

Fireman's Prayer

History of the Fireman's Prayer

The only way he could find to ease the pain of such a tragedy was to sit down and put his thoughts on paper. The phrase, "enable me to be alert and hear the weakest shout", sends a chill up a firefighter's spine as you imagine what he experienced on that fateful night. It was a particularly tough time for him as he had young children around the same age.

While most accounts of the Firemen's Prayer conclude with Author Unknown, the world renowned poem was written by Firefighter A.W. "Smokey" Linn. As a young firefighter in 1958 Linn and his crew responded to a fire in which three children were trapped behind security bars and died in the fire.

His granddaughter, Penny McGlachlin said that back then there were no grief counselors to help the firefighters. Penny believes this was an actual prayer from him, to god for the sake of his own family, the other fireman, and the families of the children.

Smokey joined the Wichita, Kansas Fire Department in 1947 after returning from World War 2. He retired in 1975 and became president of the local chapter of the Good Sam Camping Club. He passed away March 31, 2004 of complications following surgery.

The Fireman's Prayer was originally published in a book called, "A Celebration of Poets" in 1958. The last copyright of the book was 1998. It is the family's desire that the credit for the Firemen's Prayer go to the author, A.W. Smokey Linn

The Fireman's Prayer

When I am called to duty, God
whenever flames may rage,
Give me the strength to save some life
Whatever be its age.
Help me to embrace a little child
Before it's too late,
Or some older person
from the horror of that fate.
Enable me to be alert
And hear the weakest shout,
And quickly and efficiently
to put the fire out.
I want to fill my calling
and give the best in me,
To guard my neighbor
And protect his property.
And if according to Your will
I have to lose my life,
Please bless with Your protecting hand
My children and my wife