

EMERITUS CHIEF SELBY JACOBS OCTOBER 25, 1934 - DECEMBER 2, 2019 PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE

For Release

December 4, 2019

The Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue and the Prince William County Fire and Rescue System regret to announce the passing of Retired Fire Chief Selby Jacobs.

Mere words cannot describe Chief Selby Jacobs and the years of outstanding dedication and exemplary service he provided to the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue and citizens of Prince William County. Chief Jacobs brought exceptional knowledge, expertise and skills that aided in the creation and foundation of the county's fire and rescue service.

Chief Jacobs began his career with the Prince William County Fire Service, in 1966, as the first Fire Marshal. Although his primary responsibility was the development of a Fire Building Code, his duties consisted of a wide range of tasks to include educational programs and instruction for the annual county fire school; at which time he was the only state certified instructor in the county.

In 1967, as Fire Marshal, Jacobs was assigned the responsibility of managing the Public Safety Communications Service. That same year, he led the effort to create a 9-1-1 system; being the first 9-1-1 system on the east coast and among the first three in the U.S.

Due to the physical requirements firefighters have to possess to perform in hostile operating conditions, Chief Jacobs created a physical agility testing program for firefighters; it was the first in the National Capital Region and among the first in the nation. This program compelled him to initiate our physical fitness program.

In 1969, Chief Jacobs was designated as the Fire Administrator responsible for managing three branches of the fire service (Fire Marshal's Office, Fire Suppression and Communications). As the county's population grew, expansion of the fire service was essential, spurring a greater need of fire protection for county residents. He recognized the need for training and established a training division for three program areas within the fire service; firefighters, volunteers and fire code enforcement. During this same time period, Chief Jacobs created the "Operations Exit Drill in the Home" known as EDITH that spread nationwide. Today, 50 years later, the program is still being used as a fire prevention method in saving lives. Prince William County was one of 8 departments, that year, to receive Special Recognition for Fire Prevention by NFPA.

Great strides, within the county's fire service, were made possible due to Chief Jacobs' foresight. In 1972, he became Director of the Fire Service and appointed as Coordinator of Emergency Services, a new program. This distinguished program was put to the test, that

same year, when the county was severely impacted with major flooding caused by Hurricane Agnes. Today, the Emergency Services program, created by Chief Jacobs, remains on the cutting edge of excellence.

Under Chief Jacobs direction, the Department became a trailblazer within the fire service. During that same year, Chief Jacobs and the Department adopted one of the first sprinkler ordinances in the nation providing fire protection for the community. Although the Virginia General Assembly passed the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code that prohibited localities from exceeding the statewide code, the Department became a leading voice in influencing building code changes used throughout the nation.

The following year, Chief Jacobs hired the first Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), thereby, renaming the service as the Prince William County Fire & Rescue Service. He partnered with the U.S. Park Police to provide medevac service allowing for the transport of critically injured patients to a trauma center and into surgery within the "Golden Hour". Another first for our region was the installation of a communications system allowing persons with speech and/or hearing impairments to communicate with the 9-1-1 telecommunicators.

In 1977, Chief Jacobs advanced our EMS system with the upgrade of rescue teams to advanced life support units to complement a new fleet of medic units he secured through a federal grant.

Around 1980, the Department made use of new technology with "mini computers". An article by a national fire journal shared our innovative use of the new technology declaring the Department as the future of the fire service. Since that time, we remained progressive with biomedical equipment, Geographic Information System, Computer Aided Dispatch System and public safety radio systems to name a few. In addition, we created the Child Passenger Safety Seat Program, possibly the first for this prevention and education program among the fire and rescue departments. The need for this program grew out of the concern to protect our most vulnerable in society, our babies and small children, who are injured or worse during vehicle crashes.

In 1985, out of the concern for the safety and welfare of department members, Chief Jacobs in conjunction with the Police Department and the Community Services Board, created the first joint public safety critical incident management program in the U.S.

