



## **National Fire Heritage Center Newsletter**

### **Introduction**

If you are among my age group (65+) you may well remember an early television ad for General Electric. Their slogan was “progress – it is our most important product.” Well, the world has seen a lot of progress since I observed that slogan on a tiny little black and white television in the 1950’s. We are surrounded by progress.

So it is all together fitting to talk about progress we are making. Chip Jewell has done a great job in getting things going by continuing to work on getting the lease completed for our building. Our Secretary Wayne Powell is doing a great job of keeping track of our finances.

### **Booth at FRI**

Now we have a couple of other things to think about. The first I would like to discuss is the idea that we are going to have a booth at Fire Rescue International (FRI) in August of this year. Bill Killen proposed this and we have been successful in acquiring a site that will be in the general vicinity of the IAFC Member Booth. We are currently in the process of doing some planning for what might be accomplished in that booth. For example, I have been working on a small table top display that we can sit on the table letting people know that we

exist. We have only got about two months to plan for this, so, we don't have a lot of time to discuss options and alternatives.

My first request to all board members and to general members is to find out if any of you will be at FRI and would be willing to spend a few minutes in the booth? If you can drop me brief emails letting me know of your availability I would appreciate it.

The one thing the booth did raise is the fact that we can't have a booth without having general liability insurance. While we have talked about this at previous board meetings, we haven't purchased a policy because we have had any public exposure. The IAFC requires a million dollar general liability policy just in case someone trips and falls in front of a booth. Working with Wayne and Chip we have located a very inexpensive general liability policy that will be purchased prior to going to the conference.

### Heritage Quilt

Now for the most interesting part of this newsletter. I now have something to raffle off. It is the first edition of our "Heritage Quilts". Please see below a photograph of our first version.



The quilt is 72" wide and 90" long and consists of t-shirts donated by our board members. The theme behind this quilt is "protect your loved ones, with a quilt made from t-shirts worn by those who protect society". The intent is to develop a brochure that we can advertise the quilts existence and sell raffle tickets for \$5.00 each or 5/\$20.00 over a period from now until we have our annual meeting in October at the Fallen Firefighter Memorial. We have a roll of tickets that we will be discussing in a follow-up newsletter. I have a lot more information that I will be forwarding to everyone about this to let you know what the plan will be. My goal is to sell at least 500 tickets between now and October. Everyone will be given an opportunity to sell the tickets. I will be working on a plan to distribute tickets for sale before FRI.

Not unlike a lot of other ideas that we have generated with this Heritage Center, we are looking for a few good men (and women) and a few good ideas to make this work. If any of you have a suggestion, please feel free to communicate directly to me.

### **Annual Meeting**

As long as we are talking about October, we are already anticipating that we will be holding our annual meeting in conjunction with the Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend in Emmitsburg. Those of you than plan on attending should mark your calendars today. Our meeting is tentatively being planned as follows:

Location:	The Old Ambulance Building 300 South Seton Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727
Date:	Friday, October 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2009
Time:	10:00 am
Expected Duration of Meeting:	2-4 Hours
Agenda:	To be provided
Lunch:	Up to individual (there are several restaurants close by)

We need to recognize that we still don't have possession of the building but Chip has indicated that we might be able to conduct a small meeting in the facility. Those of you that have committee responsibilities should be contemplating what you can bring to the meeting that will help advance our cause.

### **History of Challenge Coins**

Ever since 911 there has been a proliferation of "Challenge Coins" issued in the fire service. If you are like me, you probably have a shelf full of them. You might find the following information interesting on how this concept came about in the first place.

During World War 1, American volunteers from all parts of the country filled the newly formed flying squadrons. Some were wealthy scions attending colleges such as Yale and Harvard who quit in mid-term to join the war. In one squadron, a wealthy lieutenant ordered medallions struck in solid bronze and presented them to his unit. One young pilot placed the medallion in a small leather pouch that he wore about his neck.

Shortly after acquiring the medallions, the pilots' aircraft was severely damaged by ground fire. He was forced to land behind enemy lines and was immediately captured by a German patrol.

In order to discourage his escape, the Germans took all of his personal identification except for the small leather pouch around his neck. In the meantime, he was taken to a small French town near the front. Taking advantage of a bombardment that night, he escaped. However, he was without personal identification. He succeeded in avoiding German patrols by donning civilian attire and reached the front lines. With great difficulty, he crossed no-man's land.

Eventually, he stumbled onto a French outpost. Unfortunately, saboteurs had plagued the French in the sector. They sometimes masqueraded as civilians and wore civilian clothes. Not recognizing the young pilot's American accent, the French thought him to be a saboteur and made ready to execute him. He had no identification to prove his allegiance, but he did have his leather pouch containing the medallion. He showed the medallion to his would-be executioners and one of his French captors recognized the squadron insignia on the medallion. They delayed his execution long enough for him to confirm his identify. Instead of shooting him they gave him a bottle of wine.

Back at his squadron, it became tradition to ensure that all members carried their medallion or coin at all times. This was accomplished through challenge in the following manner – a challenger would ask to see the medallion. If the challenged could not produce a medallion, they were required to buy a drink of choice for the member who challenged them. If the challenged member produced a medallion, then the challenging member was required to pay for the drink. This tradition continued on throughout the war and for many years after the war while surviving members of the squadron were still alive.

### **Tips for Collectors**

For those of you who are looking into the organization of your own personal collections, I picked up a few tips the other day that you might find handy. I was discussing the retention of paper products with a librarian who advised me that the three greatest enemies to the survivability of paper products are paper clips, staples and rubber bands. Her suggestion was that we ought to remove all paper clips and staples from documents before being put into storage because they have a tendency to rust damaging the paper. She also noted that sometimes people use rubber bands. Rubber deteriorates under certain conditions and goes from being an elastic retainer to being almost like glue. This librarian says that we should remove these items as early on in the retention process as possible.

**Poor Richards Almanack**

If you every have any doubts on why it is important to save the old stuff, be aware of this! A 1733 version of Poor Richards Almanack was recently sold at Sotheby's Auction House for \$556,500. That was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest price ever for a book printed in America. The bidder was anonymous. We can only hope that it might be one of our members – but that is unlikely. By the way, here is a trivia question for you – what was Benjamin Franklin's alias as author of Poor Richards Almanack? Answer – in next newsletter!!! The first one to email me the correct answer, I will provide you with a prize.

**Summary**

I got some fairly good feedback from the edition of our first newsletter. I would be interested in any additional commentary as we proceed to develop this concept. Please note that we are continuing to put the application on the back of the newsletter in hopes of acquiring new members. I am still not sure whether or not everyone who became a charter member has received their pin. If you haven't, please let me know and I will take of it. Looking forward to hearing from all of you.

Ronny J. Coleman

President, National Fire Heritage Center



## National Fire Heritage Center Application Form

Name:

Mailing Address:

Please do not use PO Boxes unless absolutely necessary. Some postal delivery systems will not deliver packages to these boxes.

City:

State:

Zip:

Country:

Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email Address:

Background, Resume or Experience in Field:

What area of interest do you have with regard to this topic:

- General Membership
- Committee Membership:
- Organizational Leadership