

SUMMER
2022
EDITION

HALL OF FLAME

NEWSLETTER



Article Highlights

[Museum Donations](#)

[Thunderbird Fire & Safety Equipment Corp. Fire](#)

[Fire Investigations](#)

[1937 Pirsch Aerial](#)

[Volunteer Spotlight](#)

[Notice Board](#)

[Museum Staff & NHFF Board of Directors](#)



Hall of Flame
Website



Hall of Flame
YouTube



@hallofflamemuseum



Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting



@Hall_Museum

HOT SUMMER AHEAD!

Fully Air Conditioned Galleries

WORLD'S LARGEST FIREFIGHTING MUSEUM



The Museum of Firefighting is home to the National Firefighting Hall of Heroes and has an acre of fire exhibits, over 100 fully restored fire apparatus on display, a children's area, and museum gift shop. Visit us today and learn more about our exhibits, collections and programs.



FATHER'S DAY GIFT IDEA



Includes the National Firefighter Hall of Heroes

Exhibits, Games & Activities for Kids ages 3 and up!

6101 East Van Buren St. Phx AZ 85008

NEW HOURS Tuesday-Saturday • 10am-6pm

Tours available for 10+ by appointment.
Available for Special Functions

602.ASK.FIRE

602.275.3473

HallOfFlame.org

501(c)(3)
non-profit
organization



MUSEUM DONATIONS

We have enjoyed a lot of generosity here at the Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting in recent months. It has come not just from monetary gifts, grateful as we are for them, but also in donation of services, materials, and highly skilled labor. For instance:

In January, volunteer Norbe Purall donated his time and electrical expertise (and his wife Bonnie donated his absence) to install red lights that rotate when you push and hold down a button on the dashboard of our 1951 cab-forward American LaFrance pumper in Gallery II, the one truck in our collection available for boarding. Brian Emmel of emergency lighting firm Federal Signal coordinated the donation of the rotating lights for this project. It greatly adds to the fun of playing on this truck.

This same truck, as well as the nearby 1948 Mack from Pierre, South Dakota, received a spiffing-up from expert detailer Eloy Martinez. Eloy is currently working on a 1926 Ford Model T Chief's car from Yakima, Washington which was recently donated to the museum and is being prepared for display.



Thunderbird donation in permanent home near Children's Safety House

Hall of Flame volunteers Bob Bombiadi and Jim Goode demonstrated their formidable ingenuity in wiring the former front desk from Thunderbird Fire and Safety Equipment Corporation with similar lights that flash.

The handsome piece, which now resides in our kids' play area, was donated by former Thunderbird Fire owner Fred Nachman (see "Thunderbird Fire & Safety Equipment Corp. Fire" for more details).

After receiving a large donation of gently used carpet tiles from Globe Corporation, the Hall of Flame was truly fortunate to get them perfectly installed by Jesse Ruiz and his crew at a great discount. This excellent, much-needed work may be seen in our play area, our video theater, and our Hall of Heroes. It has since been shampooed by Cecil's Carpet & Tile Cleaning, at another generous discount to the Museum.



Eloy Martinez poses with the donated Model-T Fire Chief's car after completing the wax & polish work



Chris Dockter of Sunstate Equipment takes a quick pause during installation of the new tires for the 1955 Baldwin

Along with the building and the kids' attractions, the trucks on exhibit also got some upgrades. Chris Dockter with the tire division of Sunstate Equipment on Washington Street contributed both material and labor to our 1955 aerial ladder truck from Baldwin, New York and other rigs that are used outside the museum.

The Hall of Flame's volunteers also got some donor love. They received a major donation from John Balzic of MJ Trophies in Glendale; more than 100 shirts were provided for the museum's volunteer organization, with accompanying embroidery.

Without contributions of this sort, it would be difficult for the Hall of Flame Museum to maintain our public programs, or the level of experience that we try to give every visitor. Great appreciation to all!

THUNDERBIRD FIRE & SAFETY EQUIPMENT CORP. FIRE

Many Phoenix-area firefighters and emergency workers remember doing business at the old Thunderbird Fire and Safety Equipment Corporation building.

Located on Roeser Rd in Phoenix, it is distinctive because the side of the concrete building had a giant mural on it, painted by noted artist Richard Haas, resembling an old-fashioned fire station.

