

## Robert A. DiPoli

Chief - Needham Fire Department  
Class of 1967

Robert DiPoli, a 1967 Needham High School graduate, remembers his high school years as happy years. Life in the 60's, he notes, was perhaps less complicated than life today. Even though the Vietnam War was hanging over students' heads like a Sword of Damocles, day to day life was less complicated for them than it is for students today. Robert fondly recalls the 60's as a time when students went home to Mom after school, when cars were nice, and when music was the best.

Robert, however, describes his academic experiences as challenging. For him, school work was a personal struggle, as he had to balance the demands of his studies with a rigorous work schedule. As a junior, he heard the fateful words "not college material" and had to repeat the year. But Robert was not discouraged. His work ethic was strong. Determined to be the best he could be at whatever he chose as a career, he never gave up. After high school, he did return to school and earned respectable grades. In 1987, he graduated from Massachusetts Bay College with an A.S. Fire Degree; in 1994, he completed the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program. Robert ascribes his success to his motivation: "I have never stopped searching for knowledge. I must credit some terrific teachers and good friends for my motivation."

Robert worked at the Needham Department of Public Works from 1969 to 1971. From 1971 to the present time, Robert has been a member of the Needham Fire Department, as Firefighter, Fire Lieutenant, and Deputy Fire Chief; in 1989, he was appointed Fire Chief. Currently, Robert is the Governmental Affairs Director of the Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts and the Director of Federal Legislation. He is also a member of the National Society of Executive Fire Officers. Last fall, he served as host of the National Conference held in Plymouth.

Since the late 1960's, Robert has been actively involved in numerous community service activities—Greene's Field Playground, the Memorial Park Gazebo, the Carleton Pavilion, Cooks Bridge Playground, the Tippett Hospice House, and the annual Needham Exchange Club's Fourth of July Program. Since 1987, he has been a



member of the board of directors for the Needham Exchange Club, serving as its president in 1994-95.

Robert has been a successful and productive member of the Needham Community. Upon his nomination for the Distinguished Career Award, he modestly wrote:

I am sure that there are many NHS grads who are more deserving of recognition for academic success and successful careers in the business world. I chose a career as a public servant. Perhaps I could motivate the student who struggles with school work and is not headed off to college in the fall and needs to find success in other avenues. I am extremely honored to be considered for this award.

Robert's selection as a recipient of the Needham High School Distinguished Career Award is an honor that he deserves. He is a credit to Needham High School and to the Needham Community that he has served so well for so many years.

E.M.B.