

National Fire Heritage Center Newsletter

National Capitol Region Chapter of NFSA to Retrofit NFHC HQ

The National Capitol Region Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA) will retrofit the building shared by NFHC and the Frederick County (Maryland) Fire Museum with fire sprinklers. The generous commitment by the NFSA Capitol Region Chapter came about after the Chapter held its regular monthly meeting at the National Fire Heritage Center in April.

Chapter members noted that the building housing all of the historical documents did not have fire sprinklers, and action was taken to remedy this fact at the meeting. With a unanimous vote, Chapter members voted to provide a complete wet pipe sprinkler system to protect the existing building that houses the Frederick County Fire Museum and the National Fire Heritage Center at no cost to either organization. The design, materials, and installation will be provided by the Capitol Region Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association.

Liam Knott will serve as NFSA Project

Chairperson of the National Fire Heritage Center Sprinkler Project.

“This is an exciting project for us,” explains **Terry Victor**, Capitol Region Chairperson. “We believe that it’s not preserved until it’s protected and this project gives us the chance to make that happen for a very worthy organization. Preserving our nation’s fire service history is important to us as we recognize them as a key stakeholder and ally in our mission to make things safer for all Americans.”

“We are thrilled by this generous gift from the NFSA Capitol Region Chapter,” says NFHC President **Ronny J. Coleman**. “Protecting the building that houses the NFHC and Frederick County Fire Museum collections shows the world that the NFSA and NFHC really practice what they preach.”

For more information about the National Fire Sprinkler Association, visit www.nfsa.org and select the National Capitol Region Chapter.



Message from the President

Time capsule or technology?

On July 4, 1976, I contributed to a "time capsule" that was installed at Bicentennial Park in San Clemente, California. (See related article on p. 9.) My contribution to the time capsule was relatively simple. It consisted of a badge and a letter in an envelope to be read to whomever is in charge of fire protection in the year 2076. That is probably at least four generations of firefighters away from today.

A lot of things have changed since 1976. The world of information exploded. It is likely that the time capsule could've contained videotape, a CD/DVD, or some form of electronic filing system like a flash drive. It is also equally possible that whoever opens the time capsule would never be able to open the technology I used. The reason for that is fairly simple. Technology is undergoing constant change -- the means of storage and retrieval of information are becoming more and more complex.

What does this have to do with the National Fire Heritage Center? We are attempting to collect the originals of the hard work of each generation in a format that does not require complex translation. I know that whoever opens the time capsule in San Clemente will be able to hold the badge and to read the simple letter without fear of having to translate it.

Our NFHC motto is "Preservation of the perishable." That includes -- but is not limited to -- the idea that we also have to keep track of the medium that contains that perishable information. For that reason, we have been attempting to collect our technology that will let us go backwards in time. Let me give you a real world example. Have you ever used a filmstrip? I have several in my collection that date all the way back to the 1940s, including civil defense materials. I have boxes of 35 mm slides that had been rendered somewhat useless unless I can get them scanned into digital files. **Frank Schmersal**, our resident archivist, has been looking for some of these forms of technology to preserve them also. You might have an old reel-to-reel tape recorder out there in the garage that still works. We could sure use it. How about a 35 mm slide projector? Any old video playback units out there wasting away?

In summary, if time stands still for no man, then technology waits on no one either. Our history in many cases is placed in a context of a technology that might disappear someday. We should plan for what is commonly called technology transfer. We should have an inventory of the aging and obsolete technology in the context of a library that has modern technology.

So, if you're foraging around in the garage or storage shed and run into an obsolete delivery system, please give us a call before it takes a trip to the dump. It may not make a bit of difference to you today, but some firefighter 50 years from today may benefit from your contribution.

Ronny J. Coleman

The *National Fire Heritage Center Newsletter* is published four times yearly by the National Fire Heritage Center.

