



BOX 42 NEWSLETTER

"Serving the fire community since 1942"

August 2016 - (all images: click twice to enlarge)

MEETING INFORMATION

Normally meetings are held on Saturday late in the month at various fire stations.

The August meeting will be held in conjunction with the annual club picnic at Engine 16 on August 14th. (See below for details)

Charlie LeDuff Rides With Engine 41

Reporter Charlie LeDuff recently spent some time riding with DFD Engine 41 for a feature of his news series, "The Americans." The story looks at the challenges faced, and some of the improvement on the horizon.

To view the feature (2:15) [\[click here\]](#).

To read his related story [\[click here\]](#).

Annual Picnic Is August 14th

The annual Box 42 picnic is set for Sunday, August 14th, at 1:00. The location is, once again, the quarters of the DFD fireboat, Engine 16, on 24th, south of W Grand Blvd. [Enter through Riverside Park at W Grand Blvd and W Jefferson](#) - it's east of the J.W.Wescott site, as shown by the red circle.

Guests, as always, are welcome. The club will furnish food and soft drinks, but please bring a dish to pass and a lawn chair, as seating is limited. Alcohol is not permitted.

Townhouse Fire Displaces Residents

A fast-moving 2-alarm fire forced residents from their homes at the Woodbridge Estates townhouses group near Selden and Miracles on July 1st. Miracles Blvd. is part of the Motown complex which replaced the Jeffries Project and runs approximately where Brooklyn used to be. The complex was constructed in 2004.

A WSU student interviewed by the media said that he was awakened by the fire alarm about 10 am, and walked downstairs to get a drink of water. By the time he gathered his wallet and personal belongings he had trouble finding his way out of the building and had to jump from his balcony. There were no serious injuries.

This aerial view of the DFD at work shows the extent of the fire.

To view it [\[click here\]](#).

July 4th Arson Fires Spike

In recent years, incidents of arson in Detroit have ballooned in the days leading up to the July 4th holiday. Comparisons have been made to the devils' night phenomenon which has plagued the DFD for 30 years.

The department has recognized the problem however and has been taking proactive steps to counter it. For the week prior to the holiday this year, five extra engines were deployed to bolster manpower.

On Monday, June 27th - the riverfront fireworks night - DFD was also called upon for the crash of a small plane on the east side. The 18 year old pilot, pulling a banner for the fireworks crowd, reportedly ran out of fuel. A pedestrian was killed in the incident.

WXYZ's Ronnie Dahl ran this piece about the increase in arson fires.

To see the clip [\[click here\]](#).

CONTACT US You can contact Box 42 by US mail or email. Submissions are always welcome and highly encouraged.

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Feature: Detroit Police and Fire of 1957

The film shown below is an episode of *Detroit: Today and Tomorrow*, a series produced in conjunction with Mayor Cobo's Detroit Tomorrow Committee. Albert Cobo, elected three times, served as Detroit's mayor from 1950 until his death in 1957.

The film shows a glimpse of the police and fire departments of the mid-1950s, and reveals the numerous changes that have taken place over the past 60 years.

During the basic illustration of a DFD response, Engine 50, Ladder 23, and Squad 6 are shown leaving their quarters at 12985 Houston-Whittier (earlier named simply 'Houston.'). For those who like to study such specifics, the rigs drive outbound on Gratiot, turn east on Troester, and then south on Chalmers. Interestingly, some of the landmarks they pass are still there, including this house on the southwest corner of Troester and Chalmers (albeit not in such great shape): [\[Click here\]](#).

To see *Detroit: Today and Tomorrow* (14 min) [\[click here\]](#).

The Box 42 Newsletter welcomes all ideas for input and features and we would be happy to hear from any interested persons who have job stories, historical information, newspaper clippings, photos, or other material that you would like to share with the Box 42 community. Please send all news and information to the address on the front page.

Editors: Bill and Mike Rosenblum

New Southfield Fire Chief

Congratulations go to Captain Johnny Menifee on his appointment to chief of the Southfield Fire Department. Chief Menifee, who has been with Southfield FD for 23 years, hosted Box 42 members during the photo tour of May 2014. This article from Southfield's web site speaks to his experience.



Chief Menifee

To view the article [\[click here\]](#).

Reader Comments

We're glad to see that member Len Williams is back in service after recuperating from a long illness. He wrote: *Another great issue. I believe that I have a complete set of running cards from the 1960's.*

From Ted Main

Another great newsletter. The fire engine in the clown picture is Ted's and is a 1936 Ahrens Fox model WR rotary gear pumper. Ted calls it a female Fox.

From Carol A. Rosenblum

Not only do I love the old, historic photos

Coming events

Sunday, August 14, 1:00

Annual Box 42 picnic at Engine 16

Week of August 16-20

IFBA convention at New Orleans, LA

For registration and information [\[click here\]](#)

Friday, August 19, 1:00 - 8:00

16th Annual Emergency Vehicle Show

9 Mile, e/o Woodward, Ferndale [\[click here\]](#)

of Detroit, but I am amazed at your use of technology in being able to replay actual tapes from the Detroit riot of 1967, as printed in this month's newsletter.

