

Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association

CERTIFICATE OF INDUCTION

This certifies that

Fire Chief Owen S. Collins

has been inducted into the

Tennessee Fire Service Hall of Fame

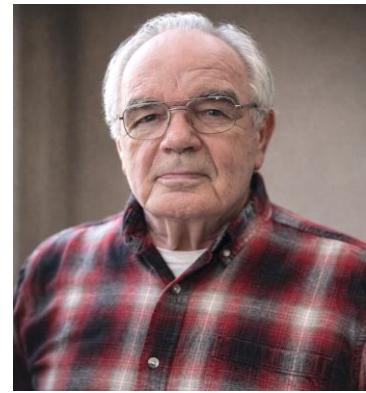
A legacy recognition program to honor individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, exceptional dedicated service, and lasting contributions to the formation and continued success of the Tennessee Fire Service.

This honor is bestowed by the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association to acknowledge a career that exemplifies professionalism, integrity, and commitment to the fire service mission.

Chief Brian Biggs, President
Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association

Date: February 5th 2026





Mission of this program: The mission of our Hall of Fame is defined as "A legacy recognition program to honor individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and/or have provided exceptional service and contributions to the formation and continued success of the Tennessee Fire Service."

The Legacy of Fire Chief Owen S. Collins

Fire Chief Owen S. Collins (Ret.) has spent a lifetime building a legacy in fire service leadership, firefighter education, and public safety that continues to resonate across Tennessee and beyond. Born on October 13, 1941, Chief Collins' journey began when he moved to Madison County, Tennessee, at the age of seven. It would be the place where he lived, served, and eventually retired, leaving behind a legacy of dedication and excellence.

Collins entered the fire service in 1960 as a volunteer member of the Jackson-Madison County Civil Defense Fire Department.

In November 1962, Collins joined the Jackson Fire Department, launching what would become a remarkable 39-year career. In 1964, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and assigned to Fort Knox, Kentucky, where he served as an Air Crash Rescue Firefighter. The skills and discipline he developed during his military service would profoundly influence his later work in the fire service.

Returning to Jackson in 1966, Collins brought with him a new level of experience and professionalism. In 1968, his capabilities were quickly recognized, and he was promoted to become the Jackson Fire Department's first Training Officer. His role placed him at the center of firefighter development, training both new recruits and seasoned firefighters alike.

By 1971, Collins transitioned from city service to a statewide role by joining the Tennessee Fire School as a West Tennessee Regional Instructor. There, he became a cornerstone of firefighter training in the state, traveling across Tennessee to deliver instruction that was as practical as it was inspiring. He was part of the generation that laid the foundation for modern firefighter education in Tennessee.

In 1974, Governor Winfield Dunn appointed Collins as one of the original members of the Tennessee Firefighting Commission on Professional Standards. This newly established body was tasked with setting the training and certification standards for firefighters statewide. Collins' involvement helped shape Tennessee's modern fire service infrastructure.

Notably, Collins also made significant contributions on the national stage. Beginning in 1969, he served on various development and validation committees for the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA), the publisher of "Red Book" training manuals. His knowledge in crash rescue and foam firefighting earned him special recognition in the development of the original Airport Firefighter manual. In 1978, he was elected to the IFSTA Board of Directors, where he served until 1981, influencing national training programs and improving firefighter safety across the country.

Among his many achievements, Chief Collins is perhaps best known for developing and delivering officer-level training programs in Tennessee. He authored and taught courses such as Fire Officer I and II and Fire Instructor. These programs became foundational for departments across the state. Known for his clear instruction and dry wit, he mentored thousands of future fire service leaders with a blend of wisdom, practicality, and humor.

In May 1988, after years of state service, Collins returned to where it all began—the City of Jackson—this time as Fire Chief. His return brought full circle a career that had touched virtually every aspect of the fire service. He led with humility, dedication, and a deep sense of responsibility for his department and community.

Chief Collins officially retired from the Jackson Fire Department in February 2001. But even after retirement, his passions carried him into new adventures. A talented craftsman, he operated a machine shop at his home where he made parts for antique muzzle-loading rifles—a lifelong interest that also led to his service as President of the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association from 1980 to 1983.

In retirement, Collins also held a U.S. Merchant Marine Captain's license and spent a decade delivering yachts and large vessels along America's rivers and coastlines. He traveled extensively between the Great Lakes, Florida Keys, and Gulf Coast, adding yet another chapter to his adventurous life.

Through every chapter of his career and life, Chief Owen Collins exemplified the values of service, humility, and mentorship. He never sought recognition for his accomplishments, yet his influence is undeniable. From the fire academy to the city streets, from classrooms to coastlines, his legacy lives on in the thousands of firefighters he trained, the leaders he mentored, and the lives he made safer through his unwavering commitment to excellence.

Chief Collins has been married for many years and is the proud father of two grown children, a son who lives in Nashville and a daughter who resides in Mountain City. His life is a testament to what it means to serve with purpose, lead with compassion, and leave a lasting mark on the world.

Congratulations on your induction and on being the first inductee into this prestigious legacy program. This honor reflects a lifetime of dedication, leadership, and service to others, and it recognizes a legacy that will endure well beyond today.

As FDNY Chief Edward F. Croker so powerfully stated, "I have no ambition in this world but one, and that is to be a fireman." Your career embodies that calling, and your example will continue to inspire generations within the fire service.