

# Hall of Flame

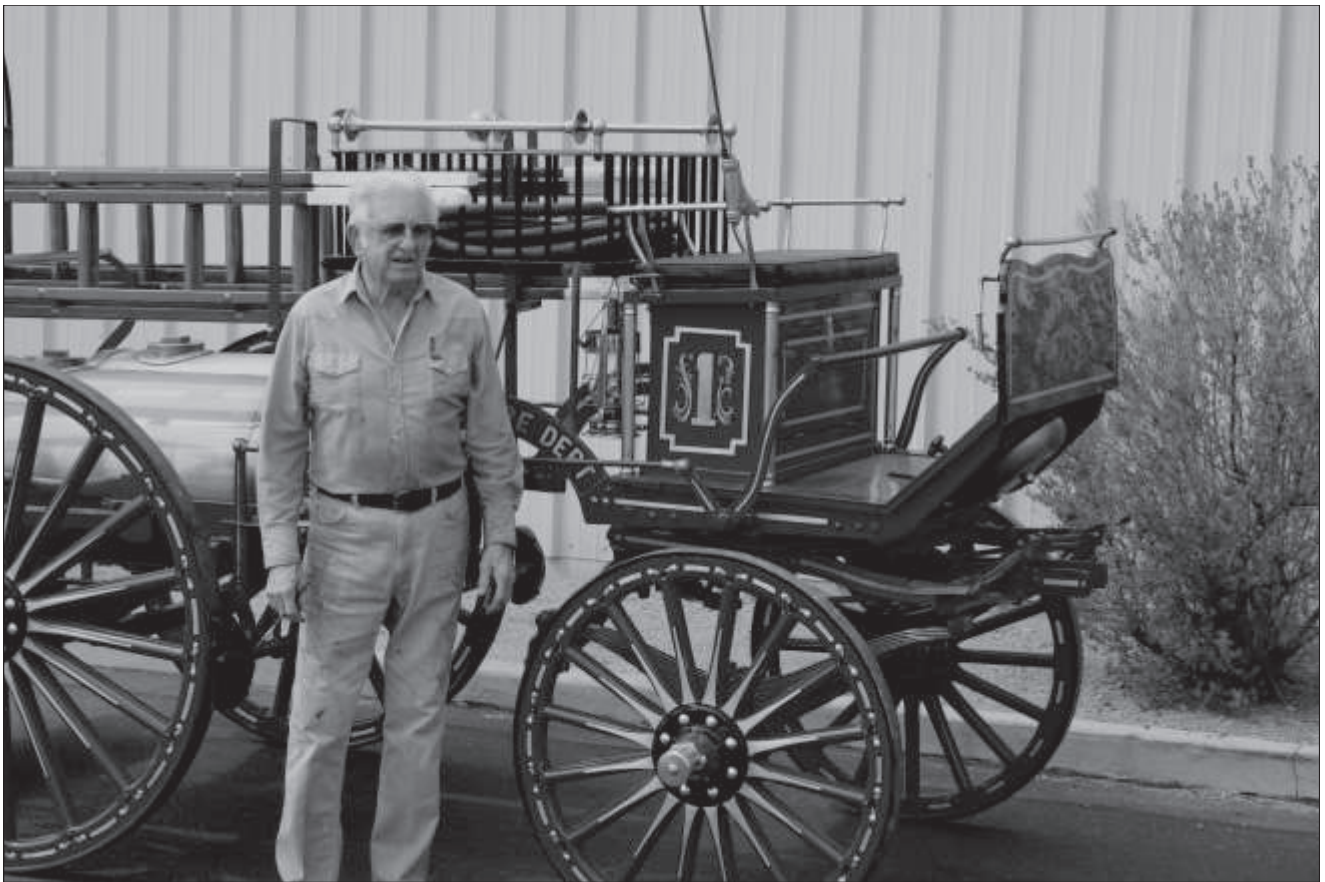
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## News



## Museum Restorer Don Hale Passes Away



Don Hale, Restorer at the Hall of Flame since 1981, passed away in January of this year at the age of 94. Don (pictured above in 2009 with a newly restored chemical fire engine once used by the Phoenix Fire Department) came to the Hall of Flame following a thirty year career with the San Luis Obispo, California Fire Department. Prior to his career at

San Luis Obispo, Don was a member of the Army National Guard. During World War II he was one of the first American soldiers to be stationed in Australia as a member of the 32nd Infantry Division and fought in the bloody Buna campaign in New Guinea, as well as several other actions with the Australian Army. Following the war he returned to his home in

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Los Angeles. Prior to the War Don had worked in his grandfather's specialty shop where he built replicas of carriages, wagons, stagecoaches and similar vehicles for use by the movie studios of Hollywood and Los Angeles. His grandfather taught Don how to paint and decorate carriages, as well as cabinetry, blacksmith work, upholstery, and a myriad of other skills. Don also became an excellent machinist and mechanic in his grandfather's shop.

