

Chief Don Smith

In 1962 seventeen-year-old Don Smith lied about his age. He had to be 18 to join the South Dixie Fire Department. Young Don felt he had no choice; he HAD to be a firefighter. This was the beginning of a 40-year career, which saw Don Smith become one of the most respected figures of the Kentucky fire service.

Don worked through the ranks of the South Dixie department, being made chief in the late 1960's and serving nearly 20 years. Don worked for the state fire commission for many years but never strayed fire from his first love, the South Dixie Fire Department. After being made a lifetime member of the department, Don had to serve more, and became a member of the Board of Trustee's.

Working to the very end for his beloved South Dixie Fire Department, FireBoard Chairman Don Smith played in intregal part in the departments pending merger with Pleasure Ridge Park Fire Department. While Don hated to see an end to his original department, he pursued this effort because it was the best thing for South Dixie. Don passed away on April 17, 2003, the departments merged on July 1, 2004. While he didn't live to see the beginnings of the new department, his selflessness, wisdom, and dedication will live on forever within it.

Don's career within the State Fire Commission put him in contact with many firefighters and departments throughout the Commonwealth. Don became one of the foremost experts on the fire service of Kentucky and the laws and regulations, which governed the departments. His wife states that without a doubt, Don could quote any KRS pertaining to the fire service at the drop of a hat, but don't ask him her birthday. So many of us called on Don for assistance through the years, and he was always there for us.

Don's support of the KFA was constant. Working for legislative benefits, or to enhance our training and performance, Don was at the forefront. Don was one of the few people who wrote House Bill 4 that later amended Chapter 75 to add section 400, which made all our non-profit fire departments in the state legal entities. As a member and chairperson of the KFA's educational committee for over 20 years, Chief Smith took upon the task of our State Fire School as his very own. Don led the fireschool through its greatest years. He was forever a vital part of our annual conferences, playing the part of advisor, but more importantly our friend. Don always had a story to tell, some good, some bad, a lot of funny ones, but most of all touching ones. Through the many firefighter funerals he attended, the grieving families and dedicated firefighters he met, always moved him.

Don Smith loved the Kentucky Fire Service and especially the people who made it. Whether you were from the largest department or the smallest, Don Smith was your comrade and friend, and it is our great honor to induct Chief Don Smith into the Kentucky Firefighters Association "Hall of Fame".

Presenting Don's award to his wife Alice, is Mr. Ronnie Day, executive director of the Fire Commission and a long-time co-worker and friend of Don.

Mrs. Alice Smith

