

Robert Matthew Aker, 34, 1515 South Meridian Street, Portland, passed away Saturday at Parkview Hospital in Fort Wayne following injuries from a traffic accident.

He was born in Portland on September 15, 1976, the son of Mike and Linda (Hutchens) Aker. He was married June 27, 1998 to Brooke Cramer, who survives.

Matt started his service with the Portland Fire Department as a volunteer in July 1997. He was hired full time in June 2002. He was appointed Assistant Fire Chief in January 2005 and was appointed and served as Fire Chief for Portland Fire Dept. Matt was 3rd Vice President of the Indiana Fire Chiefs Association, Certified with Indiana Department of Homeland Security: EMS-First Responders, Fire Inspector I and II, Fire Investigator I, Technical Rescue Awareness, Fire Officer I, Ice Rescue, Rope Rescue, Hazardous Material Incident Command, Hazmat 1st Responder Awareness and Operations, ECI Fools, American Heart Association CPR and AED, Chairman of Membership of IFCA, Adhoc with ceremonies at Emergency Conferences, Portland's Representative for DPC, District 6 Co-Chair for Fire Task Force Element and Jay County's Representative to Region 6 Fire Training Council. Matt served with the Jay County Sheriffs Department since 1999 and was Captain of Jay County Sheriff Reserves, was a member of Emergency Response Team, Portland Rotary Club, Portland Morning Optimists and American Red Cross. He was a 1995 Jay County High School graduate and 1997 graduate of Vincennes University in Conservation Law Enforcement. He was an avid outdoorsman.

Surviving are his wife, Brooke; parents, Mike and Linda Aker of Portland; grandmothers, Maxine Aker of Portland and Rosie Hutchens of Portland; two brothers, Brad Aker (wife-Connie) of Bryant and Chad Aker (wife-Jill) of Portland; one sister, Mrs. Ted (Lori) Ferguson of Portland; nine nieces and two nephews.

Funeral services will be Saturday at 11 a.m. in the Jay County High School with Pastors Hugh Kelly and Tim Dilley presiding. Burial will follow in the Green Park Cemetery. Visitation will be Friday from 1-8 p.m. in the Baird-Freeman Funeral Home. Memorials can be made to the Matt Aker Scholarship Fund.

Contributed by Jane - no source listed

Crash claims Aker Fire chief was on motorcycle

By RACHELLE HAUGHN

Family members, friends and fellow firefighters are mourning the death of Portland's fire chief in a weekend accident.

Robert Matt Aker, 34, died at a Fort Wayne Hospital Saturday evening after the motorcycle he was driving collided with a car on West Votaw Street near Walmart.

"It's a whole lot of grieving," Portland Fire Captain Ron Somers said of the situation at the fire station today. "It's going to be quite a job to fill Matt's shoes. Everybody's trying to cope and get through it."

A large procession of fire trucks, patrol cars, rescue vehicles and an ambulance followed the van carrying Aker's body from Parkview Hospital to Baird-Freeman Funeral Home, Portland, on Sunday evening. Some of those in the procession — including Jay County Sheriff's Office deputies and firefighters — cried as they drove down Meridian Street. Both sides of the street were dotted with mourners showing respect for the fallen chief. Communities north of Portland flocked to the sidewalks to show respect as well. Aker also served as the captain of the Jay County Sheriff's Office reserve deputies.

Funeral arrangements are pending at Baird-Freeman.

Aker, 1515 S. Meridian St., Portland, was pronounced dead at 5:51 p.m. Saturday at Parkview Hospital.

See Aker page 5

Continued from page 1

He died from multiple blunt force trauma, an official with the Allen County Coroner's Office said this morning. He suffered trauma to the head, chest and abdomen.

Somers said the Indiana State Police brought in a Critical Incident Stress Management team for firefighters Sunday — including those who had responded to Saturday's accident scene on West Votaw Street.

"We had a lot of hurt guys," Somers said. "It lets everybody vent a little."

Aker, a graduate of Jay County High School, was appointed fire chief by Portland Mayor Bruce Hosier in December of 2007. He had become a full-time firefighter in 2005 and had been a volunteer firefighter beginning in 1997.

His brother Chad Aker and father Mike Aker were also involved with the fire department.

After the procession's arrival at the funeral home Sunday member of the family, including Aker's wife, Brooke, hugged and grieved with members of the fire department.

According to Portland police, the accident occurred at 4:26 p.m. Saturday. Aker was riding his 2002 Harley Davidson Sportster west on Votaw Street, and was approaching the Walmart Supercenter. At the same time, Doris A. Muhlenkamp, 64, 8129 East 500 North, Portland, was stopped, facing south, in the Walmart parking lot exit. She was waiting to turn east on Votaw Street.

Muhlenkamp told Portland police she saw a white van attempting to turn north into the Walmart parking lot. She began to turn east — not seeing Aker. Her 2009 Chevrolet Impala struck Aker's motorcycle.

Aker was thrown off the motorcycle and landed in the middle of the street. The motorcycle came to rest off the south side of the street. He was not wearing a helmet, police said.

Alcohol and drug tests were conducted on Muhlenkamp, which is standard testing for a fatal crash. Results were still pending this morning.

Aker was transported to Jay County Hospital after the crash, and then flown by Samaritan helicopter to Parkview Hospital.

He was an organ donor.

The city's mayor, Bruce Hosier, is asking that all flags be lowered to half-staff this week in honor of Aker.

Contributed by Jane Edson