When he joined the San Luis Obispo FD Don estab-

lished a second business with a body shop and a custom boat building shop. He restored a few of San Luis' old hose wagons and motorized rigs, rapidly establishing a reputation as a skilled craftsman. Soon he was restoring pieces of fire apparatus throughout southern California. Museum founder George Getz hired Don following his retirement from San Luis, and Don moved to Scottsdale. During the next thirty plus years he restored over ninety of the Hall of Flame's wheeled pieces, from hose carts to huge aerial ladder trucks. Many of the Hall's vintage pieces of apparatus were severely deteriorated. Some



*In 1998 the Museum opened its National Firefighting Hall of Heroes. Don built all of the thirty plus free standing panels as well as fifty large text blocks, examples of which are behind Don. Don favored western style dress and had a large collection of bolo tie clasps and belt buckles, which he made himself. He was a skilled jeweler.*

*Don poses in 1996 with a newly restored 1919 Seagrave fire engine used by the Phoenix Fire Department from 1919 to 1950. Museum founder George F. Getz Junior found the engine in almost unrecognizable form in a New Mexico field. It took Don over six months to restore the rig to this condition.*





were barely recognizable as pieces of fire apparatus. Don met all of these challenges. In addition to his skills as a body repair worker, painter and welder Don was a master mechanic who got many of the old rigs into running condition.

Don used his skills as a carpenter and cabinet maker to create many of the museum's exhibits, building cas-

es, panels, text blocks, and lighting displays. When the museum expanded its library Don built several dozen custom book cases as well as reading tables. He also built all of the display furniture for the museum's store.

Perhaps Don's greatest achievement was his use of gold leaf for lettering, scrollwork and trim for the mu-



*In 2011 the Museum hosted a surprise 90th birthday party for Don. Museum President George F. Getz, a friend since the 1980s, enjoys a conversation with Don, who was genuinely surprised by the party, and who had arrived at the museum ready for a day's work in his shop. For almost all of his career Don worked six days per week.*



*Don poses with one of his finest restorations: a 1930 Moreland brush truck once used by the Los Angeles Department of Forestry, which was merged into the Los Angeles County Fire Department in the 1940s.*

*The Department of Forestry painted its rigs with a distinctive two tone green pattern. When the museum acquired the truck as a gift from Gene Autry it was badly deteriorated with several coats of faded red paint. Don restored it to its original colors and lettering.*

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seum's steam fire engines, hose wagons, manual and motorized fire engines and ladder trucks.

Don retired from the museum in 2014 but continued to help with various projects despite his declining health. He passed away in early 2016. We have no plans to replace him, since he restored all but a very few rigs which will not require extensive restoration. It would not be possible to replace him in any event, since men with his skills are almost impossible to find.



*In 1989 Don restored this 1922 American La France Type 75 fire engine from Edgerton, Wisconsin.*

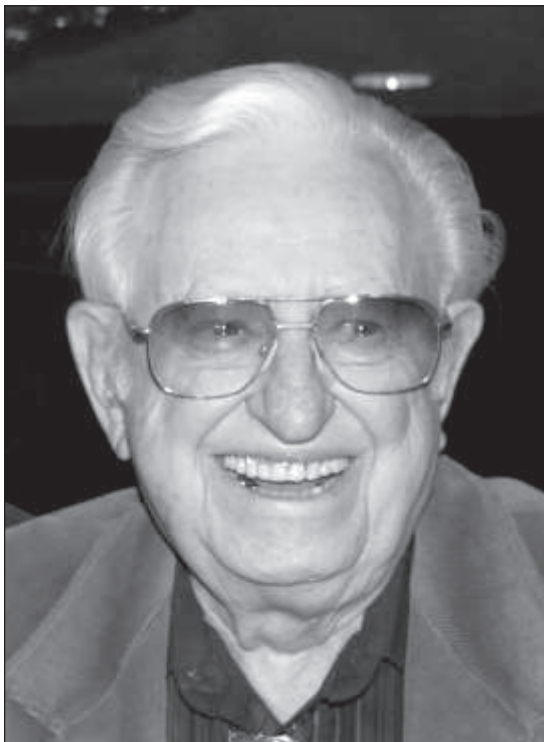


*In 1992 Don did a full restoration of the museum's 1930 Ahrens Fox Quad fire engine from River Forest, Illinois. He used gold leaf to do all of the striping and lettering. Since Ahrens Fox rigs were almost universally decorated with custom decals, Don used a set of decals produced by Michigan restorer Ken Soderbeck. He used gold leaf for custom scroll work on American La France and Seagrave apparatus.*





