



BOX 42 NEWSLETTER

"Serving the fire community since 1942"

January 2017 - (all images: click twice to enlarge)

MEETING INFORMATION

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

The January meeting will be at 1000 hrs on Saturday, January 21st

at [Troy Fire Department Station 2](#)
[5600 Livernois, 1/2 mi. north of Long Lake](#)

Major Fires -- Gatlinburg, Tennessee

A fire which began on the Chimney Tops Mountain in Tennessee on November 23rd -- the second in that area in a week -- spread north to the resort town of Gatlinburg over the next several days, turning into the disaster of a lifetime for that community. The initial fire, some five miles south of Gatlinburg, was difficult to reach due to cliffs, thick vegetation and rough terrain. Chimney Tops is part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

By November 28th, the fire had spread rapidly and eventually encompassed some 17,000 acres. Extreme winds gusting up to 85 mph pushed the fire beyond waiting fire units at the south edge of Gatlinburg. A mutual aid call had amassed some 200 firefighters from across the state in the largest call out ever of structural fire units in the city. GFD had positioned units along the north border of the park in preparation, but flying embers created more spot fires than could be controlled.

Ultimately 14 persons were killed, and over 2400 homes or businesses were destroyed or damaged. Two juveniles have been charged with starting the fire.

It's hard to grasp the scope of this fire from the description. This short video was taken by a local resident. It illustrates the stress of his attempt to evacuate the area with his friend.

To see the video (5:15) [\[click here\]](#).

And this video from YouTube takes a before and after look at some of the local attractions that were affected.

To view the clip (1:40) [\[click here\]](#).

Cambridge, Massachusetts

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, a three-story residence under renovation caught fire on the afternoon of December 3rd. The fire spread so rapidly that by the time the first engine arrived, seven buildings and nine automobiles were engulfed. The neighborhood is a dense

residential area containing many attractively restored older buildings. One heavily damaged building was St. Patrick's Place, a former three-story church converted to residences. It was 250 ft. away from the building where the fire started, at 35 Berkshire St.

The fire, which damaged or destroyed 16 buildings, ultimately went to 10 alarms and used resources from 16 communities.

Below: The initial Cambridge fire was on Berkshire, south of York



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

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New Box 42 Members

Box 42 welcomes two new members, accepted at the December meeting.

Bill Grimshaw is officially an account executive at VTC Insurance Group of Farmington Hills, where he has worked for 24 years. He began with AAA in 1974, and brings over 40 years of experience to his clients. On a more familiar note, Bill is an excellent fire photographer whose press work has been seen for decades in the area. One example is the shot at the right from the Pepino's fire of November 2015 in Walled Lake.



Bill Grimshaw

Our other new member is Bill Reardon, who has attended several meetings over recent months. Bill is a railroad engineer / mechanic at Greenfield Village. He is the son of former Box 42 member the late Jack Reardon, and the brother of John Reardon, a retired DFD lieutenant. Jack Reardon passed away in October of 1974.



Bill Reardon

Box 42 congratulates and welcomes both members.



Walled Lake Rd at Pontiac Trail - 11/2/2015
Photo by Bill Grimshaw

Spartan Motors to Acquire Smeal

Spartan Motors USA of Charlotte, Michigan has announced its acquisition of Smeal Fire Apparatus Co., a leading manufacturer of an array of fire and wildland urban interface vehicles. Our June issue carried a profile of Smeal, which is based in Nebraska.

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

Fire Destroys Macomb Home

An elderly Macomb Township couple was hospitalized with smoke inhalation when their ranch home was consumed by fire on November 27th. The fire was on the west edge of the township near Hayes, north of 21 Mile. The residence, built in 1977, was destroyed when the owner struck a can of gasoline while backing into his garage. Macomb Township was assisted by Shelby Township in fighting the fire, which began about 4:45 pm. This view shows the house prior to the fire: [\[click here\]](#).

