



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Retired Belleville Fire Chief Honored with Surprise Celebration on 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

**October 7, 2019**

City of Belleville officials, friends and family of retired Belleville Fire Chief and World War II hero Fred Bruss recently celebrated his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday at a surprise party at Belleville Fire House #4.

“Freddy served the City of Belleville as both a fireman and as Fire Chief for 30 years,” said Mayor Mark Eckert. “He was born and raised in Belleville and served this country and the residents of this city in a very distinguished and honorable career.”

During the celebration, Buss was presented with a proclamation by Eckert, officially honoring his service to our country, the city and his family. Several retired fire chiefs and fire personnel along with current fire department personnel were present, too.

Bruss served as an aerial gunner, and from April 1944 to January 1945, he flew 60 combat missions in an A20 fighter airplane over enemy territory, including three in which he was shot down. He earned many military service awards including the Army Airforce Technician Badge, Marksman Badge with Rifle Bar, Aerial Gunners Badge, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal, European-Africa-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four Bronze Service Stars, a World War II Victory Medal, and the Honorable Service lapel button.

Bruss was married to Wilma Bruss for 53 years and they had three children, Sandra, David, and Bryan, and eight grandchildren. In 2000, Bruss remarried after the passing of his first wife to Kathleen Vogt Bujnak.

Bruss began working for the City of Belleville Fire Department in 1949, and he retired as Fire Chief in 1979. He was also president of the Illinois Association of Firefighters for various years from 1976-2006. At the event, attendees enjoyed several photo albums outlining the history of the Belleville Fire Department.

“We took time to honor Freddy today because guys like him aren’t really worried about recognition or medals,” said Eckert. “But we thought it was time to officially honor him and provide him with the recognition he’s been due along with celebrating his 95 years. We’re proud to have a shared history with him.”

To learn more about the City of Belleville, visit [www.belleville.net](http://www.belleville.net).

Cutline: Belleville Mayor Mark Eckert presents a proclamation from the City of Belleville honoring Fred Bruss, pictured here, at his surprise 95<sup>th</sup> birthday party on Saturday.

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