

Byrus Family Award in Memory  
Of  
Chief Robert C. (Bob) Byrus

Bob Byrus pursued a lifelong Career in Fire Service and prevention. He progressed to ever increasing levels of responsibility to become nationally and internationally recognized for his expert knowledge of fire safety, prevention, and suppression. We would like you to know a little about our father and we take pleasure in knowing that this scholarship grant continues his passion to expand the knowledge and professionalism of the fire service.

He became interested in the fire service early in his youth after suffering severe burns while working delivering gas to filling stations. As part of a very lengthy recovery, it was arranged for him to stop by the Palm Beach, Florida fire station to use extension ladders to exercise his back and arms. This developed into a lifelong interest in fire equipment, safety and prevention as he became an unofficial volunteer member of this all paid staff fire department. In 1924 he was officially hired by the department. His first assignment was to develop training manuals.

He left the Palm Beach department as a Captain to become Assistant Chief at Morrison Field Air Base at West Palm Beach. He became Chief shortly thereafter and instituted a training program for aircraft fires which featured a fire pit where aircraft rescue and fire suppression techniques could be developed and practiced. His methods were soon recognized by the War Department in Washington and he was hired to document and expand his aircraft rescue and fire-fighting program throughout the Air Transport Command during WWII.

After the war, he became Director of the Fire Service Extension Program at Iowa State College in Ames, IA. In 1951 he was recruited to become Director of the Fire Service Extension Program at the University of Maryland, where he served until he retired in 1966.

During his career he was an advisor and consultant to many agencies and especially supported and promoted volunteer fire departments and associations. Internationally, he was engaged to study the fire effects of the fire storm in

Hamburg, Germany during WWII and evaluate the firefighting command and staff school in Great Britain. He also contributed to the study of the 1967 NASA launch pad fire and explosion. He authored the article on Fire Fighting for the 1960's edition of World Book. Bob was an advocate of continuing education for fire command and control staff and the professionalization of local fire departments, especially volunteer departments. He focused his career on education, research and training.

He served on many committees and was a dynamic speaker at many events of the Association of Fire Chiefs, the Society of Fire Protection Engineers, the UL, and many annual meetings of state Firemen's Associations and other organizations. He was chairman of the NFPA committee on Aircraft Fire and Rescue. In 1960 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award from the National Fire Protection Association. This award that had only been awarded 19 times in the then-64-year history of the Association. In 1981 he received the Maryland State Firemen's Association Hall of Fame Award.

An interesting note is that he became Director of Fire Extension Services at two major Universities and developed an international reputation in fire prevention. His formal education was 10<sup>th</sup> grade! Amazing what can be accomplished with positive attitude and intuitive. His accomplishments were achieved mostly by the people he trained and motivated. He was able to navigate the political culture and obtain the necessary funding and support for fire research, training and facilities.

Please carry on this tradition.

We congratulate you and wish you the best in your choice of a career in fire prevention, a profession so highly regarded by our father and grandfather.

The Byrus Family.