



What is a Firefighter?

He's the guy next door.

He's a man's man with the sharp memory of a little boy who never got over the excitement of engines and sirens and smoke and danger.

He's a guy like you and me with wants and worries and has unfilled dreams.

Yet he stands taller than most of us. He's a firefighter. He puts it all on the line when the bell rings.

A firefighter is at once the most fortunate and the least fortunate of men.

He's a man who savors life because he has seen too much death. He's a gentleman because he has seen too much of the awesome power of violent forces out of control. He's a man responsive to a child's laughter because his arms have held too many small bodies that will never laugh again.

He's a man who appreciates the simple pleasures of life...hot coffee held in numbed, unbending fingers...the flush of fresh air pumping through smoke and fire convulsed lungs...a warm bed for bone and muscle compelled beyond feeling...the camaraderie of brave men...the divine peace of selfless service and a job well done in the name of all men.



“THE FIRE CHIEF”
ROBERT A. MCALLISTER, SMSgt, USAF (Retired)

Military History:

- Entered the Air Force in 1952 at age 16 (always lied about his age)
- Active duty 28 years
- 19 Assignments
 1. Sampson, New York for basic training, 1952
 2. Denver Fire School, 1952
 3. Travis AFB, 1952
 4. RAF Upper Heyford, 1953
 5. Dowfield, Maine, 1958
 6. RAF Briznorton, 1960
 7. RAF Fairford, 1960
 8. Columbus AFB, 1964 Station Chief
 9. Sheppard AFB (Helicopter School and Rescue Specialist Training), 1965
 10. Phillipines (Jungle Survival School), 1965
 11. Washington (POW/Arctic Survival), 1965
 12. Tuy Hoa AB Vietnam (24 mos), 1966
 13. Seymour Johnson AFB, 1968 Station Chief
 14. Da Nang AB Vietnam (Fire Chief), 1969
 15. Columbus AFB, 1972 Deputy Chief
 16. Galena AFB, Alaska (Fire Chief), 1975
 17. Columbus AFB, 1977 Deputy Chief
 18. Kadena AB, Japan (Fire Chief), 1977
 19. Columbus AFB, 1979 Deputy Chief
 20. Retired in 1980 with 28 years Active Duty Service as a SMSgt (selected for promotion to CMSgt). He returned to Air Force Fire Protection in 1981 as a civilian and later became the Fire Chief at Columbus AFB MS. He retired again in 2002 with 50 years of total federal service.

When asked what he considered to be the best assignment – he always says the 4 years in Vietnam, because every nerve was alert.. No room for a mistake because peoples lives were in danger

MEDALS

During Vietnam Chief was involved in 17 saves and several dead retrievals

- Silver Star - B-52 crashed in a mine field near Da Nang Chief went in and pulled out the only survivor which was the tail gunner
- 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses - (1st) Tuy Hoa AB, Vietnam came under attack. During the attack 3 C-130's were blown up – Chief's crew lifted 2 pedro HH-43 helicopters off and crash landed one of them (saved 2 pedros) – (2nd) As a SSgt, was with pararescue under fire on a save and ended up staying over night with sniper fire all around

- 2 Bronze Stars (1 W/Valor device) During a bad weather storm, Chief's crew left Tuy Hoa AB, Vietnam to rescue an army member 26 miles from base on the return. The crew crash landed with the grunt off base in a rice field (hot zone) – under fire, got the army grunt and crew back to base – awarded Bronze Star (w) valor
- 33 Air Medals – 1 Air Medal for every 35 missions flew more than 1155 missions
- Vietnamese Medal of Honor - trained Vietnamese firefighters in search and rescue operations invaluable contributions his efforts in training Vietnamese firefighters resulted in numerous saves
- 6 Meritorious Service Medals
- 6 AF Commendation Medals

PERSONAL

- Married Barbara in 1956 (42 years of marriage when she died of cancer) met her during his tour at Upper Heyford, England – Upper Heyford was tied for best assignment because of Barbara
- 4 Children – Janet, Kenny Marie, Robert, Dennis, lost one
- 6 Grandchildren – Bobby, Courtney, Roury, Katie, Cody, Corinna
- 1 Brother - Berney
- 3 Sisters – 1 died of cancer