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“Congratulations on your retirement, Charles!”

9/11, when his fire department teamed up with other county agencies and the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC inside Meeks Park in order to never forget American lives lost to senseless acts of terrorism.

Worden shared some of the history of his career, including when he and others began Union County’s first five volunteer fire stations in 1984, on up through his years as Union County fire chief between 1993 and 2014, during which time he grew the fire department to its current 12 stations.

He also touched on more personal moments of humanity, such as having to leave the family dinner table to help others in need, and Worden closed on a note of solidarity within the ranks of first responders.

“Thanks to all of the departments, thanks to all of the members, all of the people, to Commissioner Paris, Larry Garrett, and on down the line,” said Worden. “If you would, give all of these people a hand, because they helped make my job much easier, and helped to get things done.”

Worden, now 70, is a Union County native and graduate of Union County High School. He attended Young Harris College after high school, and upon graduation from college in 1967 went to work for the Tennessee Chemical Company

in Copperhill.

In the 1970s, Worden joined the company fire brigade, kicking off his decades-long involvement with firefighting. He continued to work for the chemical company through the 1980s, and in 1984 became a founding member of the volunteer fire departments of Union County, where he worked his way up to battalion chief.

When the chemical company folded in 1990, Worden went to work as a jailer for the Union County Sheriff’s Office, where he forged a healthy respect for the men and women of local law enforcement.

He was a jailer for a couple of years, and even spent a few months in 911 dispatch before being hired on as Union County Fire Chief in 1993. Up until the mid-1990s, Worden farmed hay as a side business, something his family had done for decades on their 86-acre farm.

In 1996, Worden was appointed EMA director by Gov. Zell Miller following the retirement of Hughes Chatham, and it was in the early 2000s that he took over as 911 director.

Worden retired as fire chief in 2014, at which point he received a commemorative fire ax given him by his firefighters, and David Dyer took over as fire chief while Worden continued as EMA and 911

director.

During his retirement reception last Friday, Worden gave his blessing to Fire Chief Dyer, who will once again carry on in Worden’s footsteps, this time taking on the added responsibilities of EMA and 911 director effective Feb. 1, 2017.

Worden Jr., Charles’ son, is especially proud of his father, and would like the community to know that Worden Sr. helped to launch many promising first responder careers in Union



Those in attendance gave Worden a standing ovation for the work he’s put in over the years.



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris presented Worden with a special plaque honoring his years of service.

County, including his own.

As a retiree, Worden says he looks forward to concentrating on some overdue remodeling projects, and in general plans on enjoying life as much as possible.

Worden would like to thank his wife and son for their constant support over the years, adding that he couldn’t have done it without them.



Union County Fire Chief David Dyer took over as EMA/911 director on Wednesday, Feb. 1. Dyer and Worden are longtime friends.



Worden enjoyed being surrounded by family, friends and colleagues during his retirement party on Friday, Jan. 27.