

Earl McDaniel

An icon of the Kentucky fire service, Earl R. McDaniel's career spanned 45 years with the Lexington Fire Department. Joining the department in March of 1941, Earl saw promotions to Fire Marshal and Assistant Chief lead him to the Chief's position on December 27, 1949. Chief McDaniel continued as Chief until his retirement, exactly 37 years to the day in 1986. Earl passed away on Jan. 29, 1991, while watching his beloved UK Wildcats beat the Auburn Tigers.

Under Chief McDaniel's leadership, the Lexington department changed from a small operation with 6 fire stations to a modern one with 18 stations. More important, during his tenure, McDaniel and the Lexington Fire Department was synonymous with high quality, twice cited by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as the # 1 fire department in the nation for a city Lexington's size. Earl stressed discipline and that his firefighters be highly trained with a caring attitude.

Earl McDaniel's leadership was not restricted to Lexington alone. At the time of his Chief's promotion in 1949, Earl was serving as President of the Central Kentucky Firefighters Association and the National Chairman of Fire Prevention for the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce. Always active in committees of the KFA, he was elected President of our association in 1952 in Ashland. As Southeastern Fire Chiefs Association President in 1954 he represented 10 states, and in 1956 the State Insurance Board appointed him Kentucky State Fire Marshal. In 1957 he was honored for his years on the Board of Directors of the International Fire Chiefs Association. Earl remained active in all these associations till his retirement.

Chief "Mac" always supported and assisted every fire department in the Commonwealth regardless of size. Through his efforts as co-chair, our State Fire School in Lexington continually grew and afforded expert training to thousands of firefighters across the state. The oldest state fire school in the nation, Earl coordinated many agencies including the KFA to make this school work, free of charge, for our firefighters. Earl was always there to recognize deserving or non-deserving individuals with his famed "bull-cinch" award. And who can ever forget Earl's appearances in his white dress uniform.

Chief McDaniel's expertise was not limited to the fire service. At the 1965 KFA annual conference in Frankfort, Earl shared the podium with others including Governor Ned Breathitt speaking on, of all things, "The Great Wall of China". Earls interest and support helped many and enabled the KFA and the Fire Service of Kentucky to grow and prosper.

Presenting this Hall of Fame Award was a person who witnessed many of Earl's efforts first hand, President of the KFA in 1975, Retired Chief Ray A. Muench of the Southgate Fire Department.

Accepting Chief McDaniel's award were his daughter, Mrs. Marcia Caton, and sons Charles and Earl McDaniel.