The building was as intriguing inside as outside. Walking into the reception area, visitors to Thunderbird would encounter a one-of-a-kind reception desk made from the cab of an E-One (and a Pierce front bumper); the owner, Paradise Valley resident and longtime Valley businessman Fred Nachman, commissioned the unique desk around 1985.



improved seating, it is already being “driven” by young visitors to imaginary fires.

Earlier this year Hall of Flame volunteer Norbe Purall rewired our 1951 American LaFrance pumper in Gallery 2—the one full-size truck in the museum which anyone is permitted to climb and play on—with lights that flash in response to pressing a button in the cab. It quickly added fun and excitement to the experience of the truck for our young visitors. Soon after, Hall of Flame volunteer and all-around repair person Jim Goode wired the Thunderbird desk with similar lights to enhance its already considerable entertainment value for the kids

Fred has now donated this singular piece of Phoenix’s fire history to the Hall of Flame Museum. This past February the desk was transported to the museum, carefully unloaded, then painstakingly reassembled by Hall of Flame docent Bob Bombiadi. After a brief period on display in Gallery 3, the desk has been moved into the play area at the rear of Gallery 4, where, newly equipped with

FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

Despite the traditional rivalry between police and firefighters, at times the jobs overlap. Here in Arizona, for instance, almost 90 years ago, firefighters were instrumental in the arrest of one of the most notorious of all American criminals, John Dillinger.

In January of 1934, the famed bank robber from Indiana was hiding out, along with several members of his gang, at the Hotel Congress in Tucson when a fire, apparently accidental, broke out. Guests were evacuated; Dillinger's gang tipped Tucson firefighters William Benedict and John Freeman to retrieve their luggage. Freeman and Benedict noticed the luggage was unusually heavy. Soon after, the firefighters recognized the men from pictures in press coverage of the crimes and reported them to Tucson PD. Dillinger and his men were arrested (Dillinger later escaped custody in Crown Point, Indiana; he was killed by federal agents outside a Chicago movie theater that summer in the celebrated "Lady in Red" incident).

A much more recent example of firefighting criminal investigation occurred here in the Valley during the "Phoenix Serial Shooter" case of 2006. On a recent visit to the Hall of Flame, Mike Blaire, an inspector and investigator for the Glendale Fire Department from 1985 until his retirement in 2011, recalled his contribution to the case.

On the same night in June of 2006, arson fires broke out in the artificial flower department of two different Walmarts, one at 55th Avenue and Northern and the other at Bethany Home Road and the 101. Blaire was assigned to investigate.



Glendale, AZ Fire Department Inspector and Investigator, Mike Blair

"There was a lot of smoke; not much fire," says Blaire. "It was the biggest high-loss fire I've ever done..." Blaire notes that the store decided to dispose of all the food in stock, even though it was fully packaged and undamaged.

“It was depressing watching their employees line up and throw all that food in the dumpsters,” he recalls.

Surveillance video from both stores showed two men in the area of the fires. When this footage was shown in the media, Blaire received a tip from a citizen. A woman was confident that one of the men, whose face was clearly visible in the video, was her boyfriend.

“She’s saying it’s hard to believe, he seems like such a nice guy; he’s great with my kid. While she talked, I started thinking, I’m going to need to go see this guy,” says Blaire. “Then right as we were finishing up, I asked a question I would often ask at the end of an interview. I said, is there anything else you want to tell me that I haven’t asked?”

It was a momentous question. “She said, ‘he told me he was killing people.’”

Blaire quickly realized that he was onto a lead in the case of the Serial Shooter, a string of shootings from car windows and other “recreational violence” directed at both people and animals that year (simultaneous with the unrelated murders and sexual assaults of the “Baseline Killer”). Upon hearing his interview subject’s story, Blaire remembered a maxim among criminal investigators: “Not all arsonists are serial killers, but almost all serial killers are arsonists.”

Blaire passed on his information to the Phoenix PD Task Force working the case, but, he says, “The task force didn’t take it seriously.” After the arrests, however—it turned out there were two serial shooters, plus a third man who assisted—Blaire was called upon to testify about the arsons at their trial. He presented ample material to back up the charges.

“That’s something I tried to do all my career,” he says. “When I went to court, I tried to overwhelm them with evidence.”

His efforts prevailed. The defendants, Dale Hausner and Sam Dieteman, were convicted of 80 out of 87 charges. Hausner was sentenced to death (he died by his own hand in prison in Florence in 2013) and Dieteman was sentenced to life in prison without possibility of parole.