In 1988, Chief Jacobs found a cost-effective approach for HazMat service with creation of a non-uniformed HazMat coordinator and a uniformed HazMat coordinator. That same year, due to Chief Jacob's contribution to County Executive Noe's white paper, the Board of County Supervisors appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission on Fire and Rescue resulting in the organization of the Fire and Rescue Association, the first 24-hour medic units and the reorganization of the fire service into the Department of Fire and Rescue with the director's title changed to chief. Keenly aware that many of the volunteer departments, across the nation, were evolving into paid departments, Chief Jacobs made use of his role, as the chairman of the Fire and Rescue Association, to not make the same errors as other

jurisdictions made in the loss of their volunteer firefighters and EMTs. Today, our volunteer component of our fire and rescue system continues as a strong partner in the delivery of emergency service.

On October 25, 1994, after 28 years of service, Chief Jacobs retired from Prince William County. Although retired in name only, he remained active in the fire service. In 2009, he became interim chief of the Fauquier County Department of Fire and Emergency Services until a fulltime chief was appointed. He was also an active member of the Virginia Fire Chief's Association.

In December 2008, a newly erected fire and rescue station (Antioch Station 24) was dedicated in his honor as appreciation for his years of unwavering commitment, dedication, and service.

Chief Jacobs was the "Father" of the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue creating a culture of innovation and exceptional service. He took us from infancy and made us a mature, progressive, productive and respected department. He took pride in the department becoming a trailblazer of the fire and rescue industry concerning fire prevention. His organization and leadership role has enabled the department to be viewed as one of the best fire and rescue systems in the nation.

The role of a founding leader is crucial to the culture of any organization. Chief Jacobs constantly looked for best practices from industry, from science, and other sectors beyond the fire service that we could apply here in the department. This is imminent within our system today; we're a reflection of Chief Jacob's values for public service. The Department's mission, vision and values statements are essentially Selby Jacobs. These words speak to such things as innovation, exceptional customer service, ultimate performance, unity, and protection of life, property and the environment. We are efficient and high performing in the service we provide to the public because this culture was instilled in the department and its members by Chief Jacobs.

Chief Jacobs recognized diversity as the essential ingredient to having a world class organization. He led diversity efforts at the national and local level. Selby Jacobs wanted his department to be a department of critical thinkers encouraging us to attain a formal education; to seek an education not only from the college and university system but from public safety institutions as the National Fire Academy and the National Emergency Management Institute. Today, the System continues to build upon a strong and reputable foundation due to the initiatives of Chief Selby Jacobs.

Additional Accomplishments/Achievements of Chief Jacobs

- District Chairman of the Boy Scouts of America
- President of the Virginia Civil Defense Association
- Served on the NFPA Suburban and Rural Fire Protection and Prevention Committee
- Gubernatorial appointed representative to the State Building Code Technical Review Board

- Chairman of the COG Special Task Force to review the emergency response of the events of January 13, 1982, specifically the Air Florida Flight 90 crash and Metro train derailment. The work done by this task force provided the framework for the National Capital Region to become the greatest collaborative multi-jurisdictional region in the United States for public safety agencies and positioned us well through the many years of effort that followed to respond effectively to the 9-11 attack on the Pentagon.
- Red Cross volunteer for more than 50 years
- Member of the first "People to People Emergency Service Delegation" to the People's Republic of China.
- Member or Chairman of college level advisory committees for:
 - Northern Virginia Community College
 - George Mason University
- Adjunct faculty at:
 - The National Fire Academy
 - National Emergency Management Institute of Virginia
Department of Emergency Services
 - Virginia Department of Fire Programs
 - Red Cross Intermediate Disaster Service Instructor
- Life Memberships with:
 - Virginia State Fire Chiefs
 - International Association of Fire Chiefs
 - National Fire Protection Association
 - Virginia Emergency Management Association
- Recipient of:
 - National "Silver Beaver Award" from the Boy Scouts of America
 - Executive Fire Officer (EFO) designation from the National Fire Academy
 - Elizabeth Davies Award from Prince William Chapter of the American Red Cross
 - Exemplary Service Award from the Virginia/D.C. State Service Council of the American Red Cross