

C. B. McCullough

Our first inductee tonight into the KFA Hall of Fame class of 2009 will be honored posthumously. We are proud to recognize and remember Fire Chief C.B. "Bud" McCullough as a new member to the Hall of Fame.



Chief McCullough a Morehead, Ky. native joined the fire department in 1930. Married, C.B. lost his only child in 1942 while his son was defending our country in World War II.

In the early years of his fire department career, C.B. molded a reputation in education and the training of firefighters. He traveled the state taking fire classes and made many friends and contacts. These friendships and associations led to his involvement with the KFA.

McCullough rose through the ranks of the Morehead Fire Department and was named Chief in January, 1939, a position he held for 24 years. Chief McCullough faced many major challenges as he began his career as Chief of Morehead. In early July, 1939 on the eve of the worst flash flood in Rowan County history, the great Morehead Hotel was destroyed in a spectacular fire. And just as McCullough's men were getting their breath on came the flash flood of Triplett Creek at the Licking River in Morehead. This flood caused over 30 deaths and severe devastation to the downtown area of Morehead.

Chief McCullough and his department endured. With WW 2 on the horizon, many responsibilities and duties were issued to the Chief. In 1942, C.B. was appointed fire warden and had the responsibility of overseeing the mandatory blackouts at 8:30 each evening. C.B. was also primarily responsible for the completion and implementation of contingency emergency plans for Rowan County.

As Fire Chief, C.B. supported training throughout the state, teaching many classes. Working with KFA Hall of Famers Chief Earl McDaniel (Lexington), Capt. V. A. Beam (Louisville), Chief Burris Hensley (Ashland) and many others, the Kentucky State Fire School was established as the premier fire training opportunity nationally.

With the KFA playing the key role in this fire school, McCullough naturally became extremely active in the association leading to his election as President at the annual conference in Lexington in 1951 and culminating with his conference in Ashland on September 9-10-11, 1952. With C.B.'s friend Burris Hensley serving as General Chairman of the conference, the KFA's 32nd annual convention was a huge success. Held at the Henry Clay Hotel in Ashland, guest speakers included State Fire Marshal J.T.

Underwood, Regional Civilian Defense Fire Coordinator William L. Martin, Eighth District Vice-President of the IAFF George Slocum, and John L. Thompson from the Kentucky Inspection Bureau.

Ashland city manager Jack Maynard stated in the conference program, “through the efforts of the KFA, firefighting has been raised to a profession which is ably demonstrated by the low fire loss during the past decade. Through your leadership our fire departments increase their efficiency in fighting the fires and the protection of public property”.

Chief McCullough was well known and respected in Morehead. He served various community groups in addition to his duties as fire chief. The Chief was remembered by the city and department in 1979 when the newly built main fire station on Rt. 32 near Main Street in Morehead was dedicated in his honor and a plaque permanently installed on the firehouse.

It was recalled that after every working fire call, Chief McCullough and the old-timers on the department would meet in his office, where C.B. would retrieve a half-gallon bottle of whiskey from a file cabinet, remove the cork and take a drink. He then passed the bottle around. Once the bottle made the rounds the cork would be returned to the bottle and the booze stored for next time. This regular symbolic gesture was done as a ritual that everyone had returned safely from the emergency.

At Chief McCullough’s burial in 1964, the “old-timers” pulled up chairs around his open grave and pulled out that half-gallon bottle of whiskey, removed the cork, and poured the first drink on their departed brother’s casket and then proceeded to pass the bottle until it was empty.

It is with great honor and respect that tonight, we posthumously induct Morehead Fire Chief and Past – KFA President C.B. McCullough into the KFA’s Hall of Fame. Presenting this award will be KFA President and 1st Vice President Randy Courtney and Bobby Cowherd.

Accepting in the name of Chief McCullough and the Morehead Fire Department will be Morehead Fire Chief Jeff Anderson.