If Blaire's contribution to the case was underreported locally, it was recognized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, who gave him a special award. Prior to the Shooter case, he had already been named Arson Investigator of the Year by the Arizona Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators.

As for Blaire himself, he speaks of his work with a characteristically modest shrug: "I thought I did a good thing."

1937 AERIAL PIRSCH

We are always excited here at the Hall of Flame when we meet people who remember our exhibits from before they became museum pieces. In recent months we had two different visitors to the Museum who offered us first-hand memories of our beautiful 1937 Pirsch "All-Power" Aerial, now on display in Gallery 4.

One was a gentleman named David, who came to the Hall of Flame on a senior tour from La Siena retirement community. A native of Kenosha, Wisconsin, David remembered seeing this ladder truck, built right there in Kenosha by Pirsch, many times on the street as a youth. And well might the rig jog his memory; the hydraulic aerial, which carries an 85-foot-long ladder, is one of very few trucks in our museum still wearing her original paint

and decorations, having remained in such beautiful condition over the decades that restoration was deemed unnecessary.



Not long after David's visit, we were visited by Keith Gumbinger, also from Kenosha.

Keith and his brother John have even more personal fond memories of the aerial, which their father Jerome drove for Kenosha FD. Keith sent us a beautiful photo of the rig in action.



The Pirsch Fire Apparatus Company based in Kenosha, was one of America's premier builders of fire equipment. Together with Mack, in 1931 Pirsch introduced the first aerial truck to use hydraulic and mechanical power to raise, extend, and turn its aerial ladder. Until its introduction, aerial trucks used the "spring assist" design or relied on an unwieldy system built around compressed air or water pressure from a hydrant. The introduction of hydraulic pumps to lift the aerial into position was one of the most important innovations in firefighting technology.

The modern American fire service uses hydraulic pumps to power its aerial ladders, tower ladders, squirt units, outriggers, searchlight towers, and a wide variety of other devices.

This truck, built in 1937 for Pirsch's hometown, uses a mixture of hydraulic and mechanical equipment to operate its ladder. The ladder itself is made from single lengths of clear grained Douglas Fir from the forests of western Oregon. Wood of this quality was expensive and difficult to obtain but was critical to the strength and durability of the ladder. Steel rods spanning vertical posts provide a truss to give additional strength and rigidity. The "stick" and its truss can be compared to a bridge that is raised into the air instead of spanning a stream or gully.

Unlike many ladder trucks of this size, this design does not require outriggers to maintain stability when the ladder is extended. Like many aerials, however, this one also has a "Ladder Pipe" mounted at the ladder's tip to play water on a fire.

It is rare for a piece of apparatus to survive in such excellent condition after 30 years of active service in a large town with cold, wet weather, where road salt is used. The piece is one of the prides of our collection, and we are delighted that people who remember her from her working days get to visit and enjoy her in valued retirement.

SPOTLIGHT VOLUNTEER: IAN SEIVWRIGHT



As with so many of the Hall of Flame's volunteers, Ian Seivwright's passion for firefighting started in childhood.

Ian was born in Cohoes, New York, near the city of Troy, but his family moved to the town of Western Springs, Illinois, 13 miles southwest of Chicago, when he was 5 years old. The family would often take summer trips to visit family in Schenectady, New York.

"My Uncle Gene, who was my favorite uncle, was a career firefighter," recalls Seivwright. "He retired as the Chief of Schenectady Fire. But at the time he was Captain of the station across the street from his house, so I'd tag along when he'd go on calls." That sealed his aspiration. He puts it simply: "It got in my blood."

A photo survives of Seivwright, diminutive in the middle of a bunch of grownups, staring up in fascination as the Western Springs firefighters battled a house fire around 1950.

He was soon responding to fire calls in Western Springs on his bike. "At that time, you had to be twenty-one to be a firefighter," he says, but by the time he was a teenager in 1960, he and some friends had worked on so many Western Springs calls that "...a special meeting of the village board was held, and they gave us a special dispensation to become official members of the Fire Department."

After studies at Elmhurst College and service in the U.S. Navy as a Communications Officer for the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet in the '60s, Seivwright returned to Western Springs, working for decades as a safety engineer at People's Gas, the Chicago-area gas utility. He remained a part-time member of the Western Springs FD through it all. "By day I was fire and safety in Chicago, and by night I was fire and safety in Western Springs," he notes.

