

WE ARE BLACK HISTORY

IABPFF “SMOKE”

VOLUME 3 | BLACK HISTORY MONTH EDITION | FEBRUARY 2021





ORGANIZED: Organized in Hartford, Connecticut, October 3, 1970.

FOUNDING ORGANIZATIONS: Vulcan Society Inc., New York, N.Y., Phoenix Society Inc., Hartford, Connecticut, Vulcan Pioneers of New Jersey Inc., Newark, N.J., Vulcan Pioneers of Hudson County Inc., Jersey City, N.J., Valiants Inc., and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS: The Membership of the IABPFF is comprised of 90 Chapters and represents 5100 fire service personnel and a 200 Lifetime Members.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Page 2.....	Founding
Page 3.....	Presidents Message
Page 4.....	IABPFF Historian Bro. George Collins
Page 5-13.....	IABPFF The Formative Years
Page 14.....	Member Spotlight
Page 15-16.....	Chapter Spotlight
Page 16.....	Family Affair
Page 17.....	IABPFF Tribute
Page 18.....	Gold Star Recipients
Page 19.....	IABPFF Scholarship
Page 20	COVID-19 Vaccine
Page 21.....	Congratulations Biden/Harris
Page 22.....	Heart Health
Page 23.....	Committee Chairs and Exec. Team

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We Are Black History

Greetings International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters!

Black history month is a time to honor and acknowledge the experiences, motivations and expressions of the brave men and women who came before us.

In our third edition of SMOKE, I invite you to:

- **Revisit the events and struggles that led to the creation of our beloved organization;**
- **Relive the blood, sweat and tears of our founders so that we may learn the lessons of the past; and**
- **Review their journey in order to confidently charter a course for our future.**

The journey was far from easy, the path unclear but the goal was always righteous. Let us honor their struggles, dedication and resilience as we look to the future asking ourselves what will history say about us?

Carrie Edwards-Clemons, President

Lift Every Voice and Sing

**Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.**

**Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the
slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.**

**God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget
Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand.
True to our God,
True to our native land.**

(Written by James Weldon Johnson)





Greetings IABPFF Members,

It was an honor for me to write the first article for The IABPFF 50th Anniversary Smoke. Newsletter. The article was researched for the recognition of the IABPFF by the African American Fire Fighters Historical Society, for its 10th Annual Salute Dinner and would have been part of a presentation at the 50th Anniversary IABPFF Convention that was scheduled to be held in Hartford, Connecticut, the birthplace of The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters. As we all know COVID-19 has caused these celebrations to be postponed as we remain thankful for the opportunity to reschedule them. The fact that our 50th Anniversary still has the IABPFF making history by electing its First Woman President Carrie Edwards-Clemons, Deputy Chief, Flint FD, says a lot about the growth of our organization.

In talking about writing a 50th Anniversary IABPFF newsletter article, I was asked how do you fit 50 years in one newsletter article? The answer is, it's impossible! That is why with the first edition it only covered the first 15 months prior to the first convention. For this edition I will defer to one of the IABPFF Braintrust Brother John Ruffins.

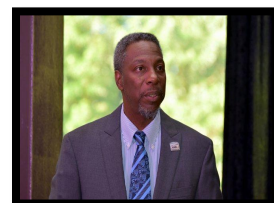


Bro. John Ruffins

I had the opportunity to speak with him at length in the year 2000 at the 30 Anniversary IABPFF Convention in Barbados, WI. I had not a clue that he would produce this document and have it printed Friday June 4, 2010 in the event program

Commemorating 70 Years of Community Service of The Vulcan Society Incorporated FDNY, 2010 Battalion Chief Wesley Williams Memorial Scholarship Dinner Dance.

The manuscript for this newsletter article covers the first 10 years of our organization under the leadership of our Founding President David Floyd, Captain FDNY. I challenge you to take an example from Brother Ruffins and document your local IABPFF chapter's history. Those of you who are part of that history secure all your documents, pictures, collectables, historic memorabilia and make them available to your members as you make a commitment to share your stories. Enjoy the reflections directly from the man who started it all.



Bro. George Collins, IABPFF Historian

**THE 10 FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE IABPFF
THE FIRE OF JUSTICE THAT STARTED IN
BROOKLYN
AT 739 EASTERN PARKWAY
AND SPREAD ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND
DROPPED KINDLING SPARKS
ON THE CARRIBEAN ISLANDS**

John Ruffins

In July of the Summer of 1969 - Newsweek Magazine carried an article in which it described "The Fireman Under Fire." It paints a picture of Black Watts, California, an abandoned car in a back alley torched by kids with gasoline. Engine 65 responds and is met with a shower of stones from the Brothers in the Hood. On the East Coast - East New York experienced 300 fires in one five hour period following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.



Racial tensions were roaring and fire workloads in New York jumped 40% from 1968 to 1969. Previously unheard of harassment of Fire Departments was becoming commonplace. False alarms, the most common form of harassment, jumped into astronomical figures all over the country. For example, in Houston alone, firefighters responded to 3097 box alarms and all but 163 were false.

