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Dear Supporter,

23 Jan.2021

Please allow me to introduce you to ***The African American Fire Fighters Historical Society (AAFFHS)***. The African American Fire Fighters Historical Society’s mission is to collect, preserve and disseminate historical data, and information relating to the contributions made by fire fighters of color, and others who have made a contribution to such history; to be used for the purpose of education, fire prevention and mentoring. AAFFHS is a 501C (3) Charitable Organization, whose Annual Salute Dinner is the only event in the world, that regularly honors African American’s contributions to fire service history. All honorees over the last 12 years were very deserving of their recognition and most have never had their contributions acknowledge. These individuals are humble men and women, who just were doing what needed to be done. With your interest in our organization I would like to share with you a few of our honorees which shows how your contribution would help continue our mission.

We have been able to reveal the stories of people like Edward Collic, Baltimore City Fire Department’s First African American Lieutenant Pilot (driver of the fireboat). After having the Coast Guard examiner turn an average 3-hour test into an 8-hour test for Mr. Collic. He was given 10 extra navigation questions before he was reluctantly given his 100 Ton Masters Licenses. For 13 years he worked as Acting Lt. always placing 1st or 2nd on the promotional exam, dealing with either one or no promotions depending on his placement on the list. More than once he was removed from 1st and had other persons promoted over him. After a time, someone didn’t get the memo that he was Black and he was finally promoted to possibly be the 1st African American Fireboat Lieutenant Pilot in Maryland. As Lt. Pilot he was sought out one night by his Battalion Chief to take his fireboat on longest run in BCFD history up the Susquehanna River to Port Deposit, Maryland. for a train derailment of hazardous material.

Also at this event we have had the opportunity to honor people like Mrs. Carrye Brown, when recognizing the 20th Anniversary of her appointment to the highest fire service position in the country. In January 1995 Carrye E. Brown was nominated by President William Clinton, as Our Nation’s 1st Woman and 1st African American to head up the U.S. Fire Administration. Her responsibility was for legislation, regulations and standards for all fire departments in the country. Mrs. Brown to this day still holds the record for the longest serving person in that position.

I believe the most touching of all we have been blessed to honor, was The Gorham Family. Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Company in Prince George’s County, MD was established after a tragic fire August 1946 in the home of Leroy and Lillian Gorham. The death of 5 year 7-day old Jean, 2 year 2 month 10-day old Ruth and their 11 month 5-day old little brother Leroy Jr.; in this fatal fire was the inspiration for a Community to do for self. Without any knowledge or experience men from all over the area started Maryland’s only all African American Volunteer Fire Department. By the end of that year they were providing fire protection for the Deanwood Park and Chapel Oaks Community.

50 years since his appointment as Fire Commissioner, September 2018 final legislation was signed naming a fire station for The Late Konstantine Prevas. Mr. Konstantine Prevas Esquire. Being sworn-in on January 23, 1968, by Mayor Thomas D’Alesandro III. Commissioner Prevas, was the deciding vote on a three vote panel to remove Jim Crow and discriminatory practices, along with unfairness in the area of discipline and promotions from Baltimore’s fire department. Part of the Dynamic Duo, his working with Reverend Marion C. Bascom Sr. Baltimore’s First African American Fire Board member. Created a more equitable fire department.

The establishment of The International Black Fire Fighters Museum & Safety Education Center is the next undertaking to achieve at this time.

***George Collins, President & Founder African American Fire Fighters Historical Society***