

# Firemen's Memorial

831 Franklin St. • Scott Wise, Artist  
by Wilson Mendez, Jr.

Sept. 11, 2001 is a day that will forever live in infamy as one of the greatest American tragedies of this or any generation. It is with this sentiment the Firemen's Memorial, of all of Scott Wise's body of work, resonates very personally with him.

Wise has served as Clarksville fireman since 1997. As the events unfolded on Sept. 11, 2001, Wise watched television with his fellow firemen on duty with a sense of helplessness. On that day three hundred and forty-three firemen gave their lives trying to save other lives in the line of duty like they were trained to do.

The memorial was not commissioned by any specific group or organization. Its initial concept began with Wise himself. He gave his personal time and effort to pay remembrance in his own way.

The piece is a ½ life size bronze sculpture of a fireman's boots with the helmet sitting on top of them. It rests on a granite block donated by Clarksville Memorial. On the front of the piece sits a plaque with the names of those in Clarksville who lost their lives on duty. A crucifix made of bronze adorns the back.

Only three names are on the plaque: Claude B. Welker Dec. 3, 1960; George "Pen" Wilson May 13, 1967 and Ray Harrison Aug. 21, 1981. Traditionally this is how firemen have honored those who gave their lives in the execution of their duties. It is similar to the way the armed forces honor their fallen soldiers.

Out of the tragedy came a sense of unity throughout our nation. This spirit of unity also guided the project. Various businesses in and around Clarksville contributed monetarily to Wise's endeavor. He kept his work at the fire station and worked on it when time permitted.

The piece took him over two years to complete. The memorial was unveiled on September 11, 2004, as part of an annual ceremony dedicated to fallen firefighters every Sept. 11.

Wise said, "In doing the piece, I feel like I have done something for the families, for their loved ones to remember them by."

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