False alarms were used to lure the Fire Department apparatus away from arson fires. Booby traps were set in buildings, fire escapes loosened and cardboard placed over holes in floors. In 1968-69 there were 947 attacks on New York City Firefighters causing injury to 125 members.

The older open trucks in New York and Newark were being covered with make-shift plywood panels to protect Black as well as white firefighters from flying objects thrown from roof tops and vacant lots.



The white firefighters of the late 60's, the Civil Rights Years, were stamped from a mold that hadn't changed for 50 years. Usually from a blue collar family with a no-nonsense view of right and wrong, he had a high school education and a good military record. A team man with an unquestioning sense of discipline and a full appetite for excitement and danger. The article goes on to describe white fire fighters as being uncomplicated, fatalistic about danger, patriotic and religious and conservative in his politics. His job is three times as hazardous as police work and he delighted in it.

The Firehouse of 1969 had the feeling of an exclusive club, between runs with ritual jokes about cooking and elaborate practical jokes that can spin on for days. The underside of this innocent simplicity of 1969 was narrow mindedness and an automatic rejection of people who lived to the beat of a different drum. The Fireman's Club was exclusive, and most conspicuously excluded were Blacks.

At the time, New York City had a Black Fire Commissioner, Robert O. Lowery and probably had the best record of integration of any big City Department. However, there were only 700 Blacks in a Department of 14,000 members - 5%. At the same time, 1969, San Francisco had four (4) Black Firemen, Los Angeles had 53 and Detroit 45.



Even in the middle of the ghettos, the men who rode the apparatus were overwhelmingly white. Men who lived somewhere else and had minimal contact with the community they sought to protect. The passing years and the struggles of all of the 125 IABPFF Chapters has not substantially changed the complexion of the Fire Departments of the U.S. The Newsweek article quotes a Chicago Fireman and racist remarks about Black women on welfare and goes on to state - not all firemen are/were prejudiced, but so many shared the same view that the firehouse bigotry was almost naive in its openness - Fire Departments throughout the country strained to cope with these new problems. In New York a plan was put in place to use convoys of apparatus in responding to fires in dangerous areas with a police car escort at both ends, other cities reduced their responses to high false alarm boxes and areas. On another level Fire Departments across the country tried to mend fences with their minority communities by instituting community relations programs; San Francisco hired kids from the community to spruce up shabby firehouses. New York Firemen were told to address Black and Puerto Ricans as “Sir” and to be as careful about damage to apartments on 124th Street in Harlem as they are on Park Avenue in the ‘90s.

In the opinion of the author, the best hope for easing tensions depended on the energetic recruiting efforts that practically all big City Departments started pushing in the ghetto areas, - But, he continued it was already plain that there will not be any overnight miracles (remember the article was written over 26 years ago).

The author observed that “few” Negroes show much interest in becoming firemen and even fewer like what they see on the job.



*Earl Gage Jr., San Francisco
First Black Firefighter*

THE FREEZE

White firemen profess to be puzzled by this lack of interest, but a Black firefighter in Detroit had a very clear explanation - He is quoted as observing - “They cry about harassment from Black people in the street - but you wouldn’t believe the harassment they give a Black firefighter in an Engine House.” - They put the freeze on you, they ostracize you, nobody talks to you, Nothing. They will find a picture of a naked Black woman and hang it on the wall with a racist derogatory remark.

“Unabashed bigotry”, of course, tends to decline as the number of Blacks on the Force rises. The article predicts - “This is obviously going to be a long slow process in most big cities”.



The Newsweek Magazine of July 21, 1969 that detailed the riots of the late 60's - The "Burn Baby, Burn Decade" - the arson spree that turned the South Bronx into a virtual ghost town with rows of completely uninhabited blocks, rocks fell like rain on plywood covered apparatus. The vicious bigotry faced by the Brothers on returning to the firehouse was a national phenomenon in cities with large minority populations.

In the late 60's it was rocks on the outside, racism on the inside of the firehouse, Black communities in flames and Fire Departments across the country making feeble attempts to recruit Blacks. The article drew me to the conclusion that Black Firemen (the 1969 term) needed to come together from across the country to face our common problems. We were the bridge between the Black community where we lived and raised our children and the white Fire Department where we risked our lives, fought for dignity and struggled for advancement.



At a Monday night meeting at 7:39 Eastern Parkway, I moved the Vulcan Society sponsor to a National Conference to bring Black firemen together. The Society voted to accept the concept and the challenge of a National Conference and President Dave Jackson designated John Ruffins and Vincent Julius as Co-Chairmen of the Conference to be held in New York, October 31 and November 1, 1969 at the Commodore Hotel, (because Vincent Julius insisted that we should hold the Conference at a unionized hotel).

Letters were forwarded to 250 Chiefs of Departments throughout the United States requesting the names of Black Firefighters to attend the Conference.



