

made possible the erection of this splendid new home of the Crisfield Fire Department.

The construction of the building is surely one of the most important developments in the 80-year-old history of this great organization. The structure stands as a symbol of the determination of this Department to serve Crisfield and the surrounding area by offering the citizens of the community protection in their lives and properties.

I think all of you know that my experience as a fire fighter goes back to early manhood, when I first joined this volunteer fire department. It has been most gratifying to me to observe the progress that has been made in fire prevention and fire protection, here in my hometown and elsewhere in Maryland, since that time.

In both interest and achievement, Maryland ranks high among the states in the measure of protection afforded citizens against the menace of fires. Much of the credit for this good record must go to volunteer organizations such as this Eastport Volunteer Fire Company, which for three-quarters of a century has been engaged in the vital public function of protecting the lives and properties of the residents of this community.

Our accomplishments in Maryland in this public service is the product of the teamwork of professional and volunteer fire fighters, and our City—this City of Crisfield—offers an outstanding example of this collaborative effort. We have, as I have stated, achieved a notable record here in Maryland, but to rest on our oars because of this achievement would be an unforgiveable neglect of public responsibility. The serious drain on the resources of the State from fire losses, to say nothing of the tragic loss in lives, must ever remain of deep concern to all of us.

We hear and read much about traffic safety, which is as it should be since traffic accidents continue to be the greatest single peril to the security of our citizens. But it is regrettable, I think, that more emphasis is not placed upon fire safety. It is a fact that the people in the fire service stand virtually alone in promoting the effort to save lives and property by preventing and fighting fires.

Scores of persons lose their lives each year in Maryland in fires, most of which could—and of course should—be prevented. Hardly a day passes that we do not read in our newspapers accounts of deaths by fires. An incident of unspeakable horror occurred recently in Anne Arundel County, when a family of nine was wiped out in a residential fire. Heart-rending incidents such as this should impel us to work harder at our task, with firm resolution that we will do a better job of fire prevention and fire protection in the future.