*In 1990 Don posed with another of his masterpieces — a restored 1916 American La France Type 40 fire engine from Paxton, Illinois.*

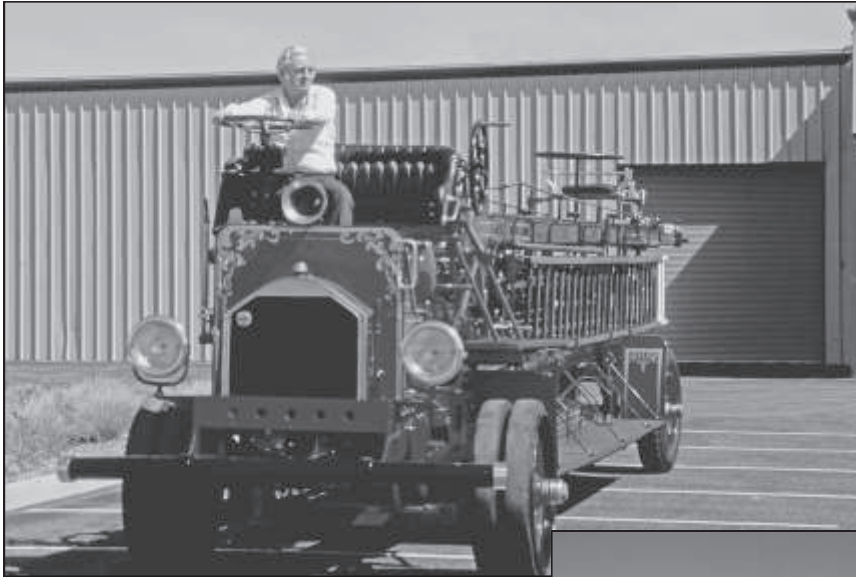


*Don in 2015, shortly before his death.*



*Local artist Sandy Boyer painted this view of Don at work in 2006.*

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*In 1987 Don undertook the restoration of a 1919 American La France Type 31 aerial truck with an 85 foot "spring assist" ladder. Originally from Danville, Illinois, it was sold to Cairo, Illinois in the 1930s. The Cairo FD had painted it white from top to bottom during the 1940s as a civil defense truck. Don restored it to its original red, including very elaborate gold leaf decoration, and re-upholstered the front seat. It took six months, and is probably his most impressive restoration.*

*In 1998 Don restored this 1947 Seagrave canopy cab fire engine originally owned by the Vandergrift, Pennsylvania FD. Seagrave painted the rig a dark green, the color of Vandergrift rigs dating back to the 1850s. The Alcoa Aluminum company purchased the rig in the 1960s and painted it a tan color. Alcoa donated the rig in 1983. Don restored it to its original green color with the Vandergrift logo.*



## Engraved Bricks Now Available for Display in the Hall of Heroes



The Museum is offering individuals the opportunity to purchase a brick engraved with the name of an individual which will be placed in the floor of the National Firefighting Hall of Heroes, as shown in the photograph at the left. Over a hundred bricks are now in place with the names of firefighters, Hall of Flame members, friends of the Hall of Flame, and Hall of Flame volunteers and staff members.

Each brick costs \$100, which includes up to three lines of text. Revenue is applied to the costs of operating the Hall of Heroes. They are available by calling the museum and placing an order paid for by credit card.

# Thanks for your membership support!

## New and Renewed Members

### Associate Members — \$25

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Charles Bachini	Thomas Kehoe
Troy Blevins	Edwin Lammell
Jack Casey	Dell Lindstrom
George Childs	Vic Massenkoff
William Clark III	Robert McMillin
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John Gebert	Marilyn Ticknor
Charles Goddard	Suzanne Welch

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Charles Dahlberg	Philip Taska
Jim Daub	Norman Trela
William Davidson	Magdalena Warecka
Paula Franklin	Eric J. Wieser
Roger Freely	Roma Wittcoff
James Johnson	Philip Taska
John Kohlman	Norman Trela
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Pam Merryman	Eric J. Wieser
Peter Munro	Roma Wittcoff
Stephanie Nuttall	

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Thomas Elliott	Alan Nielsen
Thomas Etter	<b>Niel O'Brien</b>
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R. Thomas Green	Michael Stemmler
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Lydia Kolsch	Megan Wuertz

### White Helmet Brigade — \$250

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Joseph Yemma  
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 Curator Education Mark Moorhead  
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The Hall of Flame is operated by the National Historical Fire Foundation.

The Hall of Flame is in the Phoenix Papago Park, across Van Buren Street from the Phoenix Zoo.

The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9 to 5, and on Sundays from Noon to 4.

☐ HALL OF FLAME VOLUNTEERS ☐

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