



Captain Ernest E. McCray Jr.

August 14, 1933 - March 11, 2019

Captain Ernest E. McCray, Jr. (Retired Captain of the Salisbury Fire Department), 85, of Salisbury, NC peacefully passed away Monday, March 11, 2019 at The Laurels of Salisbury.

Born in Salisbury, he was the son of the late Ernest E. McCray, Sr. and Wendlian Moore McCray Moss. He was the step-son of the late Grady E. Moss, Sr. In addition to his parents, Ernest was preceded in death by his brother, Grady E. Moss, Jr. and a niece, Miss Karina Moss.

Ernest was a graduate of J. C. Price High School, where his talents in football earned him the title of "Mr. Touchdown." He was inducted into the Price High School Athletic Hall of Fame in 2007; honored by the City of Salisbury Schools for Football Championships in 2012; and inducted into the Salisbury-Rowan Sports Hall of Fame in 2016.

While attending North Carolina Central University, Ernest received the draft and joined the United States Navy. He served ten years in the Navy. During this time, Ernest received a commendation for saving the life of a fellow shipmate aboard the USS Chara (AKA-58), the China Services Medal, National Defense Service Medal and was also named "Sailor of the Month."

Some of Ernest's civic awards were: Human Society Award for the Rescue of

Animals; Optimist of the Year; Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award; Optimist Presidential Award of Rowan County; and the Habitat for Humanity of Rowan County "Construction Volunteer of the Year" Award.

Ernest was a dedicated member of Soldiers Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church of Salisbury. He organized a Boy Scout Troop and served as its first Scoutmaster. Faithfully serving in various positions at the church, Ernest most loved working with and serving the children of the Zion Hills ministry. The church awarded him the "Outstanding Dedication and Support" Men's Day Award in 2013.

In 2005, Ernest was featured in an article in the Salisbury Post entitled "Mr. Touchdown – End Zone McCray's Home." He was also honored with a feature display at the Rowan Museum as the first Black Officer of the Salisbury Fire Department.

Ernest also served as Vice-President of Pete-Earl-Bea, Inc., a family owned business.

Those left to cherish his memory are his wife of 57 years, Frances M. McCray; two sons, Ernest "Pete" McCray, III (U.S. Army - Ret) and William McCray, Sr. (Shanna); one daughter, Wendy McKie (Herman); a sister-in-law, Shirley Moss; seven grandchildren; a host of nephews, nieces and cousins; God-children, Rev. Emily Rivers, Robyn Rivers, and Ebony Rivers-Boyd; family-in-Christ, Tom, Evelyn and Matthew Lowman; and his comrades of the Salisbury Fire Department.

The family will receive friends from 11:15am until 12:45pm on Saturday, March 16, 2019 at Soldiers Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church. Funeral service will follow at 1:00pm with the Rev. Dr. Derrick Anderson officiating. The Salisbury Fire Department will honor Captain McCray with the Firefighter's Prayer and Ceremony. Interment will follow at Rowan Memorial Park with Graveside

Military Rites conducted by the US Navy and Rowan County Veterans Honor Guards.

Memorials may be made to Soldiers Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church, 306 North Church Street, Salisbury, NC 28144 or Rowan County Habitat for Humanity, PO Box 3356, Salisbury, NC 28145.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the McCray family. Online condolences may be made at www.summersettfuneralhome.com

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 16. 11:15 AM - 12:45 PM (ET)

Soldiers Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church
306 North Church Street
Salisbury, NC 28144

Service

MAR 16. 1:00 PM (ET)

Soldiers Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church
306 North Church Street
Salisbury, NC 28144

Tribute Wall

SB

“ I just found out about Capt. McCray's passing. He was my first Captain at the Department when I started (roughly 1981. I learned a lot from him, things I still rely on today. He was a good man that I feel honored to have worked for.