Vulcan Society Executive Board Members

The four objectives of the 2 day Conference were the four problems that were common to all urban cities with large minority populations:

1. Harassment of Firemen
2. Fire Prevention in minority communities
3. Recruitment and promotion of Black Firefighters

The Conference drew Black Firefighters from both coasts and representation from the following cities - Boston, MA; Hartford, CT; New York, NY; Newark, NJ; Jersey City, NJ Philadelphia, PA; Cleveland OH; St. Louis, MO; Los Angeles, CA; New Orleans, LA; Washington, DC.; Baltimore, MD; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI. From the spark that started on the second floor of 739 Eastern Parkway grew the First Convention of the IABPFF in Hartford, Connecticut and in 1991 the First Overseas Chapter Barbados admitted to membership.

From the Membership of the Vulcan Society that conceived the First Conference of the Black Firemen the leadership of the IABPFF was born. The all-important early foundation years when young organizations wither and die or flourish and expand was guided and nourished by its First President - Dave Floyd.



**THE 10 FORMATIVE YEARS
BUILDING THE FOUNDATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK
PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS
AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID J. FLOYD, THE
FIRST PRESIDENT**

By a clear consensus of the 1969 Conference of Black Firefighters held in New York City an important decision was made to form a National Association, and that the first Convention would be held in the Fall of the following year. The five Founding Organizations, the Vulcan Society of New York City; The Phoenix Society of Hartford, Ct; Vulcan Pioneers, Inc., of Newark, NJ; Vulcan Pioneers of Hudson County, Jersey City and Club Valients of Philadelphia, PA. came together to plan the course of the First Convention. Meetings were held monthly up and down the North East Coast - much time and effort went into the planning of the First Convention and it was accomplished through the efforts of many men sincerely devoted to the concept of a National Organization of Black Professional Fire Fighters.

Some of the Pre-Convention Delegates from the tri-state region included Vincent Julius, Charlie Burgess, Jim Lee, Dave Jackson, Dave Floyd and Aiden Spooner from New York. The New Jersey Contingent - Thomas Taylor, Bob Slaughter, Alex Mills, John Sterling, Joe Tinsley and W Harris. From Connecticut - Cecil Alston, Otis Haywood, Leonard Wallace, John Stewart, Aaron West, Frank Carter, Richard Epps, Nelson Carter, Audabun Hill, and from Philadelphia - Donald Brown, Howard Rhone, Charlie Hendricks, Ron Lewis and K. Babb.

The following are Members of the Founding Organizations who served on the "Convention Committee" - Nelson Carter, Phoenix Society of Hartford, Interim Nation Treasurer; David Floyd, Vulcan Society, New York, Interim National Co-Chairman; John B. Stewart, Phoenix Society, Hartford, Interim National Chairman; Donald Brown, Valients of Philadelphia, Interim National Secretary and Howard Rhone, Valients of Philadelphia, Interim National Corresponding Secretary. David Floyd also served as the Registration Chairman of the Convention.



In the taped interview in Dave's dining room overlooking the grandeur of Central Park we reminisce about the early days of the Association and swapped a few anecdotes about how it was in the beginning. We couldn't help but chuckle over an incident during the Registration of Delegates. David was the Registration Chairman of the Convention and the Chicago Chapter of the IAFF had sent three Delegates - two Blacks and one White and one check to cover the three. Dave, in his typical wisdom, said "Not a problem" - he registered the two Brothers, Wimbush and Outerbridge and gave the non-Brother a third of Union Registered Check and suggested he take in the sights of Hartford. Of course, he was welcome to attend the public portions of the Convention.

The First Convention of the newly formed Association was convened in Hartford, Connecticut because the facilities of the Hartford Insurance Group were offered to John Stewart

who was serving as the Interim National Chairman.

At that point the Organization was without funds and the offer was gratefully accepted. John, who was always in his Organization, the Phoenix Society, and the Black Community of Hartford, eventually became Chief of the Hartford Fire Department.



Chief John Stewart, Hartford

The First Convention accomplished all of its goals, the Constitution and By-laws that were developed at that time and still 90% intact today. The Six Regions were roughly drawn almost arbitrarily using a telephone book map. At the time, it was impossible to estimate how many Black Firefighters there were or where they were located. The concept included at Regional Director for each of the Six Regions with Regional Boards.

One outstanding advantage of the Convention was that the members involved represented organizations which were at least 10 years; therefore, there was a deep pool of knowledge of how Fire Service Organizations worked. By the time of the convention much of the outline of the constitution and by-laws were in place. Making a decision on the name of the organization to be caused some amount of discussion - should the word Black be included. Would including the word Black indicate we were a radical organization - the term "Black Power" was popular at this time.

The Convention Brothers concluded, - Yes, we will indicate by our name that we are an Association of Black Professional Firefighters.

The dues structure also prompted much discussion. The larger organizations wanted dues to be as little as possible as they could foresee paying a disproportionate share of dues to the National body.

Another point of discussion was the voting structure. An attempt was made to give some parity of the smaller organizations to the larger organizations. It was realized that in some cities there may be only three Blacks in the Fire Department.

The compromise was to give five (5) votes for the first twenty (20) members, then one (1) vote for each 20 members thereafter (IABPFF Dues Paying Members) - therefore an organization with only three (3) members had five (5) full votes. If no organization was available to individuals they could join the IABPFF as individual members and have one (1) full vote as an individual. It was felt that smaller organizations would not become affiliated with the association because they would not have much or very little representation.

