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FIRE PROTECTION TECHNOLOGY LEADER WILL RETIRE AFTER 29 YEARS AT GTCC

JAMESTOWN – Lloyd Stanley was an unlikely choice to spend 40 years in the fire fighting business.

As a child growing up in High Point, Stanley never had an infatuation with big red fire trucks and never got excited when a screaming fire vehicle went by his West End home.

“I was just looking for a job when I went to work for the High Point Fire Department in June 1968,” he said. “I loved it. I said I would quit when it stopped being fun. It never stopped being fun,” Stanley said.

Stanley, 63, will retire Nov. 1 as department chair of fire protection technology at Guilford Technical Community College. He spent more than 29 years at GTCC training firemen, and was one of the pioneers in building the fire technology program at the school. He and his wife Pamela live in Greensboro.

After 10 years with High Point Fire Department, Stanley spent a short stint as a fire marshal for a private industry in Eden before becoming an instructor. He took a job at Guilford Technical Institute (now GTCC), working under the fire science technology program’s only other employee, Howard Wood.

“There were eight students in the program when I went to work there on Sept. 8, 1980,” he said. “We now have about 65 fulltime students and a great many part-time students,” Stanley said.

“I hadn’t been there long until Howard left, and they made me the chairman of the department,” he said.

Coworker Bob Halpin said that Stanley “contributed a lot toward making the program what it is today. He was always open to new ideas; and he pushed us (instructors) to look for new things.”

“He always had the best interest of the students at heart,” Halpin said. “We’ve grown to being one of the best fire technology programs in the state under his leadership,” Halpin said.

“In 2006, GTCC became the only community college in the state that has been able to buy a new fire truck,” Halpin said. It also was under Stanley’s leadership that a fire academy to certify firemen was started, he said.

“Lloyd was a consummate professional who often went beyond the call of duty,” said Bill Geter, dean of GTCC’s Greensboro campus. “He always worked late hours and had an excellent relationship with students,” Geter said.

Even as a High Point fire fighter, Stanley was willing to “work extra” in order to earn a two-year degree from Guilford Tech and a four-year degree at Winston-Salem State University.

Stanley planned to make a career of the U.S. Air Force, where he spent four years after graduating from High Point Central in 1964. Meanwhile, he married his high school sweetheart and decided to leave military service after his son Michael was born.

Even before his Air Force job was over, Stanley was reading the help wanted section of the High Point newspaper. “My wife sent me the newspapers, and I started looking for a job. The top one was the High Point Fire Department. I’d never thought about being a fireman but figured I could do that – and besides, it paid more than the other jobs in there (the advertisements),” he said.

He submitted an application and took the tests required by the City of High Point in June 1968, and remained with the fire department until November 1979.

Teaching was Stanley's niche. His knowledge of fire fighting, his good nature and "laid back" attitude made him popular with students.

Being nearly 6-4 and weighing 260 pounds, Stanley also could demonstrate to his students the physical requirements of a fire fighter's job – pulling heavy hose, using heavy equipment and even climbing to great heights.

The classroom was a place he loved, he said. "The neatest thing about teaching is when you see a student who has been struggling with something, and the 'light bulb comes on.'" You know you've accomplished something in helping that student," he said.

"I never regretted going there," he said of his career as a teacher and leader in fire protection technology. "The fire service never gets out of you. Fire service people are really good people – like policemen and other jobs develop a closeness," Stanley said.

Stanley has spent recent months recovering from a shoulder operation and other medical complications. "I thought I might stay on the job longer but when I started having health problems, I figured it was a good time to retire," he said.

He and Pamela have a daughter, Beth Betts, living in Mississippi. Son Michael lives nearby, and the Stanleys figure they are going to be able to see their children and their six grandchildren more. "We're going to do some traveling when I get well," he said. "I also like to fish."

"My wife and I want to do some volunteer work – give something back to the community," he said.

Stanley said he may have another project. "I might write a book. I have some ideas I could write about," he said.

Stanley's not giving away his book idea. It'll probably be an adventure novel and the hero will be a firefighter. He has pretty much already been a textbook to hundreds of fire fighters.

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