From Greg Pearn

Excellent as usual. Ted and Bill in front seat of clown engine. Fabulous ... old pics great. Alas. Poor Wayne Isken. Wife did come home ... funeral is Wednesday!

And from Wayne P. Isken

I saw my house remodeling in your newsletter, I hope it brought a lot of smiles. Have fun with my articles. Again use any/all as you see fit. The more of us smile the better it is.

PS. Wayne's Stuff crashed so now all my stuff is being emailed to those that sign up at wistuff@comcast.net I email an article or more every morning to those that sign up. I have over 2000 pages of stuff for those to start their day with a smile.

Fire Destroys East Side Church Building

A 2-alarm fire gutted a church on Detroit's east side on June 2nd. The Everybody's Universal Tabernacle Church of Holiness, was destroyed in the fire, which was deemed to be suspicious. At the time of the fire, DFD was still working on an abandoned house fire just two blocks away.

The church, at 3672 Meldrum on the south-east corner of Pulford, was apparently vacant, although it had been a going concern for many decades. A photo of the building taken in the 1950s in on page 5.

This excellent video from BoxAlarmDetroit shows the action and the aftermath.

To see the video (5 min) [\[click here\]](#).

The location of the church fire was reminiscent of one of Detroit's most historic major fires. Just a block south on Meldrum was located the Briggs Manufacturing plant, which burned in 1963. Walter Briggs bought the plant in 1925 to produce auto bodies for Ford, Hudson, and Packard. Briggs was an owner of the Detroit Tigers along with Frank Navin, and expanded Navin Field into the new Briggs Stadium after Navin died in 1935.

We ran this story of the Briggs fire over three years ago, but since the audio recordings are so dramatic, we are running it again for those who'd like to review it, and our newer readers who may have missed it. >>

A Day In History, 50 years ago: Briggs Manufacturing Fire

This UPI story, printed in a Utah newspaper, sums it up. This major fire, which destroyed the former Briggs Manufacturing plant at 3100 Meldrum, occurred on April 10, 1963.

DETROIT FIRE DESTROYS PLANT BUILDING, CHURCH

DETROIT (UPI)—The abandoned five-story Briggs plant on Detroit's near east side was destroyed by fire Wednesday and the spreading flames also burned down a nearby church where 200 children were attending Mass. They escaped unharmed.

More than 200 firemen and 50 pieces of equipment responded to the call and all available men were summoned to aid in fighting the blaze. Burning embers swirled in a brisk morning breeze and set numerous fires in the Grand Trunk Railroad yard and at a school and coal yard.

Destroyed in the fire was Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church. About a half-dozen automobiles in the area were destroyed as debris from the burning plant crashed down on them.

The Duncan Steel Co. also was badly damaged by fire. A school connected to the church was damaged by water and smoke as was the home where the sisters who taught in the school lived.

We present here a couple of vintage recordings which highlight the standard operating procedures of the DFD 50 years ago. Before the advent of 911, the DFD utilized two switchboards, which handled both incoming and outgoing traffic - public calls, dispatches to stations, notifications, and general business.

The first clip is a recording from one of those switchboards during this fire. Recordings of both telephone and radio traffic in those days were voice-activated, and made to plastic Dictaphone belts before the switch to magnetic tape, which resulted in a somewhat scratchy quality.

To hear this recording (19 min.)

[\[click here\]](#).

Our other recording covers the radio traffic from this fire. For those who may not be aware, DFD at that time utilized only one channel to cover the city. There were no fireground or tactical channels, and there was no repeater. Field units did not hear each other unless the dispatcher had his microphone open which allowed incoming traffic to be heard as background.

In this radio clip, you may notice a thumping sound during the quiet passages. This was crosstalk on the PLC lines corresponding to the telegraph signal which was transmitted to the fire stations. In those days box alarms were still tapped out at all stations, punching holes in a paper tape to record the box number. For a second alarm on box 9119 Central Office would send 2-2 9-1-1-9, and repeat that cycle multiple times. When the dispatcher's microphone was open, you could hear the transmitter tapping in the background. The buffs used to refer to that sound as 'music.'

The traffic of KQA205 from 4/10/1963 (12 min.): [\[click here\]](#)

9119 Meldrum & Benson													
3-9119 Our Lady of Sorrows School, Meldrum between Charlevoix and Benson													
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
ENGINES					LADDERS					BATTALION			
18	26	41	13	45	10	6	14	5	1	3	1		6
11	6	9	3	1									
7	23	36			SQUADS					BOAT TENDER			
					3	1		2					

9119 DATE 3-26-65

The Briggs Manufacturing Fire of 1963



These photos, from various sources, show the extent of the Briggs Manufacturing fire of 4/10/1963. The shot at the lower left, showing fire fighters salvaging the crucifix from the Our Lady of Sorrows Church, received wide publication. The crucifix was recently restored and installed in a new location. To read that story, [\[click here\]](#).



photo by Jim Leininger



Church Fire

(continued from page 3)

The Everybody's Universal
Tabernacle Church of Holiness
as a neighborhood fixture

3672 Meldrum at Pulford, Detroit

mid 1950s