The discussion moved on to how Dave became the First President of the IABPFF. A meeting was called in Dave Jackson's (The President of the Vulcan Society) room and the question was asked - who is going to run for president? It was suggested Dave run because he will be president of the Vulcan Society - 500 members - the largest organization in the IABPFF, and Shelly Harris from Newark ran against him. After the election Dave suggested we can't have all of the Executive Board from the North East Region - Robert Paul was from Gary, Indiana, midway of the country as Vice President. Dave felt that having the Vice President from Indiana well eliminated some traveling and also saved money.

Dave thought the Treasurer should be close to the President in travel time and Charlie Hendricks volunteered to run. The Recording Secretary, Bill Brogden was from Philadelphia and the Recording Secretary from Columbus, Ohio. At the first press conference the reporter asked if this was an East Coast Organization and Dave was able to demonstrate the Officers represented various selections of the country.



Northeast Region



Southeast Region



North Central Region



South Central Region



Northwest Region



Southwest Region

The Convention also attracted TV coverage and the interviewer used two microphones, Dave Jackson held one and the interviewer another. When we watched the televised interview that evening, Dave Jackson's answers were dubbed to respond to questions that were different from the original interview.

Some very important lessons were learned in dealing with the press and meetings with organizations - especially the Union - i.e., decide who is going to do the talking, who is to do the listening and never go to a meeting alone, and most important, - critique the meeting immediately after it is over. Also, never talk in the bathroom and look out for the guy in the stall.

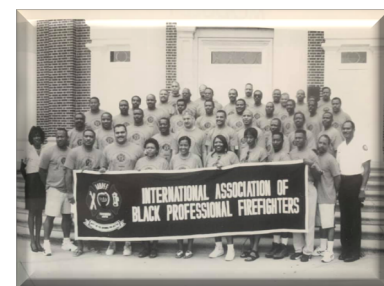
In discussing the early goals in forming the IABPFF, the four original objectives were still in place but the most effort was directed to increasing the number of minorities in the most effort was directed to increasing the number of

minorities in Fire Departments nationwide. Second, the strong push for upward mobility. If we could get our Members into the upper ranks of the Fire Department across the country we could affect policy decisions, and third - was to reach out to our communities.

In the early years as President, Dave's personal objective was to keep the Organization moving in one direction together. He felt that if he had taken a radical stand "The Hate Whitey" posture, no one would show up at the next meeting. He had to balance the position of working within the framework of the IAFF to appear to appease the Union and keep them off our back. It was important to emphasize we were not a Union. Dave remembers the St. Louis Chapter as being against any relations with the IAFF.

Shortly after the Convention of 1970, the Union (IAFF) received a Grant to recruit minorities into the Fire Department. Dave had great doubts of the Union's sincerity.

An article in the Wall Street Journal announced the \$450,000 Grant from the Labor Department. This precluded the IABPFF from requesting grant funding for recruiting for minorities.



As a countermeasure, Dave wrote a Grant Proposal to the John Hay Whitney Foundation to monitor the IAFF effort to recruit minorities. This was prior to the Second Convention in 1972. The John Hay Whitney Foundation dispensed the funding in "dribs and drabs" i.e. requests had to be made for travel expenses to each meeting. The Foundation would authorize funding to fly to the City to be monitored.



By taking the bus, Dave had travel expenses for himself, a member of the IABPFF and a Vulcan Member in keeping with the principal - “Never Go To A Meeting Alone.”

After a few cities were monitored it was very evident to the Whitney Foundation that the Union was not using the Labor Department Grant to recruit minorities and Dave was able to supply enough evidence for the Foundation to produce the report. To compile the evidence the IABPFF had secured a copy of the Union’s Grant which stated specifically how funds were to be expended - i.e. rentals, travel, etc. Dave’s investigations showed conclusively funds were not being expended appropriately.

Howard McClennon, President of the IAFF, a Firefighter from the Boston Fire Department was very upset with Dave’s finding but there had been a sort of mutual respect generated over the years that kept the avenues of communications open.

One of the areas they had agreed upon was that the Local Chapters of the Union were autonomous as were the Local Chapters of the IABPFF

autonomous and that the National bodies did not have full influence over the Local Chapters.

The discussion turned to how the Convention sites were selected and Dave recalled he looked at St. Louis and the Chapter were having serious problems with the IAFF so the decision was to hold the IABPFF Convention in St. Louis to show National support for our Chapter and our Brothers under siege.

St. Louis had filed a lawsuit against discrimination in the Fire Department, this was certainly, if not the first, one of the first such

actions in the country. On his return to the New York City Departments hiring practices even though Robert O. Lowery was the much respected Fire Commissioner and a Past President of the Vulcan Society.



Commissioner Robert O Lowery

Augustus Beekman, another Vulcan, was the Chief in Charge of the Community Relations Bureau and the highest ranking Black Officer. Among the Delegates and the Second Convention were fifty (50) members representing the Vulcan Society along with Delegates from Los Angeles and San Diego.

