

Richard G. "Andy" Anderson

—Frank Brehm

Richard G. Anderson, at the age of 90, passed away on August 1, 2016, at Renown Medical Center in Reno, Nevada, after a brief illness. To all of us in the Feather River Rail Society and his many friends he was known as just "Andy".

Andy was born on November 30, 1925, to Mary and Earl Anderson in Herrin, Illinois. Raised on the family farm Andy learned the value of hard work at an early age. He saw his father work in the coal mines as well as tend to the farm and vowed at an early age to get his father out of the mines.

He was an amazing man and had an equally amazing and love-filled life. Andy loved people and it showed in the way he lived his life, always helping others. Although he will be remembered for his career in the firefighting service that was not his original career path.

While growing up Andy had started working in

the local mortuary after high school and found that to his liking. After an honorable discharge from the US Navy, with the help of a friend he attended mortician school in San Francisco and after completing his apprenticeship in Richmond moved to Red Bluff. The Coroner in Red Bluff saw Andy as competition. The coroner's son owned the mortuary in Portola and wasn't doing so well so made a deal with Andy and sold him the mortuary, thereby moving young Andy out of Red Bluff to Portola in 1954. It was in Portola that he got his first taste of the fire service having become involved with the town's fire department.

In 1956, he moved to Quincy when the opportunity arose to purchase the funeral home there came his way; with the help of his father he was now running the mortuaries in both Quincy and Portola. It was that same year, he joined the Quincy Volunteer Fire Department. Clearly, he had no idea of the legacy that would result when, five months after joining the firefighting ranks in Quincy, he was elected their volunteer fire chief. In order to raise a family and pay their bills, he



Prior to boarding the 707 for the trip down to Quincy, Steve Habeck (left), Andy and his wife Gayle stand next to the 707 which was "named" in Andy's honor for his retirement dinner.

—Frank Brehm Photo.

continued to own and operate the funeral home in Quincy until selling it in 1986.

Andy often said he wasn't looking to be the fire chief, he just wanted to help the department, which he did for the next 50 years, right up until his retirement from the department in 2007. As Chief Andy took the small rural fire department and turned it into a role model for all volunteer departments, not just in Plumas County, but throughout the state and country. He was the department's sixth chief in its first 128 years. His devotion to the department, 'his' firefighters, the community and emergency services was evident in nearly everything he did in his career over the next half century.

Most notable might be the development and construction of the emergency services training facility at Fire Station 1 on Lawrence Street in Quincy. He and his wife Gayle also donated the land behind the station for this training complex on Andy's Way, the side street appropriately named in his honor in 2006. He was responsible for merging the Plumas County Fire Chiefs' Association and the county's Fire and Emergency Association into one group, which he chaired for 25 years. He established the county's first Disaster Council and chaired the county's Multi-Agency Coordination Team and was on the organizing committee to form the Plumas Fire Safe Council.

He was also the director of the Office of Emergency Services for more than 30 years. In 1983, the Board of Supervisors appointed him the County Fire Warden. At the state level, he was appointed to the Senate Select Committee on Volunteerism in Fire Service and was a charter member and past president of the California Rural Firefighters Association.

Along side his life's devotion to fire service, his other passions included county fairs, railroading, radio broadcasting and flying his own airplane. For 35 years, he volunteered for various jobs at the fairgrounds including serving as the master of ceremonies at various grandstand events. He stepped in as fair manager for four years, from 1987 to 1991.

He was also a member of the board of directors for the Feather River Rail Society, being elected by the board to fill a vacancy in October 1998. He was elected President at the July 1999 meeting. Andy did not care for being called President, instead preferring the title of Chairman. He became very active in the Run-a-Locomotive program, and of course excelled in this endeavor. He never tired of promoting the museum and was instrumental in finding support and funds for many museum projects.

In 2006 Andy decided that 50 years in the fire service was enough and it was time to call it a job well done. Andy refused to say the word 'retire', instead preferring to say he was moving on to other opportunities. A retirement dinner was held for Andy on November 11, 2006 where he was presented with a tribute as entered on September 28, 2006 into the Congressional Record of the House of Representatives by Rep. John T. Doolittle;

Mr. Speaker, today I wish to recognize and honor an outstanding citizen and public servant who will celebrate his 50th Anniversary as Fire Chief of the Quincy Volunteer Fire Department on November 11, 2006. I join with the local community of Quincy and the residents of Plumas County in congratulating Mr. Richard G. "Andy" Anderson for his remarkable service.

Andy Anderson was born and raised on a farm in Southern Illinois. In addition to attending school and performing farming chores, Andy also worked at the local mortuary. When World War II commenced in 1941, he pleaded with his father to allow him to serve in the United States military. When his father finally granted permission in 1942, Andy enrolled in the United States Navy and served aboard the USS Cullman for the duration of the conflict and received an honorable discharge for his contributions.

After the war, Andy attended mortician school in San Francisco and completed his apprenticeship in the Bay Area. He then took a position in Red Bluff, California, before purchasing mortuaries in Portola and Quincy, California. In 1956, Andy moved to Quincy to

manage his businesses and was elected fire chief of the local department in November of that same year. During his service as chief, Andy made the Quincy Volunteer Fire Department into a model organization. He has stressed the importance of inter-agency cooperation and created the Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association which included the fire chiefs from throughout rural Plumas County. Andy served as the chairman of this organization for 25 years. Presently, the organization has expanded to include all Plumas County emergency service providers. In addition to this valuable contribution, Andy participated in or created several other county and statewide organizations dedicated to emergency services and disaster preparedness. To this day, he serves as the Director of the Plumas County Office of Emergency Services and as Plumas County Fire Warden.

Andy is also an accomplished pilot and has an active interest in radio broadcasting, railroading, and county fairs. He has poured his efforts into these worthy causes as well as numerous other local volunteer and civic organizations. Andy has great pride in his two grandsons, Will and Richard, and has been married to his wife Gayle for over 42 years. He affectionately refers to Gayle as "the real Chief."

Mr. Speaker, my district encompasses a large area of rural California, and I am happy to say that these communities are kept strong by people like Andy Anderson who make sacrifices in order to serve their fellow citizens. Andy is deserving of our recognition because of his five decades of public fire and emergency service, his military service to our country, and his love of family. I appreciate the opportunity to honor him today.

This tribute was also entered into the record of the California State Legislature on September 29, 2006.

Many of the local population may also remember him as a popular early morning disc jockey on the local radio station. While on the air, Andy always ended each radio broadcast

playing the Orange Blossom Special in the background with one heartfelt message: "... and if I'm lucky, I'll get to see you." Well Andy, clearly those who knew you consider themselves the lucky ones.

He is survived by his loving, devoted and supportive wife of 52 years, Gayle; sons Will (Kelly) and Rick (Sara); and grandson Richard G. Anderson III and step-granddaughter Sadie Dingel. Andy was preceded in death by his parents, Earl and Mary Anderson; son Ed Anderson; and brother Earl Anderson.



Steve Habeck and Rod McClure behind the sign on the 707 which thanked Andy for his public service.

—Gail McClure Photo.