Volunteer newsletter staff include:

Editor: Ronny J. Coleman

ron@fireforceone.com

Associate Editor: Pam Powell

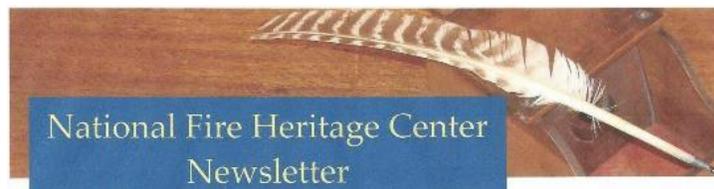
PamelaAPowell@msn.com

Contributors: R. Wayne Powell

waynepowellnfhc@gmail.com,

Frank Schmersal accobonack@aol.com, Rodney

Slaughter RSlaughter@thenfhc.org



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PO Drawer 76 Emmitsburg, MD 21727

888-819-4798

www.thenfhc.org

Notes from the NFHC Archives

We missed the deadline for the last issue of the newsletter, for which we apologize to our loyal readers. (Sorry!)

Recent Acquisitions

Since our last column, the NFHC has acquired 13 cartons of training materials from the Old Dominion Historical Fire Society, a/k/a the Virginia chapter of SPAAMFAA. We have acquired 19 cartons of books from the library of the late **Dr. John L. Bryan** of the University of Maryland, and 65 cartons of materials from one of our founding members, **Dr. Harry E. Hickey**. And we have received other donations from as far away as Brazil and as near as Emmitsburg.

The State of the Archive

We continue to catalog materials as quickly as possible. We are nearing 9,000 cataloged items in the collection. In the next few weeks we will be preparing an updated directory of the archive, which will be posted on the website. While preparing the directory takes a bit of time, it enables anyone to see what is available for use at the NFHC.

Please take the time to visit the archive whenever you are anywhere near Emmitsburg. It has grown to an impressive size, and continues to grow every day.

Sponsor a Bookcase Campaign Update

In the past few months, we have added eleven more bookcases. We now are at maximum capacity: to add more bookcases, we will have to remove furniture that we are actively using (display cases, the conference table, etc.) While we have already installed the bookcases, we still are inviting members and supporters of the NFHC to sponsor them, at a cost of \$150 per unit. Sponsors will have their names engraved on brass plates that will be placed on a plaque in the Heritage Center. Please consider sending a tax-deductible donation of \$150 to the

NFHC (P.O. Drawer 76, Emmitsburg MD 21727).

The two most recent bookcase sponsors are **Parker Browne** (former vice president of Akron Brass and Red Head Brass) and **Dr. Denis Onieal**, Deputy United States Fire Administrator, pictured below with Archivist Frank Schmerral.



The Archivist's Wish List

The items on the following list are needed for us to view, process, and store items that are in the collection. If you can help the NFHC obtain any of these items, please contact Executive Director Wayne Powell (waynepowellnfhc@gmail.com) or archivist Frank Schmerral (accobonack@aol.com).

- 16mm reel-to-reel movie viewer with splicer
- Fluorescent light box, 18 x 24 inches (or larger)
- Flat file or drawing file, 24 x 36 inches, 5 or 10 drawers – we could use two of these.

Frank Schmerral
Archivist

See you at *Firehouse Expo* in Baltimore?

The NFHC Booth will be in space 1903.

Stop by and say hello to volunteer staffers

Stu Nathan, Wayne Powell, & Frank Schmerral.

Historic NASCAR “Decklid” at NFHC

On May 1, 2015, the National Fire Heritage Center and the Frederick County (Maryland) Fire/Rescue Museum hosted the Board of the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) of the IAFC and representatives of the Shell Pipeline Company LP. Along with other special guests, they participated in a dedication ceremony that unveiled a display featuring a NASCAR Decklid (a rear trunk deck with spoiler). The Decklid is now on long-term display at the NFHC. Four photos (called canvasses) are part of the display.



Photo courtesy of Shell Pipeline and NASCAR.

The Decklid, with its salute to the 20th Anniversary of IAFC/VCOS drew international attention to the importance of the America’s volunteer fire services. In October 2014, at the Martinsville Motor



Speedway in Ridgeway, Virginia, the VCOS Logo with Banner appeared on the “22 Car” Decklid driven by famed NASCAR Sprint Cup race car driver, Joey Logano.