The IABPFF was truly off and running.

When it came time to make the decision on the location of the Third Biennial Convention, Dave considered the West Coast but had serious doubts as to whether the Organization was strong enough to

pull members clear across the continent. In 1973 Dave and some members of the Executive Board made a site selection trip to Augusta and checked on the newly opened Hyatt Regency Hotel, a truly beautiful property.

The Hyatt required the Association put down a \$2,000 deposit. The IABPFF Treasury was in no financial position to comply and the Atlanta Chapter did not have that kind of funding. However, Dave had established a policy when we stayed at a hotel, Holiday Inn, etc., and our obligations were met he asked the Banquet Manager to send us a letter to confirm the facts and they replied. This provided the IABPFF with a sizable portfolio of complementary letters from many hotels.

After reviewing the portfolio the Hotel rescinded its request for a deposit. In order to sell Atlanta to the Presidents of the Organization as the next Convention site, Dave invited them to come to Atlanta for a meeting of Presidents. This was the beginning of the Executive Council concept and was added to the Constitution. The Convention was the first where wives and families attended along with members.

At this point the Convention Rotation System was not in effect and cities and Organizations would compete against each other for the privilege of hosting the Convention. That was a plus, but the downside was the politics involved in the decisions. It came down to - I will vote for your city if you vote for my candidate. This was detrimental to the process in the selection of the best leadership of the Organization.

The normal rotation of Conventions was finally put in place and the next scheduled Convention was in San Diego, California.



This was the beginning of the Memorial Service processional and the use of Uniforms. The Memorial Ceremony was held at the Firemen's Monument. The San Diego Chapter of the IAFF was involved in a labor dispute with the City of San Diego. The Union had secured a list of all of the Organizations who were scheduled to have a Convention in the City the following year. The IABPFF was targeted and pressured not to hold the Convention in San Diego. An emergency Board Meeting was held.

The IABPFF was receiving threatening letters along with a photograph of a lynching from an old magazine.



Dave received word that if we moved the Convention to Los Angeles, the expenses of the Convention would be covered - there was nothing in writing - just a phone call. Dave called a meeting of the Executive Board to explain the situation. Some felt the site should be changed. Dave objected to the change because he felt the Organization would be weakened. He also felt it would be a disappointing blow to the Brothers of San Diego. The Executive Board voted not to change the site, but some of the Members expressed a concern about safety and bringing their families.

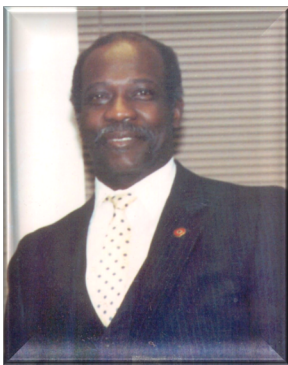
On September 28, 1976, just a few days before the opening of the Convention in San Diego, Dave went to a clothing store in Brooklyn. He was waiting for a bus when two white men bumped him and one threw lye in his face. There was no attempt to rob him. He ran in a close-by Body and Fender Shop and threw water on his face. He identified himself as a Fire Lieutenant and that the police be called who transported him to the hospital. When he reported the incident to the Executive Board, the question of police protection arose.

On his return to New York, Dave applied for a gun permit but didn't take it any further.

He admits he was pretty paranoid for a few weeks following the incident. He experienced some facial blistering but his eyes escaped damage.

The Convention of 1978 was held in Washington, DC which was the headquarters of the IAFF. They participated and put on a workshop. The concept was to make the Union aware the IABPFF was continuing to function and was expanding.

In 1980 Detroit hosted the 10th year Convention. It was always a strong organization but up to that point did not participate fully in the Conventions. The question is as always, can we help the Organization by going to their city and has the organization helped the IABPFF? Dave had made it a policy that when the Organization joined the IABPFF he would send a letter to the Officials of the City, would ask for names and Dignitaries, Mayor, Commissioners, President of the City Council, Fire Chief, etc., to explain who we are and the objectives of the Organization. When the Chattanooga, Tennessee Chapter joined the IABPFF letters were sent to the Dignitaries following the established policy.

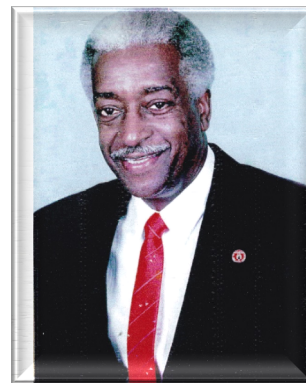


IABPFF First President Dave Floyd

When the next Executive Council was held in New York City - Chattanooga Fire Department supplied the President of the Organization a car and funds to travel to New York to participate in the Council Meeting.

In a copy of the IAFF Union Publication a photograph was published of the Joint Council of National Fire Service Organizations which came together for lobbying purposes in Washington, DC at the IAFF Headquarters. Dave noticed there was no Black representation on the Council. The question was how could the Organizations discuss the minority problems without minority representation. After a letter was forwarded to the Joint Council an invitation was extended to the IABPFF to join with all expenses paid.

