

# THE MUSEUM TRUMPET



Vol. 7, No. 2

The Official Newsletter of the San Jose Fire Museum

May 2016

## Collections Update

# Fire Museum Acquires 1945 Mack



*This beautiful example of a post-war fire engine was recently acquired by the SJFM. It was a centerpiece of the Zoltan Szucs' collection and now will be a featured apparatus in our fire museum.*

On March 6, 2016, many members of the local firefighting community received some very sad news. On that date, Zoltan Szucs lost his battle with pancreatic cancer. He was not only a key civilian member of the San Jose Fire Department, he was also a major collector of firefighting apparatus and memorabilia.

The San Jose Fire Museum is currently engaged in discussions with the family of Zoltan Szucs about purchasing some key historic items from his great collection. We have identified many different types of tools, equipment, and apparatus that we want to purchase – with an estimated value of \$40,000.

One of the acquisitions already made by the Museum was one of Zoltan's pride and joys — a 1945 Mack fire engine that was originally part of the Albany, CA Fire Department. This rig is in pristine operating

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## President's Message

By John A. McMillan

The many volunteers of the San Jose Fire Museum (SJFM) start the spring of 2016 with a lot of hope and excitement.

We have a number of key restoration projects on our plate. Ongoing projects include the total restoration of Old Squad 11 (a 1953 GMC) and the minor restoration of our recently acquired 1914 Little Giant Chemical Engine. And, I want to personally thank Retired SJFD Firefighter Jim True for his quality repair work on the engine of our 1905 Cadillac Fire Chief's car.

Many of you are aware of the recent passing of San Jose Fire Department Employee, Zoltan Szucs. He was quite the fire buff and his personal collection of fire memorabilia reflects it. Zoltan left behind a fantastic collection of historic firefighting apparatus, memorabilia, and equipment.

The SJFM is currently in conversation with Zoltan's family about purchasing some historic pieces from the collection. Members of our Board of Directors have seen the collection and there are some very valuable items that would enhance our total fire collection. A major part of the Museum's mission is to find and acquire historic fire memorabilia that will help us tell the entire story of firefighting in America. Please read the article on page 1 of this newsletter that provides you with more information on this amazing opportunity to grow our historic collection.

During the last month, we also received the final report of a Feasibility Study completed by Netzel Grigsby Associates. Netzel Grigsby Associates is a professional consulting firm that was hired by the Museum to research fundraising opportunities that will allow the Museum to grow into "Old Fire Station One". The study is complete and many of the outcomes, while not maybe what we wanted to hear, are not surprising.

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# San Jose Fire Museum to Purchase A Portion of Major Collection

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condition and a prime example of post-war firefighting apparatus. As such, it fills a void in our collection's ability to show the progression of firefighting through the 1940s.

However, in order to make the purchase of additional equipment and memorabilia from this collection possible, we need you to become involved. The Fire Museum has made a decision to commit \$10,000 in existing Museum funds. So, the rest of the money must come from firefighters and friends of the San Jose Fire Museum.

To help in this effort, we are announcing a fundraising program that will allow you to become a partner in this great acquisition. If

you will consider making a cash donation, we will apply your donation to a specific piece of historic equipment. Your family name will be forever attached to that piece of equipment, plus you get a tax write-off because we are a 501(c)3 Non-Profit organization. How's that for a good deal!

Some of the historic items we are interested in purchasing include a leather-riveted play pipe, parade axes, a fire alarm gong, a variety of portable hand extinguishers, leather fire helmets, fire marks, lanterns, and trumpets. Examples of some of these pieces can be seen in the accompanying photographs.

If you are interested in helping us out, please contact John McMillan at (831) 359-2194 or e-mail John at [macmhalain@yahoo.com](mailto:macmhalain@yahoo.com).



*Above: Just an example of the vast collection acquired by Zoltan Szucs — a real fire buff.*



*Left: This cabinet is full of classic, leather firefighter and chiefs helmets that represent the very early days of firefighting. Also shown are brass nozzles and an operating scale model of a steam fire engine.*

*Right: Already purchased from Zoltan's collection is this very rare Firefighter's Exemption Certificate and an SJFD Chief Engineer's helmet. Another addition to our collection, but not part of Zoltan's memorabilia, is the SJFD Battalion Chief's helmet shown on the right donated by SJFD Capt. Sean Lovens.*



## **In Memoriam**

### **Zoltan Szucs Passes Away After Battle with Cancer**

Zoltan Szucs, known by his family and friends as "Z", passed away at his home on March 3, 2016 following a difficult battle with pancreatic cancer.

Z was born on September 23, 1960 in San Jose, California and resided in Hollister, California. Z had a 35-year career in the fire services industry and was most recently employed by the San Jose Fire Department managing the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) program. Earlier in his career as a firefighter, he received awards including a Medal of Valor in 2001 for fighting a spectacular overturned tanker truck blaze in Los Gatos. He was passionate about his work and was an avid collector of antique fire apparatus and artifacts. He also enjoyed his vast collection of trains.

Zoltan is survived by his loving wife Celeste, step-children Garrett, Brianna, and Buckley Burmeister, his mother Elizabeth, and brother Alexander. He was predeceased by his father Alexander.



**Zoltan Szucs**

September 23, 1960 - March 3, 2016

## **President's Message**

*Continued from Page 1...*

We have some new goals to achieve based on these outcomes and we know we must begin working on them immediately.

