his time of sacrifice and our time of mourning, we remember Richard’s habit of always telling those close to him that he loved them before he left. Love you, mean it “Buddy.”