

THE MUSEUM TRUMPET



Vol. 12. No. 1

The Official Newsletter of the San Jose Fire Museum

January 2021

A GIFT FROM 'CAPTAIN WONDERFUL', TOM RICHARDSON



Before we talk about our featured guest for this piece, the San Jose Fire Museum (SJFM) wants to kick off 2021 by expressing our appreciation and thanking all our supporters who have made either ongoing or one time donations. Those donations help us to keep moving towards SJFM's goal of becoming a state-of-the-art fire museum in downtown San Jose. Speaking of donations, we would like to take this opportunity to recognize a very special individual to the SJFM who has made donations totaling \$1,000,000 over the last 2 years. His name is Retired SJFD Fire Captain Tom Richardson (aka Captain Wonderful). He was inspired to donate after hearing about retirees like Jim True, Dave Wood and others who were committed to the restoration of SJFD and its history, especially Old Fire Station One. Tom is not local enough to take a hands-on role in the restorations but, because of his financial success, he was able to do the next best thing by making such a generous donation.

Pictured above: Retired SJFD Fire Captain Tom Richardson at his home holding his Hook & Ladder One Helmet on 10/29/20. His Extramem Rank pin collection can be seen to the right of him on his mantle.

The following is a short life story as written by our friend Tom Richardson: I was born and raised in Rhode Island and joined the army shortly after high school where I spent 3 years as a helicopter crew chief and door gunner. Upon discharge, I drove to California, broke and looking for a job, finally landing one at Lockheed in Sunnyvale. The job recruiter asked me what I knew about assembling missiles. I told him in classic "Captain Wonderful" style, "All I know is that the pointy end goes in front" and from that was hired on the spot. I worked there for about 2 years until about when the Russians put nuclear missiles on Cuban soil. It was then that I received a nice letter from President Kennedy requesting my presence back in the army to straighten things out. I suggested that we should make a massive helicopter invasion from the east coast. Kennedy agreed and evidently the Russians got wind of the plan because they turned tail and took the missiles back home. That's the story anyway! After serving, I returned home, got married and had 2 children. Shortly thereafter, I was hired by the Santa Clara County Central Fire District where I served for 14 years and came up through the ranks to make Fire Captain. There are 2 things that really stood out to me during my career in the fire service. The first was a structure fire in a basement, which was so intense it melted the linoleum flooring on the first floor above it into liquid. I fell through the first floor and the molten tar splashed into my face and eyes. I was helpless with my eyelids burnt shut but thankfully Jim True and Keith Mellor pulled me out and saved my life. They were able to open my eyes at the hospital and did the best they could to remove the tar from my face. When someone asked Jim True what happened to the Captain, he replied, "His face caught fire and we had to beat it out with a bicycle chain. Other than that, he's fine". After a month or so in rehabilitation, I was able to see well enough and returned to work. The second thing I can remember is looking up to Captain Ray Dundon as someone who was a leader in so many ways. Ray cared about the people on his crew both at the station as well as for their safety at fire scenes. He seemed to always be in command without having to shout orders. His crew was always willing to work with him and for him, to accomplish the task at hand. What more could a crew ask of their Captain? I came over to the San Jose Fire Department after a partial merger of the two departments and retired in 1999 after a total of 34 years in the fire service. I held many side jobs while in the fire service including a fire science instructor at San Jose City College, running a skydiving school, a FAA licensed parachute rigger, a safety harness manufacturer, and buying, rehabbing, and selling rental properties in California and Oregon. Since retiring I have divested myself of all my rental properties and am now investing in the stock market.



Pictured above: 1) Tom's Santa Clara County Fire Protection District ID card issued in 1965. 2) The name tag that Retired Fire Captain Tom Richardson wore on his SJFD Uniform.

(continued on next page)

TOM RICHARDSON CONTINUED

Convincing Tom to allow us to include his story was a challenge as he wanted to remain anonymous. He is truly an example of someone who keeps giving without any expectations. We say a big “thank you” to Tom for allowing us to do so, and hope that his story of giving encourages others to do the same with whatever amount is possible, big or small. Tom loves the fire service and wants to leave a legacy of helping to preserve its history. Tom’s donation enables SJFM to move to the next level in its development toward designing exhibits and displays. In addition, plans are underway to create short videos of these exhibits to share during the pandemic so that we can share with everybody the progress that is being made. In the future, SJFM hopes to engage youth in a STEM (science, technology, engineering & math) program as well as to create a Public Safety Education program targeted for all ages.



Pictured above: Richardson Presentation Helmet presented to Tom for his \$1,000,000 gift to the SJFM



A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Back in August 2020, the SJFM received a great donation from Mary & Steve Williams. They donated the painting pictured to the left of an actual fire scene in San Jose dating back to the late 1970’s. The artist was our very own Retired Firefighter Alex Noseworthy. He gave the painting as a gift to Fire Associate Leonard Goldstein, who passed away recently. Mary Williams contacted us and thought this painting should be in our Fire Museum. Pictured from left to right are Dave Wood, Sam Seibert and Mary Williams holding this painting.

PLEASE NOTE:

SJFM has a NEW MAILING ADDRESS!

Going forward, please send ALL mail for **SJFM** to:

PO Box 579

San Jose, CA 95106

President's Message

By John A. McMillan



Hello to all of our friends, donors and partners and a Happy New Year! 2020 was a major challenge for the San Jose Fire Museum (SJFM), just as I am sure it was for many of you. The SJFM has been closed to the public for 10 months now and we hope to be able to reopen in 2021!