One of our biggest challenges will be connecting to the private sector. We already know that San Jose firefighters are very aware of our organization. But, one big way to make the connection to the private sector will be to do some more rehab of the existing "Old Fire Station One" building. Safety improvements need to be made to the first floor so that the Museum is presentable and safe for children and their families to visit. This also applies to potential private partnership investors who might want to see the Museum's potential.

Another area that needs major attention is working to improve our donor base with active and retired firefighters. Along this line, we had some great news recently from the City of San Jose's City Manager's Office. The City has agreed to provide a payroll deduction program that will allow

not only active San Jose firefighters but all city employees the opportunity to make donations to the SJFM through the City Payroll System.

Finally, to address other recommendations of the Feasibility Study, we need to further develop our Business Plan, proceed with the creation of our Advisory Board, and reset our strategy on capital fundraising.

In closing, I just want to say how proud I am of all the effort put in by our Board members, volunteers, and friends. I also want to mention the growth of our *Museum Trumpet* newsletter. It has grown from a mailing list of 655 in July of 2011, to 1,320 in February of 2016. We get a lot of positive responses for the quality of our newsletter and a lot of credit goes to the newsletter's editor, John Whitaker, a key community volunteer who helps the Fire Museum in so many ways. Thanks, John.

If you would like to volunteer in any of the above-mentioned activities or projects, please see an article on page 4 of this newsletter on volunteerism opportunities.

## **1905 Cadillac Once Again Up and Running Like It Should**



The San Jose Fire Museum's classic 1905 Cadillac Fire Chief's vehicle has finally been repaired and is now running smoothly.

The car had been driven to an event and during that event it was noticed that oil had accumulated in the radiator water. Before repairs could be attempted, the museum staff had to contact several experts regarding the Cadillac, as it is an unusual vehicle and valued at \$125,000. The Cadillac needed to be repaired - and repaired right!

Although our search for a mechanic came up with a few reputable Cadillac experts, we found an expert literally amongst us.

Retired San Jose Firefighter Jim True was asked to help us get the Cadillac running. During the past several months, Jim has been working on the vehicle. A few of the adjustments he made had to do with timing, reworking the fuel tank and water pump, adjusting the carburetion system, and most importantly, ensuring that oil was not leaking into the radiator water.

Jim spent countless hours not only making sure the above-mentioned tasks were completed, but gave the Cadillac a thorough road test. Needless to say, the vehicle now starts easier and is running smoothly.

Thanks to Jim's valuable talents, the Museum volunteers can now utilize the vehicle for parades and other requested events.

## **Squad 11 Project Underway – But Desperately Needs Your Assistance**



Restoration has begun on the Museum's 1954 GMC Fire Engine. This rig is a former San Jose Engine which was designated as Squad 11 when it was in service at "Old Fire Station One" in the 1950s. Several years ago, the rig was found in Gilroy sitting in a field. And trust us, sitting in a field in Gilroy did not do the old Squad any favors.

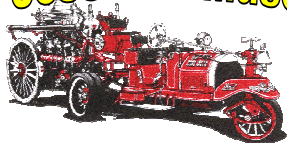
Taking the components of the fire engine apart involves unbolting, unscrewing, and freeing up bolts and screws that have weathered over time. Don Jarvis and Allen Greenburg have been diligently working on the project. Through the help of Harry Vaughan, our designated mechanic, the Squad's engine was started up and run for a few minutes to determine if the motor needed work. Luck was with us and now it runs remarkably well given the circumstances.

At the present time, the work involves stripping off parts related to the body work and then transporting the old Squad to a shop to have all the paint removed. After that, the next step will be off to the paint shop. Chrome gauges, valves, etc. will also be rebuilt or replaced.

Funding for the Squad 11 project has been mainly supplied by the generosity of the Gordon Wallace family and Rob Bettencourt.

We are always in need of volunteers to help us. All of the above tasks demand an enormous amount of labor. The work is currently being done at the Museum Warehouse on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 A.M. until 12:00 noon. However, if those days don't work for you, we often are there on Fridays, too. If you are interested in helping, give Jim Carter a call at (408) 674-1624. Here's your chance to get involved.

# San Jose Fire Museum

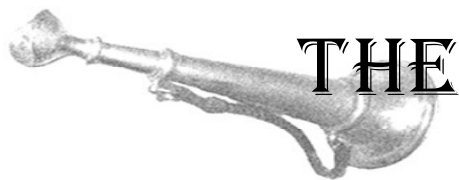


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*DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF THE SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT*

### **Hotline — SJFM Volunteers Needed**

This is a very important time for the SJFM. We need help - volunteer help - in so many areas. We have a lot of projects and challenges on our plate and all of it will lead us to success in forming our downtown Fire Museum. We are looking for all kinds of volunteers who bring different skills to the table. Whether you are a firefighter, a student, or an individual from the private sector, you can be of assistance. Some of the areas we need help in include: apparatus restoration, fundraising, document preservation, general clean-up, planning and budget development, gift shop support, and media and video support. If you want to get involved with a great organization, please consider our non-profit. Any amount of time would be appreciated. Contact John McMillan at (831) 359-2194, or E-mail him at: [macmhalain@yahoo.com](mailto:macmhalain@yahoo.com).

### **"The Museum Trumpet"**

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