The IABPFF was then included on the Letterhead with the other Member Groups. The Chairmanship was rotated and Dave became Chairman during the Carter Administration. The Council was disbanded because of internal frictions especially over the question of the site for the National Fire Academy. After the Detroit Convention and 10 years as President, Dave felt that his continuation in the position was blocking other members who had the talent and the qualification to lead the IABPFF.



IABPFF 2nd President Charles Hendricks

Charlie Hendricks of Philadelphia who had served as IABPFF Treasurer in Dave's Administration ran for President. The ultimate sign of the good leader is one who works hard to prepare someone to fill his shoes - successfully.

*Article written by Bro. John Ruffins
Submitted by Bro. George Collins, IABPFF Historian
"Keep the fires burning for justice"*

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Elbert Washington was a Two Term Past President of the Vulcan Society Inc. FDNY. Elbert retired due to Line of Duty Injuries on May 1, 1999, his last assignment was as a Duty Public Information Officer, in the Press Office. Elbert was elected as the IAFF Union Delegate in Two Fire Companies, Squad Company One, and Rescue Company where He was the only Black Firefighter in the Company.

Elbert transferred to Rescue Two in June of 1981, while there He was Awarded a Medal for the Rescue of a off duty Police Officer in 1983. Rescue Two is where founding IABPFF President David James Floyd became the first Black Rescue Firefighter in FDNY History, through the efforts of the Vulcan Society. Elbert became the third to serve in the Busiest Rescue Company in the FDNY for Eleven Years. At the time of his retirement on May 1, 1999, He received a Proclamation from the First Black Councilwoman elected to the NYC Council, Councilwoman Mary Pinkett, where He was Honored as the Most Decorated Black Firefighter in FDNY History at the time of my Retirement.

Mr. Washington served as the Northeast Region's Election Chair for several years, based on his experience of having worked on a variety of elections, while employed as an Administrator with the American Arbitration Association since 1969. Elbert was recruited by the Vulcan Society in 1971, when He was handed a flyer at a Subway Station that said,

"Can You Fill These Boots" ? Free Firefighter Classes are being offered at Vulcan Hall, the name on the Boot was D. Floyd. Elbert joined the classes, and it changed the direction of his life.



Chapter Spotlight

Philadelphia Club Valiants



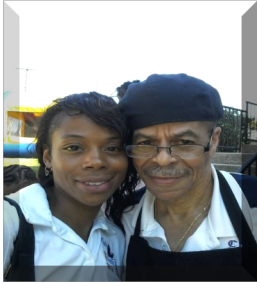
The Philadelphia Fire Department was not desegregated until 1952. Prior to then, African American candidates for the Philadelphia Fire would only be hired if there were vacancies at one of two all Black Fire stations Engine 11 and/or Fire Boat 1. In April of 2005 Engine 11 was designated a historical land mark as the firefighters assigned there distinguished themselves professionally. The members seated on the front row from left to right: Hoseman Lloyd Alma, Battalion Chief Walt Lindsey, Captain Clarence Brogden, Waldo Gentry, Alfred Ward and Hoseman James Baker all now deceased were part of that foundation of Black Firefighters who endured racism and indignities so doors of opportunities remained open for those who would follow. Others like Firefighter Joseph Sawyer, gray suit 2nd row left and Captain Eugene Turnipseed, (back row on right no hat) followed and took up the torch which lead to the incorporation of Club Valiants in 1962 and the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters.



Captain Eugene Turnipseed (Retired) joined the Philadelphia in 1959 and is a founding member of Club Valiants Inc.



VALIANT MAN: Retired Lt. Claude Smith, who dedicated 37 years to the PFD. He started at Engine 2 in 1977 and later became one of the Department's first fire paramedics. After returning to firefighting, he rose to the rank of lieutenant in 1989 and served in multiple engine and ladder companies. Lt. Smith was an active member of Club Valiants before becoming its president. He retired from the PFD in 2014, and passed away December 30, 2017. In all, he worked 41 years for the City of Philadelphia - and we are grateful for his service.



Battalion Chief Lisa Forrest and Deputy Chief Willie Williams (Retired)



Willie Williams, a fire captain at the time and member of Club Valiants, a chapter of the IABPFF knocked on my door. It's unclear to me why the department hadn't been able to reach me because I lived in the same house my entire life. However, I later found out that Club Valiants had requested and received permission from the city to knock on the door of every Black recruit who had not responded to notifications to appear from the department. "I'm so glad they knocked on my door, and that's why I'm so involved in the organization right now," said Forrest, who's the first woman to be president of the organization in its 58-year history and the first African American Female Fire Battalion Chief in the Philadelphia Fire Department's 149 year history. "If there was no Club Valiants, there would be no Lisa Forrest in the fire department." Willie Williams, a retired Deputy Chief and current Board of Directors Chairman of Club Valiants was also recruited by a Club Valiants member, IABPFF Past President Charles Hendricks.