The VCOS/IAFC also presented the NFHC with a check for \$500 and over \$100 in cash donations.

Past and present members of the VCOS Board felt there was no more fitting place for the display than in “FIRETOWN USA” – a term often used to describe Emmitsburg, Maryland, as the community is home to many important fire and emergency services related activities including the National Fire Academy, the United States Fire Administration, the National Emergency Training Center, the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial, the 9-11 Monument, the NFHC, the Frederick County Fire/Rescue Museum, and the Vigilant Hose Company (all-volunteer fire department) – the most visited fire station in the world.

As part of the dedication ceremony, a letter to participants was read from NFHC President Ronny J. Coleman, who was unable to attend.

An on-site reception followed the dedication ceremony sponsored by Shell Pipeline.

**NFHC Thanks
Nelson Dionne
Peabody, Massachusetts
for his extensive and generous
contribution of historic materials.**

**The inventory alone
was 17 pages!**

“Decklid” Ceremony Attendees

VCOS Board

- Chief Timothy Wall, Chair, North Farms, CT, VFD;
- Chief Shane Crutcher, Vice Chair, Rineyville, KY;
- Chief J. Daniel Eggleston, Albemarle County, VA, Dept. of Fire/Rescue.

Shell Pipeline Company, Houston, TX

- Alton Gregory Smith, President;
- Gweneyette Broussard, Senior Legislative and Regulatory Representative.

Distinguished Guests

- Kelly Ameen, Program Manager, Volunteer Workforce Solutions / VOCS;
- Chief Jason Catrambone, Williston, ND, Fire Department;
- Chief Norvin Collins, Sauvie Island, OR, Fire District;
- President Tim Clarke, Chief Chad Umbel and members of the Vigilant Hose Company of Emmitsburg (VHC personnel provided key support to the effort);
- Ken Farmer, Branch Chief, NFA-USFA, NETC
- Chief Charles “Chuck” Flynn, Suffield, CT, VFD;
- Joseph Giorgi, Jr., Territorial Sales Manager, VFIS, York, PA;
- Tommy Hicks, IAFC Chief Programs and Technology Manager and Assistant Executive Director;
- Chip Jewell, Chief, Frederick County, MD VFD;

- David Keller, President, Maryland State Firemen’s Association, Frederick, MD;
- David Kerr, Fire Marshal, Plano, TX, representing IFMA;
- John Maly, Docent, Frederick County Fire/Rescue Museum;
- Eric Nagle, Program Specialist, National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Rob Neale, Deputy Superintendent, NFA-USFA, NETC;
- Tom Owens, Chief, Frederick County, MD FRS;
- Battalion Chief Kenny Poole, MD FCFRS
- Wayne Powell, Executive Director, NFHC;
- Jim “Sonny” Ridgley, President, Frederick County Fire/Rescue Museum;
- Robert Rosensteel, Sr., Photographer, Rosensteel Studio
- Chief Ed Rush, Hartsdale, NY, Fire District;
- Sonny Scarff, Corporate Director, Marriott Fire Protection (retired);
- Chief James P. Seavey, Sr., Cabin John Park, MD, VFD.
- Frank Schmersal, NFHC Archivist (representing NFHC President Coleman, Elk Grove, CA)
- Doug Williams, Senior Inspector, Marriott Fire Protection (retired);
- Chief Fred Windisch, Secretary-Treasurer, Ponderosa, TX, Fire Department.

History Makers: Ed Plaughter

About Ed

Retired Chief Ed Plaughter began his career in the fire service as a volunteer firefighter while in high school. After serving 24 years with the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department career service and retiring as a Deputy Fire Chief, Ed was appointed Fire Chief, Arlington County (Virginia) Fire Department, a position he held until retiring in June 2004. In April 2006, Ed became the Director of National Programs for the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), where he retired as Assistant Executive Director in January 2013.

