past president’s newsletter

Wishing you every happiness this holiday season and throughout the New Year

Past Presidents of the Maryland State Firemen’s Association

2020 New Year Resolutions for all Past Presidents:

- Contribute news, events, pictures, or stories to the PP Newsletter
- Share what you are doing with the PP Newsletter
- Keep in touch with the PP Newsletter

Inside this issue:

- Page 2 passing of PP Robison
- Page 3 PP visit Flintstone, PP Faust receives his PP ring, and Knippenburg family receive memorial flag
- January Birthdays and Anniversaries

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OBITUARY: JOSEPH R. ROBINSON

On Tuesday, November 10, 2020, Joseph (Joe) R. Robison, beloved husband of Joan (Donovan); loving father of Bette Anne (the late Steve) Sanders, and Mitzi (Danny) Betman, passed away at his home with his wife and daughters by his side. Joe was born in his parent’s home at 222 9th Street, to the late Walter and Mildred Robison, and lived his entire life in the City of Laurel, something he was always proud to tell others. Joe was the youngest of five children (all deceased - Leo, Bud, Kitty, and Sonny).

Joe had an unselfish and loyal devotion to God, Family, City, County, State, Nation, and the Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services. He was a member of St. Mary of the Mills Roman Catholic Church. Of Joe’s many accomplishments, he considered his family his proudest. In addition to his wife and daughters, he is survived by six grandchildren, Christina (William) McKenney, Samantha (Nick) Johnson, Matthew Sanders, Rebecca (David) Gavin, Sarah (Edwin) Betman, and Ruth (David) Bryant; and eight great-grandchildren, Monica, Jackson, Molly, Camden, Levi, Sanders, Mia and Emma. Joe loved to travel with the ENTIRE family. Cruising together was one of his favorite things to do.

Joe graduated from the Laurel High School on Montgomery Street in 1952, where he was the Senior Class President. Joe was very involved in athletics in high school. When he was 16 years old, he asked another Laurel High athlete on a date, and that was the beginning of a 71 year love story!

Joe entered the United States Army after High School and served at Fort Knox during the Korean War. He was a member of both the American Legion and the Korean War Veterans. When he returned from service, he married Joan on Friday, May 13, 1955. Joe worked at the United States Postal Service for over 36 years, beginning as a clerk at the Laurel Post Office, and retired from Postal Headquarters in 1988 as a Quality Control Specialist.

Firefighting had been in Joe’s blood since he was a little boy. He had over 70 years of continuous and faithful service except for his two years in the Army. Even then he could be found at the fire department or rescue squad during his leave. He began his firefighting with the Maryland State Forestry Department at the age of 14. His application for membership in the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department (LVFD) was accepted in September 1951. He served in all operational offices of the LVFD and for 30 years served on its Board of Trustees. In 1999, Engine 103 was dedicated to him and another member, Louis Luber. He was a charter member (1952) and life member of the Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad (LVRS). As Chairman of the Board of Directors, he was instrumental in obtaining the land and coordinating the construction of their first station which they still occupy. He also served as Treasurer of the Building Committee.

He had over 50 years of active involvement in the Maryland Fire Chief’s Association (MFCA) and the Prince George’s County Volunteer Fire & Rescue Association (PGCVF&RA). In 1961, Joe became involved with the Maryland State Firemen’s Association (MSFA), and remained active until his death. He has served as President of all three of these Associations. Joe is a member of the Hall of Fame in both the MSFA and the PGCVF&RA and is an Honorary and Life Member of the MFCA. He also received Honorary Membership into the English Council Junior Fire Department for the establishment of a statewide committee to
promote Junior Fire-fighters when he was President of the MFSA and for his continued support. He is an honorary Member of the Berwyn Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad and the Greenbelt Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad – companies he served for 33 years as their Fire Commissioner.

Joe was very active in his community having served as Councilman and Mayor. During his term as Mayor, recycling was begun, a sports park was established, a new community center was designed and built, the first new building for the City of Laurel in over 100 years, and the purchase and renovation of the present City Hall was completed. He chaired the City’s yearlong 125th Anniversary Committee. He served as the Director of the City’s Emergency Services Commission.

In 1993, he was honored by the Rotary Club with their Four Star Award.

Joe’s commitment to the Laurel Historical Society (LHS) was long and extensive. He was instrumental in securing and supporting the renovation of the Laurel Museum. As Mayor he also helped in the effort to obtain funding for the building’s restoration. He later served many years as Chairman of the LHS Board. He was given the honor of Director Emeritus. Joe was known as Laurel’s unofficial historian and conducted tours of Historic Main Street and the Patuxent River, as well as his “history lessons” at the Mayor’s annual open house.

Joe was a man of integrity, action, and commitment. He took civic responsibility and community service seriously and lived these qualities. He served quietly and with a desire to succeed in whatever duties he assumed. He was a man of purpose with an extraordinary vision who worked to make a difference in the fire service, his community, and those he served alongside. He will be missed by all who knew him.

**Happy and safe holiday to all Past President’s and their families. Looking forward to a better and safer 2021 for all.***
From home to home and heart to heart, from one place to another. The warmth and joy of Christmas brings us closer to each other.

~Emily Matthews

Birthdays
Ron Grabenstein     January 1
Bob Cumberland      January 7
Gloria Lewis        January 9
Danny Davis         January 15

Anniversaries
Betty and Ron Grabenstein
January 7

Mark A. Bilger
800 Wembley Drive
Unit 1D
Hampstead, MD 21074

Cell: 443-791-4807
fmbliger@yahoo.com

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