Assistant Deputy Commissioner Crystal Yates and Firefighter Edward Rockemore (Retired). The first-ever African-American father and daughter to serve the Philadelphia Fire Department at the same time. They donated personal plaques to the museum.



Firefighter Daynese Stowe and Firefighter Jeffery Stowe The pair are the first African-American father and daughter to serve together at the rank of firefighter in the history of the department.



L-R Fire Service Paramedic Lisa Hatcher (Her father Firefighter Marcellus Hatcher now deceased was one of the first firefighters in the to pass from Hepatitis C in the Philadelphia Fire Department), Firefighter Daynese Stowe and Firefighter Jeffery Stowe, Firefighter Unique Lawrence and Firefighter and Paramedic Richard Lawrence (Retired), Firefighter Michelle Towns and Deputy Chief Willie Williams (Retired).



ALL THAT I AM...I OWE!

The IABPFF would like to pay tribute to the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia's first African American Fire Fighters hired on July 1, 1950. They were all assigned to Engine Co. #9, Lt. Charles L. Belle, William E. Brown, Douglas P. Evans, Captain Harvey S. Hicks II, Warren W. Kersey, Bernard C. Lewis, Farrar Lucas, Deputy Battalion Chief Arthur L. Page, Arthur C. St. John, and Lt. Linwood M. Wooldridge. Arthur C. St. John was called to return to the military in 1950 and Frederick J. Robinson was hired. When Farrar Lucas resigned in 1951, Lt. Oscar L. Blake was hired. Bernard C. Lewis Sr, the last surviving member of the first African American Firefighters, departed this life on Wednesday, August 26, 2020. Engine Company #9 and Associates, Inc. was founded in September of 1992 by these trendsetters, as an organization of pioneers, former and retired professional Fire Fighters, Law Enforcement Officers and Associates of the City. "I was fortunate enough to have been able to work with Lt. Charles L. Belle, Deputy Battalion



The IABPFF would like to also pay tribute to Retired Lt. James "Duke" Stewart. Duke has been the driving force for minorities being hired, promoted and for ALL firefighters to be treated fairly. As one of the founders and later becoming President of Black Brothers Combined, Inc. (BBC) and now Brothers and Sisters Combined Professional Fire Fighters, Inc. (BSCPFF, Inc.) Duke has led the campaign to bring Richmond Fire Department its first African American Chief of Fire, Chief Ronald C. Lewis from Philadelphia PA. Chief Ronald C. Lewis was also a member and one of the co-founders of the IABPFF. Duke campaigned for Barbara Spring-Hicks, our first female and African American female firefighter. He campaigned for Chief Tina Watkins our second female, the first female officer and first African American officer. Duke fought tooth and nail for Deputy Battalion Chief Arthur L. Page to be promoted, making him the first African American firefighter to rise through the ranks. Duke has been the heart and soul of BBC/BSCPFF, where minorities and females have been hired and promoted because of his drive. He served as the Richmond Fire's EEOC officer before retiring. He has sacrificed his career so that others could and would be promoted and would do it again with no questions asked. "It has been an honor to have served as his Vice-President and to have had him as my supervisor. Most importantly a true friend."

Submitted by Bro. Thomas L. Williams



DEPUTY CHIEF/ HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL COACH TROY K. GORE



The IABPFF “GOLD STAR” Award goes to Deputy Chief, Coach Troy K. Gore. Coach Gore has developed a strong discipline criteria to maintain a positive school image and fun atmosphere for all student-athletes and expected excellence for all staff and players. Coach Gore has also developed a transparent relationship with each parent to encourage their full participation into the overall operation of the high school football program. His significant network and communicative relationship with Division 1, 2 and 3 college coaches throughout the nation and promoted high school student athletes via film, transcripts and SAT/ACT scores in an effort to obtain scholarship, acceptance and walk-on opportunities to their academic institutions. Coach Gore is constantly achieving his goal of developing, inspiring and mentoring student-athletes to be productive, recruitable, disciplined student-athletes and competitive players through the discipline and sport of high school football. Deputy Chief Gore, Well Done!

IABPFF NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES

CHIEF ROBERT PEARSON, RETIRE LT. GARY WIGGINS AND NEIGHBOR TORY SMITH



On the evening of November 11, 2020 three neighbors of the Woodridge Area of Washington, D.C. worked together to rescue an elderly man from his burning home. Two of the rescuers are Progressive Firefighters Association members in Washington DC, a local chapter of the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters (IABPFF). Off duty brother Chief Robert Pearson, retired member Lieutenant Gary Wiggins (Chapter President), and Tory Smith, the third neighbor sprang into action to save an 83 year old man from his burning house. At about 6 pm a fire erupted from the rear of a house in the middle of the block.