Chief Plaughter is a Past President of the State Fire Chiefs Association of Virginia. He is a life member of the IAFC and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). As a member of those associations, he served on both national fire code and terrorism committees. Chief Plaughter was a member of the Emergency Response Senior Advisory Committee (ERSAC) of the Homeland Security Council (HSC), Department of Homeland Security, and also served as a special advisor to the Defense Science Board for the Department of Defense. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Fire Administration and Technology from George Mason University and is an Executive Fire Officer.

Chief Plaughter served for over 20 years as an instructor at the Northern Virginia Community College Fire Science Program. Ed was an adjunct faculty member and course developer for the National Fire Academy. He has contributed to the *Industrial Fire Hazards Handbook* and the *Fire Protection Handbook*. He recently contributed to the NFPA Research Foundation's *Smart Firefighting* handbook

Chief Plaughter directed the regional terrorism preparedness efforts for the National Capital Region as Chair of the Council of Governments (MWCOC), Fire Chiefs Terrorism Committee, and he was the Executive Agent for the nation's first Metropolitan Medical Strike Team.

On September 11th, 2001, Chief Plaughter led Arlington County's response efforts to the terrorist attack at the Pentagon. Arlington's Fire Department

coordinated and led the local, regional, state, and Federal response to the incident. At the IAFC annual meeting in August 2004, Chief Plaughter was named Career Fire Chief of the Year. Ed is currently the Chair of NFPA 950, *Standard for Data Exchange for the Fire Service*, and NFPA 951, *Guide to Building and Utilizing Digital Information*, technical committees. In addition, he is working with the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation (NFFF) on a guide to assist departments in the change process to implement the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives, with a focus on combination and volunteer departments.



What first attracted you to working in fire safety?

I come from a fire service family. My father was a charter member, firefighter and Fire Chief of our local Volunteer Fire Department, and my brother was also a career firefighter and is a retired Fire Chief, so it was natural for me to pursue a career in the fire service.

How did your career path change? What was your biggest surprise?

After recruit school and 3 years as a back step firefighter, I was promoted to technician

(engineer) and given an opportunity to investigate fires as a law enforcement certified fire and arson investigator. My career path was headed for a career in fire prevention/arson investigation. After spending 5 1/2 years in that field, I transitioned to the department's Fire and Rescue Training Academy and discovered a love for teaching and providing adult education. With three and half years and promotion to Lieutenant, I had a chance to return to the field as a company officer and was involved in several incidents of note, including the fire that destroyed the Filene Center for Performing Arts. I was offered an opportunity to return to the Academy as the Recruit School Coordinator. While there, I was asked to consider a staff position at headquarters, Captain and Departmental Apparatus Officer.

After serving two years in Apparatus and revamping and replacing an aging fleet, I was promoted to Deputy Fire Chief of Fire Prevention, Chief Fire Marshal, which returned me to my roots in fire prevention at a chief officer's level position. Three years later, I moved to Administrative Services and redesign/revamp the administrative efforts of the organization. After a year and a half as the chief administrative officer, I became the Chief of Operations. Almost two years later I was assigned to Support Services to complete my rotation to all Divisions at the Division Chief level.

I thoroughly enjoyed all of my opportunities to lead at the division chief level. My biggest surprise, upon reflection, is how enjoyable my time at the Division Chief level was and how critical those positions are to the performance of the organization. At that level, you truly see the fruits of your efforts -- which is not possible as the Fire Chief.

“My biggest surprise, upon reflection, is how enjoyable my time at the Division Chief level was and how critical those positions are...”

What has been your biggest contribution?

My biggest contribution to the fire service has been as a change agent within the industry. I had the opportunity to “connect the dots” at every level from firefighter to Fire Chief. With each assignment, I found that there were opportunities for change and growth. From the beginning, I was motivated to change and improve each assignment and work location. Because of the outstanding leadership within the organization, I was given the latitude and opportunity to implement my crazy suggestions and to mature as a leader, making real and substantial improvements within the department.

Who were your mentors and how did they help you?

