

Robbie Robertson

A Life of Dedication

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James C. "Robbie" Robertson
June 8, 1929 - November 9, 2013

Fire Services from Florida to Maryland are mourning the loss of a dedicated fire protection pioneer and mentor. Known to us as "Robbie", his soft southern tone and ability to recall events will forever be missed. Robbie Robertson was born in Washington D.C. and raised in Asheville, North Carolina. He spent his life in the fire service and recently finished the revision on the 8th Edition of his nationally recognized book, *Introduction to Fire Prevention*, with publication in progress at the time of his death. After attending Oklahoma State University School of Fire Protection, he was graduated from the University of Southern California. He served in the US Coast Guard Reserve for many years, rising to the rank of Commander. Robbie Robertson's distinguished career included serving as Maryland State Fire Marshal (1962-82), a Field Representative for the National Fire Protection Association, as Fire Marshal in Gainesville, Florida and as a consultant with Mizelle Hodges & Associates. He was one of the founding members of the National Fire Heritage Center, dedicated to preserving America's Fire Service History in Emmitsburg, MD and served on its board of directors. He was a senior instructor at the University of Maryland and an active member and supporter of the Fellowship of Christian Firefighters.

Robbie Robertson was a certified Florida Fire Inspector and attended many classes as well as made presentations at seminars and conferences throughout Florida, some as early as 1949. His Florida affiliations included the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association, Florida Fire Marshals and Inspectors Association, Florida Professional Firefighters Association, Joint Council of Fire and Emergency Services, and the Florida Division of State Fire Marshal. He was instrumental in identifying several Florida Fallen Firefighters who died in the line of duty from early to mid 1900's, who were added to the Florida Fallen Firefighter Memorial. In addition to all of his projects, he also served on numerous technical committees including the Institution of Fire Engineers, National Fire Protection Association, International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Fire Service Training Association and the fire protection engineering community, just to name a few. One of his latest projects is a book to preserve Florida's Fire Service History. This preservation effort will continue and will be dedicated to him. Robbie Robertson resided in Ranson, West Virginia at the time of his death

You know, in cataloging and trying to put on paper all of Robbie's accomplishments and affiliations, I realized there was much more that

needed to be said about this man who held the fire service so dear. The parts in between: a true testament on how such an individual could accomplish so much, in so little time. Although Robbie was 84 years young at the time of his passing, if you were to ask him he would tell you there's still so much to be done. Everyone who knew him has a "Robbie" story to tell. He was an absolutely amazing and brilliant man who was a mentor to many and will be forever remembered. I promise that he would never have forgotten you or the benefit you brought to a conversation with him. He had a gift and an unwavering commitment to the fire service, a "calling" you could say and nothing could slow him down. I only knew Robbie for the last twenty years, but like many, I felt as if I had known him my entire life. For those of us who were fortunate enough to work with him on some of his many projects, the true depth and his love for the fire service was revealed. He didn't sit still for very long and always had a schedule of meetings that he followed to help him navigate from one end of the country to the other, stopping off at some of his favorite places to catch up with friends. Each discussion held meaning, and he addressed his topics with great reverence. He has received many awards; one of the most distinguished was in 2012 where he became the 10th person in the world to be awarded the designation of 'Companion Fellow' by the Institute of Fire Engineers during their

75th Anniversary of the School of Fire Protection and Safety in Stillwater, OK. Fellow grade is only available to existing Members (MifireE) who have demonstrated significant individual responsibility, sustained achievement and exceptional professionalism, and also demonstrated successful leadership

and contribution to the fire engineering profession. Robbie was most deserving of that award. Pictured above with his long time friend Charlie Deal, retired Lakeland Fire Chief and past President of Florida Fire Chiefs' Association and 1978 Fire Chief of the Year who preceded Robbie in death, they regularly attended constituent meetings and conferences together. Robbie was young at heart and well respected throughout the Country. It is a true honor to have known such a dedicated and caring man. He will truly be missed by family and friends, and by the fire service that he loved.