Neighbors on the block reacted with concern and helplessness as the fire began to consume the home. Fearing the worse for the neighbor that was uncounted for and knowing that time was of the essence, Bobby, Garry and Tory began forced entry into the home. The front door had obstructions behind it which made gaining entry a challenge. The door could only be forced partially open about 12 inches by Bobby and Garry. Fortunately, that was enough room for Tory (the smallest of the trio) to squeeze through. The victim had somehow made his way to the front entry where he laid. With the smoke billowing down, Tory was able to wedge himself in the narrow opening to begin pulling the lifeless body out. Once he was at the entry threshold, all three were able to pull him the victim out of the house. Garry began the initial vital signs assessment, Bobby checked for area safety and shortly after that the first arriving units were on the scene. The victim was unconscious and suffered severe burns but had a steady pulse and breathing. The swift actions of Bobby, Garry, and Tory ultimately saved their neighbor. The IABPFF recognize your act of heroism and honors you with a “Gold Star!”



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
BLACK PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS



COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS

Chief Joseph L. Jones Scholarship 2021



The International Association of Black Professional Firefighters (IABPFF) is proud to partner with Columbia Southern Education Group (CSEG) to present the Chief Joseph L. Jones Scholarship Award to a deserving member of the IABPFF.

The scholarship will cover up to \$25,200 for one online degree program. The scholarship will be applied directly to the recipient's tuition for up to 60 semester hours or 36 consecutive months in the selected online degree program, whichever comes first. This scholarship covers tuition. The Joseph L. Jones Scholarship will be awarded yearly.

Eligibility:

- Applicants must be a current member of the IABPFF and hold a minimum of three consecutive years as a member in good standing
- Applicant must be active in their community and local IABPFF chapter
- Have a high school transcript or equivalent (GED)
- Be available to begin coursework within 90 days of the date of the award
- Capable of maintaining a 2.5 undergraduate GPA or 3.0 graduate GPA
- Able to maintain continuous enrollment in his or her degree program
- Current CSU students must meet all these requirements to be considered
- Scholarship Recipient will be determined by IABPFF Awards Committee

**For more information, log on to www.iabpf.org
DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION SUBMISSION IS MARCH 27, 2021**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 1, 2021



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS POSITION STATEMENT ON COVID-19 VACCINES

Cleveland, Ohio January 1, 2021 – The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters (IABPFF) support all efforts to ensure the health and wellness of our first responders and the communities we serve.

As First Responders, we are on the frontlines of the Covid-19 pandemic response. We continue to access, assist, treat and transport patients with or without a positive diagnosis. Our members care deeply about what we do and what we do is provide emergency medical services that are responsive to the needs of our communities.

The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters support and encourage our members and communities across the country to do the research and make an informed decision regarding COVID-19 vaccine inoculations. COVID-19 vaccines are one of many important tools to help us stop this pandemic. It is important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help put an end to the devastation caused by this pandemic.

"As we move forward, we must work together to get through this pandemic. It has no respect of person, race, gender or creed. We must all be diligent in our fight to eradicate this global issue."

Carrie Edwards-Clemons, President

For more information about the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters, please visit iabpf.org.



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS

January 21, 2021

CONGRATULATIONS President Biden & Vice-President Harris



"We lift our gazes not to what stands between us but what stands before us."

Amanda Gorman



Celebrating Heart Health Month

Heart disease is still the number one killer for all Americans, and stroke is also the leading cause of death. As frightening as those statistics are, the risks of getting those diseases are even higher for African Americans. Having high blood pressure is a risk for heart disease, and African Americans suffer from hypertension or high blood pressure at alarming rates. When we add this to the disproportionately high rate of diabetes, it is a dangerous and deadly combination.

We have become education on the important steps to remain safe in the midst of a global pandemic and we must become educated and condition ourselves to take steps to protect ourselves from heart disease and stroke. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) having underlying medical conditions such as heart disease puts you at an increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19.

The good news is that African-Americans can improve their odds of preventing and beating these diseases by understanding the risks and taking simple steps to address them.

“Get checked, and then work with your medical professional on your specific risk factors and the things that you need to do to take care of your personal health,” said Winston Gandy, M.D., a cardiologist and chief medical marketing officer with the Piedmont Heart Institute in Atlanta and a volunteer with the American Heart Association.

This month as we celebrate Heart Health Month, we ask each of you to choose yourself and make self-care a priority.

Terri Reid, Health & Safety Chair.

2020-2022 COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS



Bro. Johnny Brewington
IBF Foundation
Bro. Dave Harris
Black Chief Officers
Committee
Bro. Darren Hyson,
Information Technology
Bro. Freddie Brooks,
Community Outreach



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Communications
Sis. Sabrina Potter
CC-Retirees



Sis. Felicia Wanzo
Black Women in the
Fire Service
Bro. Brian Arnold
Office Admin.
Deyhana Thompson
President Admin.
Assistant



Thank you for being a part of the team. You add value to the organization and I appreciate all that you do!

Carrie Edwards-Clemons, President



*The International Association of Black
Professional Firefighters*

Golden Anniversary Convention



July 24-29, 2022

Hartford Hilton

**John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a
man lay down his life for his friends."**

Every fire is a chance for a firefighter to lose their life and they lay down their life for the community that they serve. Is there any greater love than someone who willingly lays down their life for their friends like Jesus did? Next to that great love is the firefighter's willingness to risk his or her life to save others.

"ALL THAT I AM...I OWE"



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