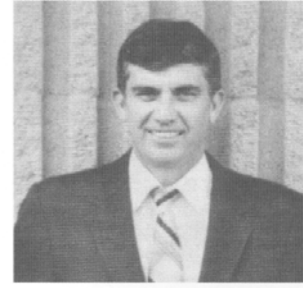


Reginald Kay(RK) Back



Reginald Kay Back was born June 6, 1939, in Monticello, Kentucky. He was the youngest of ten children. During his early years he attended school in a one room school house and later graduated from Wayne County High School.

Kay moved to Louisville when he was 17 and went to work as a pressman at Standard Gravure where he remained for 37 years. He married Lois Jean Melcher in 1959 and together they raised five children, Debbie, Barbara, Penny, Scott and Kim. They eventually had 16 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

Kay Back loved his family and the time that he was able to spend with them. He enjoyed camping and fishing and took advantage of every opportunity to be with his family. He died far too young on March 6, 1999 at the age of 59.

Kay joined the Pleasure Ridge Park Fire Department as a volunteer in 1961. He quickly rose through the ranks of the department and was elected fire chief in 1971. Kay held the position of Chief for the next 20 years. In 1990 Kay Back retired as Chief and moved to Tennessee after the closing of Standard Gravure.

Under the guidance of Chief Back, Pleasure Ridge Park became one of the largest and most successful volunteer fire departments in the state of Kentucky. His philosophy was simple. He said "If I won't do it, I won't ask one of my men to do it." Chief Back gained some national notoriety in 1977, when he refused to rescue a cat from a tree during a snow and sleet storm. Concerned for the safety of his men, Kay stated "I've never seen any skeletons of cats up trees. My business isn't rescuing cats, its rescuing people." Don't we all wish we had the guts to make a statement like that under the glare of the media spotlight.

Chief Back led a successful campaign to prevent a merger with the city of Louisville and continued the expansion of PRP until his retirement. He was offered the opportunity to become the first paid fire chief in the history of the Pleasure Ridge Fire Department, but he refused saying that "It wouldn't be fun anymore." He retired as a life-long volunteer.

In the 1970's Chief Back became active in the Kentucky Firefighters Association. In 1978 he was elected as the fifth vice president of the KFA. He followed the progression of vice presidents and became President of the KFA in 1983/84. During the time that

Kay Back served the KFA some of the most important legislation ever passed was written. He was involved in the creation and passing of House Bill 525, which created financial incentives for volunteer departments and career firefighters. He was also involved in many membership drives which helped increase the stature of the KFA. The importance of this era is reflected in the fact that five of the seven members on President Back's Executive Board in 1984 have been inducted into the K.F.A. Hall of Fame. It is fitting and appropriate that Chief Reginald Kay Back join that group tonight.

Presenting Chief Back's Hall of Fame award was Joe Bowman, who served under Kay at Pleasure Ridge Park and has carried on his activity in the KFA and KFA two-term Past-President and Hall of Famer Retired Chief of the Jeffersontown Fire Department Bob Gaddie.

Accepting on behalf of Chief Back were his daughters.