

Owens celebrates 40 years with HFD in 2017

BY DANNY WADE

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When Chester Owens was a young boy growing up in Humboldt, he realized he wanted to be a fireman one day. That dream came true and was the beginning of a long career in Humboldt.

Last week Humboldt Fire Chief Chester B. Owens Sr. celebrated 40 years on the job as a firefighter for the Humboldt Fire Department.

"I started (working for HFD) in 1977 on a snowy day just like today," Chief Owens said last Friday. "Chief Wayne Day hired me and Tom McCaslin was mayor."

Going back to his youth, Owens recalled two incidents that led him to becoming a firefighter. The first happened when he was a teenager.

"The duplex next door to my house caught fire," Owens said. "The fire trucks came and they put out the fire. Then and there I thought I wanted to help and serve."

The second experience happened when Owens was a senior at Humboldt High School.

"We were visiting family in Louisville, Ky. There was a fire a few houses down," Owens added. "Before the fire department got there, I

went into the house that was on fire to help get somebody out, anybody. That led me to know, that's what I wanted to do."

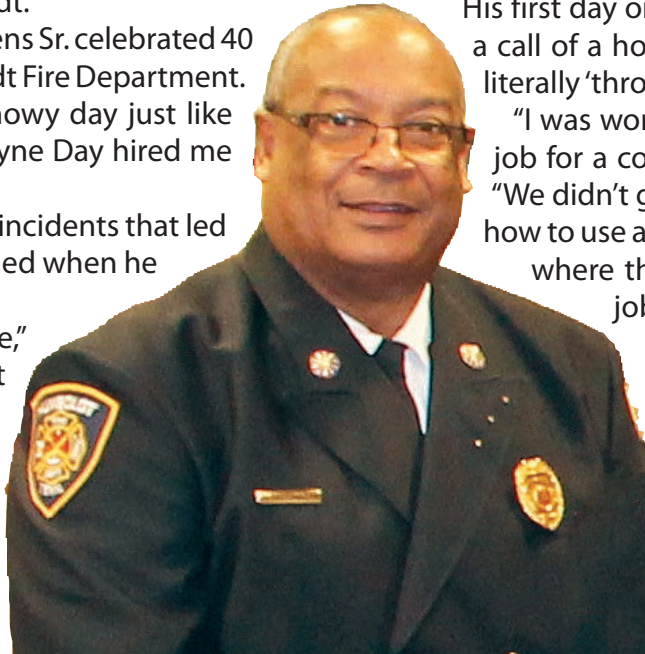

There was only one person in that house fire, but Owens helped get them out. He had found his calling.

His first day on the job the Humboldt Fire Department received a call of a house on fire in the country on S. 17th. Owens was literally 'thrown into the fire' that day.

"I was working the 2:30 to 10:30 shift and only been on the job for a couple of hours when we got the call," Owens said. "We didn't get back until 3:30 or 4 the next morning. I learned how to use an axe that day. We had to break through a chimney where the fire was. I thought, 'maybe I picked the wrong job', but I wanted to be a firefighter and a pilot."

The first two or three years, Owens worked as a dispatcher before moving up as the second truck driver. It was during the time as a driver that he learned how to fight fires. Chief Day saw something in Owens and in his 7th year with the department, he was promoted to lieutenant. A few years later he moved up to captain, a

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