

THE MUSEUM TRUMPET



Vol. 11. No. 4

The Official Newsletter of the San Jose Fire Museum

October 2020

DICK NAILEN: A LIFETIME FRIEND OF THE SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT



It is an honor to share this story about someone who is a lifetime friend of the San Jose Fire Department (SJFD), and continues to support the efforts of the San Jose Fire Museum (SJFM) to preserve firefighting history in San Jose still today with you. His name is Richard Nailen but we all call him Dick. Dick is now 92 years old and living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin since 1964. He is a retired electrical engineer who has a fascination for fire departments and the service they provide to the community. In other words, Dick is a “Major Fire Buff” and would go to our emergencies and document the scene with his pencil drawings. Between 1947 and 1955, Dick completed 143 drawings at 63 fires as well as drawings of 12 of the original San Jose Fire Stations which are proudly displayed on the wall of the dining room at Old Fire Station One. While Dick had been sketching since the age of 4, his first drawing at a fire scene was on March 14, 1935 of San Jose’s Old Tiller Truck during a mop up of the old

San Jose High School auditorium fire at San Fernando and 5th. Another one of Dick’s sketches shown below, is from a general alarm the morning of January 28, 1958 at the Healey Motor Company, an auto dealership at 477 S. Market Street. The fire started in the service garage at the rear well before the business opened that day and therefore wasn’t discovered for a couple of hours. Engine 3 pictured in the foreground was first in and Truck 2 is to the right of it. For Dick, sketching fire events however, was just a hobby. Dick also worked for the ‘Fire Engineering’ magazine from 1961 to 1991 as a Staff Correspondent, writing articles on several fires and other emergencies in San Jose and Santa Clara. In 1963, an arrangement was made with Fire Chief Ron LeBeau, for the Fire Communications Center to contact Dick for any greater alarm fires. It happened four times that year, two of which went to 3 alarms. Dick also wrote a book titled ‘Guardians of the Garden City: The history of the San Jose Fire Department’, which documents the first 120 years of the SJFD. The following is a short life story written by our friend Dick Nailen himself.

I was born and raised in San Jose. Now vanished without a trace, the hospital where I was born now a vacant lot, my childhood home on S. 14th Street, grade school, junior high, original high school, and church I attended, all torn down. My home in Willow Glen where I lived from 1941 to 1952 is still there, but I won't tell where lest somebody tear that down too. Since the age of 4, sketching had been a principal hobby of mine since my father worked in the San Jose Mercury newspaper plant and would bring home discarded tag ends of newsprint rolls for me to draw on. My interest in the Fire Department started in March 1935 when I was 7 years old and saw the burning of the old San Jose High auditorium on 5th and San Fernando. Later that year, I witnessed the big Sunday morning blaze at 230 Bassett Street. My dad took me to see both of these fires. In June of 1947, another general alarm on Bassett Street peaked my interest as I was out on my bike and saw the smoke. By then, I was making pencil sketches of things and events around San Jose which I later copied into finished drawings. I visited all the fire stations, of which there were only 8 at the time, to fill in some apparatus details. I got to every fire I could, roughly 237 in Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Milpitas, and Campbell including the one at the lumberyard on Park Avenue (September 1949), the general alarm at Lincoln and Moorpark (June 1954), and the conflagration on The Alameda (April 1955). There were no scanners in those days so I followed the sirens as I could hear any major action in town from my home or friends on the job would call me. I also did 5 years of college and 2 years in the army, after which I married, had a family and lived in Santa Clara until 1964. I had just gotten the Chief's blessing for the San Jose Communications Center to call me on 2nd alarms, when we had to relocate to Wisconsin. By then, I was writing for a lot of magazines, including 95 articles for ‘Fire Engineering’ from 1961 to 1991. I joined the local buff group, the Milwaukee Fire Bell Club, here in Wisconsin with its on-scene canteen service and responded to 415 fires from 1964 to 2011. I have been on the fireground in many places over the years including in New Jersey, New York City, Atlanta, El Paso, Dallas, San Francisco and Los Angeles.



