

## **Remarks by Fire Chief Joe Boney at the West End Hose Co. No. 3 fund-raising dinner on Saturday, Nov. 5, 2016.**

Good evening, and welcome; for those of you who don't know me, I am Joe Boney, Chief of the Biloxi Fire Department and an officer on the board of the WEHCO#3.

I thank each of you for attending this sixth annual steak dinner fund raiser. With the inception of this event, the WEHCO#3 was looking to provide a unique experience. Now, anyone can have a steak dinner for a fundraiser, but how many of you have experienced an authentic firehouse meal? Take away the adult beverages, the tablecloths, and napkins, and what you will experience tonight is the same meal served on payday in firehouses across the country.

We will begin your dining experience with steaks cooked by our own Battalion Chief Tony Murphy, whose grilling skills are a prime (pun intended) example of just why firehouse meals are raved about and so sought after. All the guys in the kitchen who are preparing the meals for your enjoyment as well as the guys waiting on you tonight (with the exception of some experienced help guiding them) are all members of the Biloxi Fire Department. So at the end of your meal, if you feel we have met your expectations (or even if we fell short), please let a museum board member know changes need to be made so next year will be even better.

Speaking of board members, I would like to introduce to you the board for the WEHCO#3 Fire Museum: first, Richard Murden our president, Eugene Ellzey, our vice president, Shelly Babashikin, our secretary; Robert Anderson, Sammy Handler, Matt Boney, Larry Gibson, and Ray Freeman.

I am proud to say that the WEHCO#3 is the only city museum I know of that not only relies on an all-volunteer base to staff and manage the facility, but also uses 100 percent of the donations received to finance our day-to-day operations and maintenance; and we like it like that. We have, however, requested support (normally in the form of in-kind service) from the City of Biloxi to assist in our disaster relief efforts. In fact, throughout the last four years, we have responded to assist in the aftermath of six disasters around the country. Our mission has led us to New York, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and north Mississippi. The museum also hosts the annual Fireman's Day Parade held each year in September; we provide a fire truck ride for Santa to attend the City's annual Christmas parade, and we host the Kids Fire Academy, which is a two-week program where the Biloxi Fire Department teaches children ages 7 to 14 about fire safety and what it is like to be a firefighter. And there are so many other community activities the museum participates in.

This year for the first time, the museum is adding a new program to this event. As I mentioned, we are an all-volunteer organization, and in our efforts, every once in a

while we encounter someone who makes an impression on us. For instance, a couple of years ago I met a gentleman from Japan who was touring the museum. After a lengthy conversation I found that he was on the Coast after Katrina in an official capacity for his government to find out what lessons were learned here in the aftermath of such a large natural disaster. At that time, this gentleman saw the museum and the damage it received, and on a return trip he found it had re-opened, so he just had to stop in. I discovered he was a retired firefighter from Japan, and I am happy to say that Mr. Yakomano and I still exchange e-mails from time to time.

What I am trying to say, is that it's not always about money or tangible things. Every once in a while someone comes along, and through their genuine interest in your efforts, they strike a bond with an organization. I know I speak for the entire museum board when I say Danny Guice has done that for us here at the WEHCO#3. He has attended numerous functions here at the museum. Every year, he shows up for the Fireman's Day Parade, and on any given Saturday he will show up at the museum just to converse and remember the good ol' days. I could spend a lot of time telling you of his many accomplishments, and there are quite a few, but I want to spend a few minutes telling you of some of the things about his life from my perspective, so please indulge me.

Mr. Guice was married to the lovely Margret Barrett Guice for 58 years; they had three children, Carolyn, Danny, and Barry. He is one of a very few public servants who has served in the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches of state government. Mr. Guice was the ninth fulltime mayor of the City of Biloxi, serving from 1961 to 1973--a time that was, to say the least, full of challenges. During his tenure, he experienced the landfall of Hurricane Camille in 1969 and was highly commended for his exemplary efforts in bringing our City back after such a major disaster.

But many of you may not be aware that the time frame from the mid-'60s to the mid-'80s was also considered "war years" for the American fire service, as our country was literally burning down. Biloxi was no exception. The BayView Lanes on the corner of Lameuse and Bayview Avenue burned on Nov. 29, 1962. In December of 1964, there was a fire at the old Crystal Ice Company building on the corner of Lameuse and Railroad streets, and the Folks building on the corner of Howard Avenue and Reynoir Street burned on Christmas Eve of that same year. The Roxey Theater on Howard Avenue burned on Jan. 3, 1965, and on July 20, 1966, the fifth floor of the Buena Vista Hotel burned, destroying 125 rooms in the hotel. Within two weeks of February 1968, two A&P grocery stores, one on West Beach and one on Howard Avenue, burned down.

During his time as mayor, Mr. Guice placed his faith in another extraordinary gentleman to be his Fire Chief, Frank Gabrich. Although I never had the pleasure to meet Chief

Gabrich, his reputation as a remarkable Chief was acknowledged by many of his predecessors. On a good note, while Mr. Guice was mayor, he saw the grand opening of Mary Mahoney's Old French house on Oct. 8, 1964, and he also saw the New Orleans Saints play their first game at Tulane stadium on Sept. 17, 1967. And when Hurricane Camille slammed ashore on Aug. 17, 1969, I was 9 years old; but even at 9 some things stuck in my brain. Along with the bumper stickers that professed we would rebuild, I remember Mayor Guice wearing his blue jump suit in every news report and boy didn't that image inspire you to roll up your sleeves and get to work.

Mr. Guice was selected as Outstanding Citizen by the Biloxi Lyons Club in 1962; so you see Mr. Guice, after all of that research I finally found something we have in common, and not just our love of history or the Biloxi Fire service, but I also had the same honor of being Outstanding Citizen which was bestowed on me last year.

In closing, we thank you, Mr. Guice, for your quiet inspiration and continued sponsorship for this organization. I hope that you will continue to grace us with your presence; we truly enjoy your company, and we appreciate all your efforts in guiding this great city through the war years and in the aftermath of Hurricane Camille

On behalf of all the members of the WEHCO#3, I want express our gratitude, and therefore, in your honor, we have planted a beautiful shade tree in the museum's front yard to symbolize your support in helping us grow.

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