

Chief Gerald Stewart

A Paducah native, Gerald Stewart graduated from Paducah Tilghman High School in 1957 and embarked on a fire service career in 1961 with the Paducah Fire Department. He advanced through the ranks of Lieutenant, Captain and Asst. Chief and became Fire Chief in 1988, 33 years after his father retired as Chief of the Paducah Police Department.



While serving on the Paducah Fire Department, Gerald began his second career as a voice of the Kentucky fire service. Serving as President of the Paducah Firefighters Local, Gerald became a member of the Kentucky Professional Firefighters Association legislative team and attended his first legislative session in Frankfort in 1972. He was elected President of KPF in 1977 and served until 1983, while also filling the role as the KPF's full-time lobbyist.

His term as Fire Chief marked not only improved employee benefits but many enhancements in apparatus and communications. He replaced all of the department's front line apparatus over an 18 month period which included 5 pumpers and two new aerial trucks. Gerald was the project manager for Kentucky's first 800 MHz (Megahertz) trunked public safety radio system and served as chairman of the Paducah/McCracken County 911 system. Chief Stewart retired from the fire department in 1996 but not the fire service.

Chief Stewart was appointed to the Kentucky Fire Commission in 1977 and served 25 years, 22 ½ as chairman. His leadership of the Fire Commission saw great growth and dramatic changes for the betterment of our service. As always, he continued his lobbying efforts for the entire fire service.

Gerald's activity with the KFA includes many committee roles including Legislative, Advisory, Resolutions. He has served as our Parliamentarian for the past 5 years. Gerald has served as a committee member at every conference he has attended since 1983. In 1992 Gerald was elected 7th Vice-President of the KFA and moved progressively through the ranks, serving as President in the term year 1999-2000.

He and the Jackson Purchase firefighters hosted the 2000 KFA annual conference in Paducah. Since that time, Gerald has been a full-time lobbyist for the KFA and continues his work today. While serving as the fire service representative on the state pension task force, he readies himself for another important legislative session in January.

Since the 1970's, Gerald Stewart has been involved in all state-wide legislation that has affected the fire service. He and KFA Hall of Famer Sylvan Smith teamed for many years to give us a tremendous 1-2 punch in Frankfort. Just some of the landmark bills the Gerald has worked on include HB 793, the first incentive pay legislation in 1980; SB 215 reorganizing the fire commission in 1980; and HB 525 in 1982, thus creating the surcharge on insurance which finances most of the benefits we see today. Gerald is especially proud and played a major roll in the cooperation and working relationships that has been created with the KFA, KPF and the Fire Commission. He worked hard in the creation and financing of our Firefighter Memorial in Frankfort.

Since 1972 when he attended his first legislative session, Gerald has devoted the major portion of his career as a spokesman, lobbyist and activist for the Kentucky fire service. His reputation for truthfulness, candor and his willingness to help are known by firefighters across the Commonwealth. Governors, state and federal legislators and local politicians know him well and respect his opinion. He is truly the voice of the Kentucky firefighters and we have all benefited immensely due to his efforts.

Gerald and his lovely wife June will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in December. They have raised 4 children and have 7 grandchildren.

It is our distinct honor to tonight, induct Chief Gerald Stewart into the KFA Hall of Fame.