Throughout my career, I had the privilege to work for a great number of forward-thinking leaders. My leadership was always willing to listen and to explore new opportunities. My primary mentor was **Warren Isman**.

Chief Isman trusted me to embrace multiple changes and attempt new and innovative concepts and, all the while, encouraged my growth as a Fire Service professional. I will never forget being loaned by Chief Isman to the Singapore Fire Service for 30 days in 1986 to assist their department with a growing arson problem. Opportunities like that helped me gain the confidence to achieve senior level leadership positions later in my career.

Chief Isman is a true founding father of our industry, and his legacy continues to impact our industry. Although he is well known for his response to hazardous materials incidents textbooks, few realize his shepherding of the development of the Department of State, USAID, Search and Rescue Response Team, that just returned from the earthquake in Nepal and the development of the FEMA urban search and rescue program.

What are the biggest challenges in the next 5 years? 10 years?

The biggest challenge over the next five years is making sure that the incoming group of firefighters within the volunteer and career ranks are capable of meeting the demands of today's fast-paced environment. Training these emerging individuals and developing skills necessary to lead a changing workforce is an urgent issue that must be dealt with immediately.

The biggest issue in the next 10 years is how to manage and deal with the aging Baby Boomers: they who will impact every aspect of our organizations, as well as our ability to provide services. One out of three Americans (80 million) will be aging and in retirement, and we need to prepare to deliver a variety of services. This will

“The biggest issue in the next 10 years is how to manage and deal with the aging Baby Boomers.”

impact us in a manner never seen before, both in the kind and levels of demands and in numbers never seen before in the response community. Demanding a new and very different set of skills, our responders will be dealing with the care and keeping of mature adult populations in growing numbers of incidents.

Unless we begin the preparation now, we will be caught off guard with demands that will tarnish our tradition of serving without regard to social factors. The time to embrace nontraditional training and concepts to meet this demand is now.

What is fire safety's biggest piece of unfinished business?

Fire safety's biggest piece of unfinished business is firefighter safety and the long-term effects of cancer within our industry. Protecting against the effects of contaminants in the atmosphere of a burning room is a challenge that has yet to be managed.

If you could start your career over, what would you do differently?

I believe the only thing I would have done differently would have been to accept the job of Oregon Chief State Fire Marshal, which was offered to me in 1993. It would have allowed me to impact fire prevention, firefighter safety, and firefighter training at a senior level within the state.

Any regrets?

Because of the opportunity that I had to work in the field of terrorism response both pre-9/11 and post 9/11, as well as to serve with the men and women of Arlington County, I do not regret any of my career choices.

What is your advice to those who are just starting a career in fire safety?

Get as much into the digital environment as possible. The emerging digital “big data world” will impact every aspect of our ability to perform, to provide for a new level of services, and to manage the threats and opportunities that we face.

Technology for technology sake is something that we must avoid, but leveraging the true benefits of technology can provide a new norm that will advance our capabilities and our ability to provide emergency and community/neighborhood based services.

Creating a Fire Department Time Capsule

According to the Boston Fire Historical Society, Paul Revere was not only the famous patriot messenger, but was also a Boston Fire Warden in 1775.¹ His buddy Sam Adams was also a Fire Warden.

Revere and Adams were also the guys who created a time capsule in 1795. Those who were in charge of retrieving the capsule many years later took over an hour to remove the objects contained in that capsule, in spite its small size of only 5-1/2 by 7-1/2 inches.

Why did individuals like Revere and Adams take the time to create this glimpse into the past?

The primary reason was to communicate with the future. They are called "*time capsules*" for a reason. They are created and buried at some point in the past and they are opened and celebrated at some point in the future to draw attention to the differences.

However, not all time capsules are successful. Historian William Jarvis states that many time capsules do not provide much historical information.² In many cases, they consist of useless junk. In one case, the capsule was full of a "gray mass of gorp that was unrecognizable."