Bill Grimshaw sent this video that clearly shows the challenge of the fire.

To view the clip (2:45) [\[click here\]](#).

Meeting at Wayne State PD

Our December meeting convened at Wayne State University PD. The station is just a block east of Engine 17 which, in fact, rolled by during the meeting. The headquarters is housed in a recently restored 1925 Albert Kahn building, redesigned to accommodate the force of 60 officers and its fleet of 19 scout cars.

After a short business meeting, highlighted by an extensive spread of refreshments, members toured WSU's state of the art communications center. Here dispatchers handle up to 120 calls per day, coordinating with Detroit PD via CAD. The center has access to 1300 surveillance cameras and monitors some 30,000 alarm points.

The club thanks Chief Tony Holt, Lt. Brandi Richards, and Blake Govan for their hospitality in accommodating the group.

At WSUPD, a flexible monitor system is the head end for 1300 cameras.

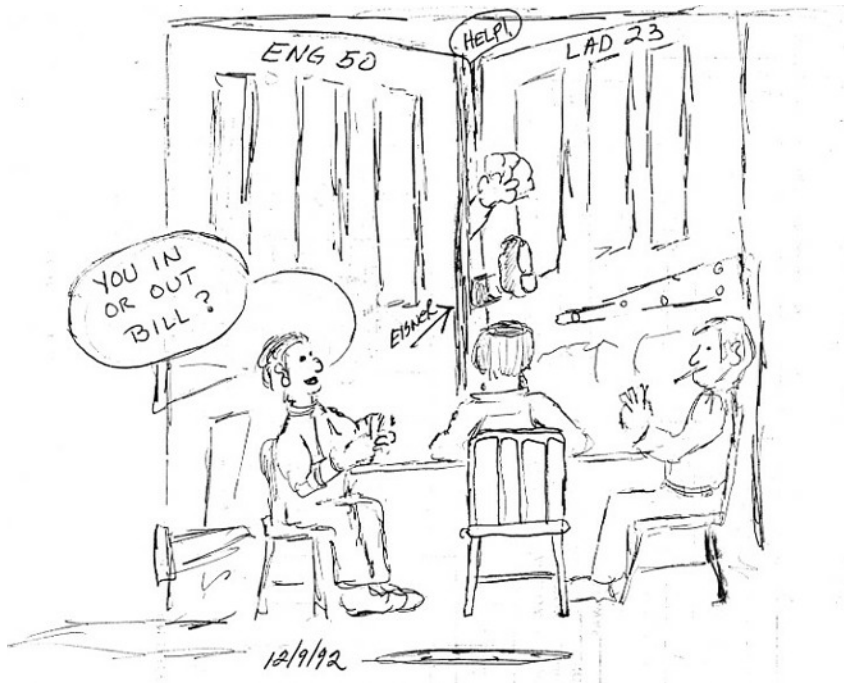


Looking back ... At John Keitz

Many readers fondly remember John Keitz, who died on May 14, 1983. John was an avid fire buff, well known across the Detroit Fire community. Although he was deaf, John was very active and was often seen at fire scenes and at DFD stations. John, who was a member of Box 42 along with his son Dennis, was often referred to as "Chief 13."

One of John's pastimes was cartooning, and regularly featured DFD personnel and situations. One such cartoon is shown below, making reference to Box 42 member and award winning photographer Bill Eisner. After John's death, Bill wrote an obituary, shown at the right, which appeared in the Detroit News in the following week.

Wayne Isken, retired DFD member and occasional contributor to the Box 42 Newsletter, has put out a call for readers who may have cartoons by John Keitz. He is hoping to put together and publish a collection of Chief 13's work. He does not want originals. Copies or scanned images will be fine. If you have something to offer contact Wayne at wistuff@comcast.net.



John Keitz - 7/18/1975
(photo by Mike Rosenblum)

The Box 42 Newsletter welcomes all ideas for input and features and 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



John Keitz alongside one of the fire rigs he loved to follow.