On a positive note, we were able to take advantage of this down time to continue making improvements to Old Fire Station One (OFS1). We completed the installation of the rear yard awning which received very favorable comments from firefighter visitors. We just finished adding some more window coverings and window film to protect our pictures and displays. Finally, we moved our gift shop to a new location with its own entrance for the public to enter through. It is now located on the south side where the former Firefighters Local 230 area used to be. We also have 2 new projects which we began developing in the early part of 2020 and are still working on. The first is to create a children’s fire engine that we have experienced some delays with but hope to make a reality in 2021. The second is to create a Fire Chiefs office display. The plan is to use the original Fire Chief office that was occupied by Fire Chief O’Brien back in 1950. Highlights of this display will include pictures of all the Fire Chiefs in the history of the San Jose Fire Department (SJFD), a presentation of what O’Brien’s office probably looked like in 1950, and historical items that are integral parts of the SJFD Fire Chief’s history.

Finally, we have 2 big announcements to make going into 2021. The first is that we are very excited to share that in December 2020, PG&E approved phase 1 of our OFS1 power upgrade project. What is even better, is that they plan on doing all this work themselves. They will do this by first bringing high voltage power to a new underground transmission vault which will be installed in the sidewalk just outside of OFS1. Next, they will bring conduit into the sidewall of the original hose storage room, which will then become the new main electrical room. The second bit of news is that we have hired 2 consultants to help us improve our exhibit design at OFS1 and collections organization at our Fire Museum warehouse. More information about this can be found on page 3 of this newsletter. I hope 2021 brings about a brighter and better year for everyone!

WE HAVE SOME NEW TALENT HELPING US OUT AT THE SJFM! MEET KEN MIDDLEBROOK & AMY LONG

In November 2020, the San Jose Fire Museum (SJFM) approved to hire 2 part time contractors on one-year (extendable) contracts to work anywhere from 8 hours to 16 hours per week. Ken Middlebrook and Amy Long will be providing us with much needed help in the areas of exhibit design and collections organization. Ken and Amy have been given tasks that match their strengths and expertise, so we look forward to the guidance and inputs we will gain from them through the year.



Ken Middlebrook: Ken has been a resident of Santa Clara Valley for most of his life. Our SJFM Board of Directors has known Ken for almost 10 years and we have admired his collections skills and enjoyed interacting with him. With great anticipation, we bring him on board with the primary role of getting the fire museum warehouse organized, inventoried, and cleaned up. Ken spent 25 years working in procurement in the semiconductor industry and has 2 master's degrees, including one in Museum Studies. For the past 10 years, he has been the full-time curator of collections for History San Jose with responsibility for the preservation of the museum's artifacts and exhibits. He also has a passion for local railroad history and is a board member and historian for the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad in Los Gatos. Ken was recently elected president of the California Trolley and Railroad Corporation (CTRC) which is responsible for operating the trolleys in History Park. CTRC is also seeking to establish a local railroad museum featuring the large steam locomotive currently under restoration at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds. Ken and his wife Katie live in Campbell and have 2 adult sons.

Amy Long: The SJFM Board of Directors has decided to rethink the layout and design in order to present Old Fire Station One as a Fire Museum. Amy Long has been hired to help with the planning and design concepts for this endeavor. With her wealth of experience working at the New Museum of Los Gatos and History San Jose, Amy comes highly recommended to the SJFM. We feel confident she will help take us to a new level of museum presentation. Amy is a freelance history curator and private school teacher with long-time ties to San Jose and the Bay Area. A lover of history, Amy decided to make a mid-life career change and pursue a bachelor's degree in History at San Jose State University. After graduating, she continued her studies at Sacramento State University earning a master's degree in Public History. While in Sacramento, Amy worked on the preservation and relocation of over one million historical objects and facility museum exhibits for California State Parks. Her last move brought her back to the Bay Area where, for the last 4 years as a history curator, she was tasked to help open and redevelop the New Museum Los Gatos. Her passion is bringing the untold and unexpected stories of a community to life.



SAM SEIBERT GETS A SURPRISE VISIT ON CHRISTMAS



SJFD Engine Company 6 visited Sam Seibert at his house on Christmas.



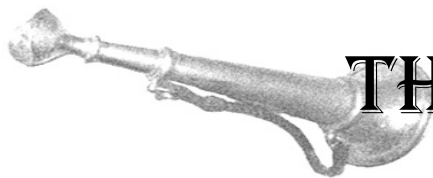
Sam Seibert proud to be standing in front of SJFD Fire Engine Co. 6 at his house on Christmas.

San Jose Fire Museum



PO Box 579
San Jose, CA 95106

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAN JOSE, CA
PERMIT NO.
4519



THE MUSEUM TRUMPET

Vol. 12, No. 1 The Official Newsletter of the San Jose Fire Museum January 2021



DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF THE SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT

PLEASE NOTE:

SJFM has a **NEW MAILING ADDRESS!**

Going forward, please send ALL mail for SJFM to:

**San Jose Fire Museum
PO Box 579
San Jose, CA 95106**

"The Museum Trumpet"

Is Published By the
San Jose Fire Museum

A Non-profit 501(c)3 Corporation

Editor

Kristine Cohen

OFFICERS

President: John McMillan
Vice President: Jim Carter
Secretary: Eileen Townley
Treasurer: Dale Foster
Director at Large: Mike Igno
Director of Apparatus: Derek Parmer
Director of Collections: Ed Del Prete
Director of Facilities: Dave Wood
Director of History: Sam Seibert
SJFD Liaison: Sean Lovens
Community Liaison: April Halberstadt

MUSEUM ADDRESS

201 North Market Street
San Jose, CA 95110

Office Phone
(408) 793-4321

Office Fax Phone
(408) 287-0401

John McMillan (Cell Phone)
(831) 359-2194

Jim Carter (Cell Phone)
(408) 674-1624

<http://www.sjfiremuseum.org>