S.A. "Barney" Barnhardt - March 26, 2019 at 03:59 PM

CI

“ To the Family of the late Capt McCray. While I am sadden to hear of his passing, I am honored and humbled to have known him and served under him a while working for the Department from 1998 to 1999. He taught me some of my first lessons about over coming adversity when I was hired. We spent many days out in the hot June sun training outback of station 51. I am so grateful to him that even after I left the department he continued to check on me from time to time when I went to work for East Spencer Fire Dept and even when I went on to work for my current Department now, Winston Salem Fire Dept. He always encouraged me to never give up on my goals and to always keep the faith. May he rest now from his labor, and thank you to his family for sharing him with young men like myself.

Respectfully

Charles E. Allen III
Firefighter, Winston Salem Fire Dept

Charles Allen III - March 17, 2019 at 03:34 PM

SK

“ My deepest sympathies to you and your family Mrs. McCray. I met Capt. McCray when working for Dr. Hill, we always had some great conversations about pets and his days with the fire department.



Susan T. Kotarsky - March 16, 2019 at 05:58 PM

DP

“ My deepest sympathies go out to you and your family. May God give you the peace that you seek.

Love ,
The Perkins & Sherwood Family

Dorothy Perkins - March 15, 2019 at 06:28 PM

DE

“ Our deepest condolences are with the entire family. May God continue to keep you all.



Dr. and Mrs. Quintin Prescott Ellis - March 15, 2019 at 12:44 PM

MW

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this very difficult time in your lives.
May God bless and keep the family safely in his arms.

Margaret Wansley, Rickey & Cleo Holt

Margaret Wansley - March 14, 2019 at 07:19 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue* was purchased for the family of
Captain Ernest E. McCray Jr..



March 14, 2019 at 03:36 PM

TO

“ To the McCray family, I had the honor and privilege to be assigned to Capt. McCray in 1981. I was fresh out of high school and probably the youngest firefighter he had been assigned. Not knowing what to expect for my first real job and with a career department, I credit Capt. McCray with helping to develop me in my career success. Like all good officers, he had expectations for his guys and helped them to meet those. He was very adamant that those who drove the fire truck knew their streets and hydrant locations. I can remember him asking me, "Junior, where is the 700 block of McCubbins St?" A little known street that wasn't easy to get to, he expected you to know. A nightly ritual when we worked night shifts, he would eat his supper at the back table and then walk over to the watch room. If we were sitting in there with the dispatcher, he expected to see a map open on the desk and you studying it. If you weren't, he would stand outside the door with his arms crossed and his index finger to his chin looking outside until you started studying and of course occasionally throwing out a few streets for you tell him how to get there.

A few short years on the job and I was promoted to Captain. Looking at how he mentored me, I wanted to do the same with my guys. For a period of time, he was the Engine Captain and I was the Ladder Captain at Station 1 and I was having a bad day. We were out training one afternoon and something happened that put a big smile on his face and made my day better. A point that he was trying to get across happened when I touched a part on the pump and he seized the moment to make sure he had been warning drivers about that. It was a classic moment for me.

He was a humble man and a strong family man. While he worked at the fire department he also worked at Food Lion on our days off to support his family and to make sure they grew up with his values. I had heard of his Naval experience with the saving of a crew member who went overboard and wasn't surprised. All though it wasn't a story that he told but was heard from others. Then I learned of his sports achievements from the news article years ago and really had no idea because he never talked about that either.

In reading the obituary of his life, I'm still not surprised at his involvement in other things and can only imagine the impact that he has had on not only the firefighters that he worked with but also the community and organizations that he was part of.

I knew a few years ago of his health condition and was attending a retirement celebration when Mrs. Francis dropped him off at the fire station. I walked over to him and hugged him and he said, "Junior, how you doing"?

*In closing, I will always cherish my time on this earth with Capt. McCray. A great man, leader, and example for so many to follow in service to the country and to the community.
Rest easy my friend.*

Todd (Junior) Overcash

Todd Overcash - March 14, 2019 at 10:41 AM