WORTHY RECOGNITIONS

SJFM LIFETIME VOLUNTEER AWARD: APRIL HALBERSTADT

April Halberstadt, our SJFM Community Liaison, received a SJFM Lifetime Volunteer Award from SJFM President John McMillan on Volunteer Hose Co. No. 1 for her 13 years of dedicated service. The SJFM presented April with this award in July 2020.



ROB BETTENCOURT

The SJFM Empire Co. No. 1 Helmet to the right was presented to SJFM friend Rob Bettencourt. His partnership donations now total over \$336,000. We thank Rob for his consistent support of our mission.



President's Message

By John A. McMillan



What a critical moment in all of our lives and such a very different and difficult time for many of us! As we continue to battle COVID-19, the raging wildfires consuming our state and an inconsistent economy, we face many of the same challenges that the volunteers of the San Jose Fire Museum (SJFM) face and which we hope to someday soon overcome. While respecting science and the COVID-19 guidelines, the SJFM Board was able to celebrate our beloved friend, Retired SJFD Fire Captain Sam Seibert, who turned 101 this year. For his 101st birthday, the SJFM Board hosted a drive-by at Old Fire Station One (OFS1) on Saturday, August 29, 2020. While being mindful of the social distancing protocol, it was wonderful to see many of you drop by and just wave and wish Sam a "Happy Birthday"! Not only did it brighten Sam's day, but it was a huge success, with over 15 SJFD Fire Companies, the San Jose Rod & Wheelers, preservation shop volunteers and friends, just to name a few drive by.

If Sam's successful birthday drive by wasn't enough, we have a bit more exciting news to share! Beginning Tuesday, October 6, 2020, the SJFM Gift Shop at OFS1 will be open from 9 am to 12 noon every Tuesday except on holidays. You can enter the gift shop through the left front door and parking will be available on the front apron of OFS1. However, this being said, until COVID-19 guidelines are lifted and allow us to reopen, the rest of the SJFM will remain closed. We are using this time to focus on how to develop an online 'Public Safety and History Education' program featuring 'The Engine That Saved San Jose', our Historic Franklin 3 Steamer. In addition, we are looking at other opportunities to connect with the community through the internet.

Finally, we have some updates to report on OFS1. We are moving forward with the electrical power upgrade project. Also, we have received \$20,000, \$10,000 from Sam Seibert and \$10,000 from Rob Bettencourt, to paint a mural on the south wall of the rear awning structure. We are working with artist Bill Vujevich to develop the rendering of the type of mural we want to have painted. It will most likely be a historical depiction of San Jose in a period of time during the 1920's. A lot more information on both of these items will be in the next newsletter.

**SAM SEIBERT TURNS 101 BUT DOESN'T LOOK A DAY OLDER!
ON AUGUST 29, 2020, AT OLD FIRE STATION ONE, THE SAN JOSE FIRE MUSEUM
HOSTED A 101ST BIRTHDAY DRIVE BY FOR SAM SEIBERT**



*From left to right:
SJFM Board
Members
Dale Foster,
Sean Lovens,
John McMillan,
Sam Seibert,
Dave Wood
and Jim Carter*



*.Pictured bottom left: Over 15 San Jose Fire
Companies drove by. Captain Derek Parmer and
crew of SJFD Engine 6 was one of them.
Everyone made Sam's day!
Pictured bottom right: Santa Clara Fire Museum
wishing Sam "Happy Birthday"!
Pictured below: Sam appreciating the San Jose
Rod & Wheeler's drive by.*



*.Pictured above: Sam on his thrown waiting for
drive by guests?*

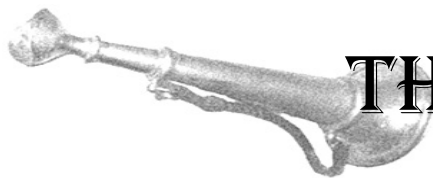


San Jose Fire Museum



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DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF THE SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT

SJFM GIFT SHOP INFORMATION:

OPEN starting October 6, 2020!

Gift Shop Location:

Old Fire Station One (OFS1)

Hours of Operation:

**Open EVERY Tuesday from
9 am to 12 noon until further notice**

Parking:

Available on OFS1 Front Apron

Gift Shop Entrance:

**Left front door which will remain
unlocked during gift shop hours
of operation**

Forms of Payment Accepted:

Cash, checks or credit card welcome

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