Photo by Bill Eisner

The Final Alarm For John Keitz

By Bill Eisner

John Keitz, who for many years lived on Nuernberg in the Van Dyke-E. McNichols area, died Saturday at age 61.

John was known as "Chief 13," a fire buff for most of his life.

He was deaf, so he could never hear the sound of the sirens and the clang of the bells. He could read the tape when an alarm came in at the fire house. In fact, he knew most every fire box location in the city.

John would respond to all the extra alarms when he could. He also could remember the names of all the firemen he met over the years — even their badge numbers.

He was taught how to talk by men in the Detroit Fire Dept. many years ago. He understood people by reading their lips.

When I first met John, I said something to him from a ways away and

didn't know why he didn't answer me. I soon found out I was the new guy around and John had been a fire buff for 30 years already.

John was a very smart man and was well-liked by all the men in the Fire Dept. and in the fire buff clubs. His cartoons of firemen at fires and in the engine houses shall always be remembered.

He is survived by his wife, Rose Marie; a son, Dennis, two brothers, Stanley and Robert; a sister, Dolores Tokarski, and his mother, Louise. He was buried Wednesday from Wujek Funeral Home with Mass said at Holy Name Church. Interment was at Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

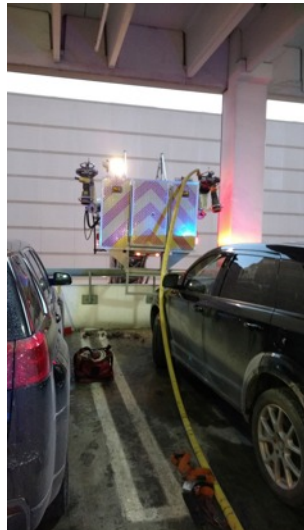
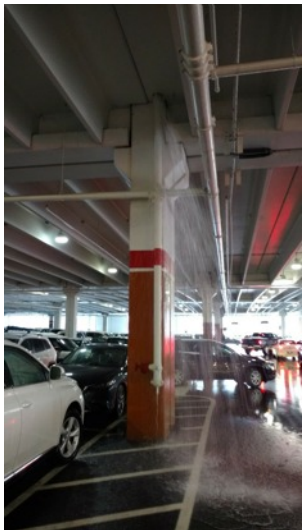
Troy Goes To Plan B For Faulty Standpipe

When Troy FD's Station 3 responded to two automobile fires in the same area of the Somerset north parking structure two days in a row, it was coincidental, although not considered suspicious. What was somewhat unusual, however, was that the firefighters found the structure's standpipe system so leaky that it was practically unusable.

On the second response, knowing about the standpipe problem, the crew raised Ladder 3 to the second level and used its outlet as a substitute standpipe.

The first fire, which started in the engine area of a parked car, was on Saturday afternoon, December 17th. The second incident occurred the day after, starting in the rear of a moving vehicle, only 100' from the location of the first fire. In both cases damage was limited and there were no injuries.

(photos from Troy FD)



Photos



29 Years Ago: Al Burch swears in Dan Jasina as secretary/treasurer, Bryan Valrance as president, and William Tweedie as vice-president on January 23, 1988. (photo by Bill Eisner)

In Chile, there are no paid firefighters. Every fire department is 100 percent volunteer, from the smallest towns to major cities such as Santiago and Valparaiso. It's been that way since the first corps of "bomberos" was organized in Valparaiso in 1851, making Chile possibly the only nation in the world with an entirely volunteer fire service. Today it has more than 300 departments with about 40,000 members. By comparison, 69 percent of the 1.13 million firefighters in the United States are volunteers. In Germany, 96 percent of the country's 1.3 million firefighters are volunteers.

Photos

Right: 1456 Canton - June, 2014

Right below: 7299 Cahalan - June, 2014

Below: 75 Louise, Highland Park - October, 2013

(All photos by Steve Redick)