If a time capsule is to contribute to the exchange of knowledge, it has to survive intact and also be relevant. Furthermore, the contents must be particularly specific to the timeframe of its origin. The concern about time capsules is that people fail to consider deterioration of its contents. This is not an idle concern, but ultimately determine the success of the project.

Despite all of the things that can go wrong, individuals and organizations continue to utilize a time capsule as a form of time travel. The fire service can certainly use this technique in preserving our past.

Following are ten tips for organizing a time capsule.

1. Pick a retrieval date in the future. A 50 year or less timeframe can be witnessed by members of your own generation. The longer the timeframe the more



important it becomes to document its location and anticipated date of resurrection. 100 year anniversary times are not uncommon but almost always assure that whoever looks at the time capsule was certainly not there when it was created. If it is too short a time frame, the differences you are

looking for may not be there. If it is too long, the capsule might not even be remembered.

2. Choose one individual to be the "archivist" or director. Creating a committee to complete the task might sound like a good idea, but only one person should be responsible for finally assembling the capsule itself.



3. Select an appropriate container. The interior of the container must resist intrusion by any environmental

impact such as water, extremely high or low temperatures or any other form of contamination such as chemical exposure. Copper alloy or high alloy stainless steel are excellent capsule container material. The capsule should be seamless or welded construction with a screw on top and a gasket avoid using soft lead solder. In some cases, a secondary container is a practical way of providing a moisture barrier. Avoid natural rubber items, which deteriorate releasing sulfur compounds.

4. Pick a location that is not going to be obscured over time. Not all time capsules are buried underground. Sometimes they were installed in walls.

¹ <http://www.paul-revere-heritage.com/fire-warden.html>

² Jarvis, William, Time Capsules, A Cultural History, (2002)

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Sometimes they are in monuments. There should always be some form of capsule plaque on the exterior that reminds people that there is a time capsule contained in this location.

There are several good places for fire department time capsules. One of the best is when a new fire station is being dedicated. If it is the headquarters fire station it is even better. The following points are to be considered for any site where you are going to install a time capsule:

- If the item is to be buried below grade, make sure that the soil is well drained with no standing water in the area
- Stay away from trenches that will include utilities such as water, sewer, gas pipes or electrical cabling.
- Choose a location that can be expected to remain undisturbed.

5. Pick your items for preservation very carefully.

Remember that you are trying to build a bridge between the past and the future. Develop a mix of items. Avoid anything that will require a technology that may become obsolete in the future. Whenever possible all items should be made of archival-quality durable materials. For example any paper that is contained in the capsule should be of high quality. Anything that is signed or has handwriting on it to be with durable inks. The ink should not be water soluble. Photographs should be of high quality. If you wish to contain newspapers in the items it is often better to photocopy them and produce them with a high quality paper, instead of newsprint which is usually very low quality. The archivist should maintain an inventory of all items that are in the time capsule and make it part of a documentation system.

6. Pack your items with the heaviest objects on the bottom. Put the items into some form of protection if they have sharp edges. Make sure the packaging

material is acid-free

7. Have a solemn "sealing ceremony" where you formally christen the time capsule with a name. If you can you might want to create the time capsule on an anniversary of some event in the department. It could be the opening of the fire station, or it could be based on the date your Department was created like a 50th anniversary. Invite the media. Keep a good photographic record of your presentation that includes pictures of the contents of the capsule.

8. Make sure that your time capsule is recognized from time to time. According to archivists it is not uncommon for time capsules to be forgotten. Anniversaries and periodic celebrations are important to renew the memory of why the time capsule is there in the first place. Put a plaque or some kind of sign in a location that is unlikely to be eliminated over time

9. Include a list of the contents and the reason that those items were included.

10. Inform local historians, libraries and museums of your project. You may not be the only one in town who keeps track of these kinds of things.

Summary

In the final analysis, a time capsule is a very small token of appreciation for the process of change, More importantly, it personalizes change as being from one generation to another. It is not always about what is in the capsule, as it is about who put those things there. It personalizes and gives perspective to the passage of time.

Where is your fire department's time capsule going to be?

Ronny J. Coleman