McCray, Fire Rescue division chief, retires

Contributed by C.B. Hanif
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RIVIERA BEACH – Riviera Beach Fire Rescue Division Chief Robert McCray, a son of the city as well as one of its most beloved families, retired last week after 30 years with the department.

“If feels great, but it’s bittersweet,” McCray said Monday after returning from Tallahassee, where he and his wife Rangelique Moultrie McCray, both Rattlers, enjoyed Florida A&M University’s homecoming weekend with their family.

“I’m very elated that I’ve made 30 years in the service,” he added.

“I’m very blessed, and I appreciate it. It’s been real – surreal, I guess you could say. I usually say, ‘I’ve got to get back to be to work in the morning." McCray said he already misses serving the public, after so many years when for him it was, “Customer Service, Job one.” So what’s next?

“I’m going to continue doing what I’ve always been doing: continue traveling, for example. We’re going to continue to enjoy life,” he said. “As far as what I’m going to do right now? I’ve got the honey-do list. I knew that was coming: ‘Now that you have the t-i-m-e, you can do this, you can do that.’ I knew the honey-do list was going to be there waiting.”

McCray said his parents moved to Riviera in 1949, establishing a family residence on Fifth Street near a park “nicknamed the firehouse — isn’t that ironic?”

His mother Sadie, who died in August at 84, was the area’s first female cab driver; father P.J. McCray retired from the steel industry, then also drove a taxi.

Among seven brothers and two sisters is Nathaniel, who retired as a captain from the West Palm Beach department after opening doors for other African-American firefighters, McCray said. “We were a community then. My mom raised everybody on the block and the other ladies did too.”

The city’s motto is “A great place in which to live, work and play,” McCray noted. “I have lived that out since the beginning of time. I was born in Riviera Beach, lived in Riviera Beach all my life, never desired to live outside of the city.”

Residents likely can count on more service from their native son.