He was frustrated by the limitations of medical treatment in the fire service those years.

“We’re watching Johnny and Roy [on TV’s *Emergency!*] save people on TV, and we have people dying in the ambulance,” he remembers. “I’d go home and lay in bed at night and couldn’t sleep because I knew we could do more.”

As part of the effort to do better, Seivwright was the town’s first EMT, and he became the first paramedic in 1979. He soon saw results. “On Thanksgiving 1979, we had a call for a full cardiac arrest; a 72-year-old lady had collapsed at the table,” Seivwright remembers. We successfully resuscitated her and by the time we got her to the hospital she was awake and breathing. She lived another twenty years. Her son was so impressed he joined the fire department.”

Seivwright was also an innovator in his day job, eventually becoming Director of Corporate Safety for People’s Gas and a founding member of the Northeast Illinois Industrial Mutual Aid Association. He was a founder of a new firefighting training ground, based on a similar facility at Texas A & M University, which was used to train Peoples Gas refinery firefighters and most municipal fire departments in the Chicago area.

The high-level training was necessary for the area’s industrial firefighters: “We had some *huge* fires. The most devastating was the Union Oil Fire in Romeoville, Illinois in 1984. Horrendous fire. It was a ‘process unit’ fire, and they’re very unpredictable. It killed 17, 11 of which were Union Refinery firefighters. I never thought I was going to go home.”

But he did make it home.



Seivwright retired from Peoples Energy in 2003, and after that he moved to a career position with Western Springs and retired as Deputy Chief in 2010 with 50 years of service. Seivwright and his wife Nancy eventually followed his brother-in-law, the late Larry Taggart, a longtime Hall of Flame volunteer, to the Valley. Seivwright first visited the museum in 2009, then joined in 2010. He is now the Secretary of our volunteer organization, and one of our most prominent members.

“My heart and soul have been in the fire service since I was seven years old,” says Seivwright. “Coming here to the Hall of Flame gives me an opportunity to keep my soul in the fire service. And that means a lot.”

NOTICE BOARD



On Monday 6/6/22, the kind generosity of our volunteers took shape when our shop roll up door was converted to motorized by American Garage Door Company. Thank you again HOF volunteers.



John Madson and his friend took a long trip down from the northwest to bring us this perfect 1929 Ford Model T Fire Chief's Truck. This incredible jewel once served in Yakima, Washington, and years later was restored by John's very talented father.

We were honored a few weeks ago to have a wonderful visit from Gabrielle Gueye, great granddaughter of Garrett A Morgan. She is also a proud graduate of the famous Thunderbird School of International Management at ASU. She stayed hours after a wonderful tour from Mark and joined Gary and Chuck for a late lunch. She will be returning with her mother Sandra in early February for the SPAAMFAA conference, of which the Hall of Flame will be the host partner site.



The Hall of Flame goes vertical thanks to Tyler Healey

<https://vimeo.com/tylerhealey>

Tyler came into the museum one morning and inquired if he could take some drone footage of the galleries. Chuck was intrigued, having seen drone work during the Superbowl in his past department. Chuck had a good feeling about Tyler and told him not to hit anything (or crash) and off he went. The rest is history with many thousand internet views.

Museum Staff

Executive Director: Chuck Montgomery

Executive Office Manager: Dawn Cullen

Curator of Education: Mark Moorhead

Museum Registrar: Hillary Brodowski

Docents:

Dan Baker

Bob Bombiadi

Karen Chen

George Dahl

George Renner

Pat Schuller

NHFF Board of Trustees

President: George F. Getz

Vice President: Bert A. Getz, Sr.

Vice President: Bert A. Getz, Jr.

Director: Rockwood Edwards

Director: William Andrew

Hall of Flame Volunteer

Leadership

Captain: Ralph Glasmann

1st Lieutenant: Joe Bakas

2nd Lieutenant: Bob Bowers

Secretary: Ian Seivwright

*Home To The
National
Hall of Heroes*



With Over An Acre of Exhibit Space
& Over 100 Examples Of Historic Fire
Apparatus, The Hall Of Flame Museum
Is The Largest Museum Of
Fire History In The World



Call Us

(602) 478-6256

Visit Our Website To See More Of Our Collections & Exhibits

www.hallofflame.org

HOURS

10am - 6pm, Tuesday - Saturday