



Toys On Fire: New Exhibit at The Fire Museum

A love of toys, of models, of firefighting and a friendship spanning much of the 20th Century are all embodied in the new Fire Museum exhibit, Toys on Fire: Fire Fighting Toys and Fine Collectibles.

Chief William N. Schwartz of the Ocean Grove, NJ Fire Department started his collection with the toy firetrucks he played with as a boy. Two of these, made by the manufacturer Buddy L of Moline, IL, are on display.

Born in 1913, Schwartz spent a lifetime acquiring over 2,000 toys, models and fine collectibles from a number of manufacturers and countries all over the world. He was still adding to his collection upon his death in 2003 at age 90. Among the many lives he touched was that of retired Memphis Fire Chief Dick Adelman, who was in his early teens and dreaming of being a firefighter when he met Schwartz.



Firefighters from Station #4 show off the arch they constructed for the Toys on Fire exhibit. Back row from left: Driver Lynn Thompson, Lt. Andy Kirk, Private Brent McKinness, Firefighter Hugh Doyle, Firefighter Chris Stephens, Firefighter James Spence, Battalion Chief Fred Steward. Front row from left: Firefighter Kimo Naumann, Firefighter Ray Pelletier, Driver Thatis Bratcher and Lt. Tony Redwine.



Photo by Milton Craft
Chief Schwartz's daughter tells a friend about his toy collection at the opening of the Toys on Fire exhibit in December 2004.

It was because of this friendship that Chief Schwartz's collection, which has grown into what is now believed to be the largest and highest quality collection of fire toys and collectibles ever seen in the South, has found a home at the Fire Museum of Memphis. Models and toys manufactured by companies such as Franklin Mint, Buddy L, Corgi, Code 3, Tonka, Matchbox and Ertl are the highlight of the exhibit but are only half of Schwartz's full collection.

The example of service and excellence in firefighting, which Schwartz had demonstrated to Adelman, was something Adelman passed on to his sons, Bill and Alan. Bill Adelman is a watch commander with the Memphis Fire Department in addition to working part-time as the Fire Museum's operations manager. Alan Adelman is a 25-year veteran of the Bartlett Fire Department.

A commitment to the Fire Museum is something that the entire Adelman family shares.

It was the Adelmans who suggested to Chief Schwartz's daughter, Lois Haase, that she consider putting

the collection on display at the museum. The Adelmans knew that her father's venerable collection would be a valuable addition to the Fire Museum. An exhibit at the Fire Museum would also ensure that the collection stayed together and close to Haase's home in Bella Vista, AR.

Miniature fire apparatus, models, toys and books from 20th Century America and countries including Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Holland and France filled up a "good sized" U-Haul used to move the collection from Arkansas. Then the process began of unpacking all the toy pumpers, engines, snorkels, ladder trucks, rescue vehicles, tools and appliances that Schwartz collected through the decades. The toys are constructed of wood, cast iron, metal, plastic and other materials and range from the simple kid-powered vehicles to those that are motorized and remote controlled.

Chief Schwartz's uniform and helmet are also on display along with other artifacts from his life as a firefighter. The exhibit is sponsored by Sunbelt Fire of Fairhope, AL, suppliers of fire equipment including E-ONE fire trucks.



Chief Schwartz's Buddy L ladder truck, made of steel in the '20s, is on display in the Toys on Fire exhibit.

An Heroic Volunteer Effort

The Fire Museum of Memphis' newest exhibit "Toys on Fire: Fire Fighting Toys and Fine Collectibles" is the culmination of a lifetime of collecting by Chief William N. Schwartz and countless hours of work by volunteers



Photo by Milton Craft

Toys and boxes surround Memphis Fire Buff volunteers John Goss and Carol Sheehan as they catalog the Schwartz collection in preparation for the Toys on Fire exhibit.

and members of the Society for the Preservation and Appreciation of Antique Motorized Fire Apparatus in America (SPAAMFAA) local chapter, the Memphis Fire Buffs.

The Memphis Fire Buffs describe themselves as people who "happen to like old firetrucks." The group's members are retired firemen, fire chiefs, active duty firefighters and everyday people who have a fondness for the vehicles and the profession.

According to executive director, Brier Turner, the design and construction of the exhibit was non-stop for about three months under the guidance of Bill Adelman, who worked two jobs and seven days a week throughout the construction.



Photo by Milton Craft.

Toys on Fire exhibit showing Chief Schwartz's uniform.

Adelman is both a watch commander with the Memphis Fire Department and the museum's operations manager.

Adelman, who usually works part-time at the museum, took on the full-time job of making sure that not only was the exhibit a success but that other items in Schwartz's vast collection were properly cared for and organized for future use. There are approximately 2,000 toys in the collection as well as archival materials including books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and photographs. Toys on Fire showcases about 900 pieces of Schwartz's collection that are on a ten year, long-term loan to the museum.

The size of the collection, which surprised Adelman and his family even though they had known Schwartz for many years, made the assistance of SPAAMFAA volunteers invaluable. Magazines, newspapers, books and other historical records permanently donated to the museum are still being catalogued and will be used for reference.

Bill's father, Dick Adelman is president of the SPAAMFAA local chapter. He together with members Carol Sheehan, Tommy Fox, Milton Craft, John Goss, Kevin Lackey, Allan Loschky and Bartlett firefighter and son Alan spent hours and hours selecting artifacts, painting and constructing the exhibit.

Local firefighters also lent a hand. Matt Harris, Dan Harris, Mike O'Keefe, Cameron Beach and the staff of Memphis Fire Station #4 all volun-



Photo by Milton Craft

Retired Memphis Fire Chief Dick Adelman stands next to photographs of him and Chief William Schwartz.

Recent Donations and Pledges

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Honorariums

In honor of Floyd Newsum by Chuck Fox
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In honor of the Memphis Fire Department Company of the Year, Truck 3B by The Insurors of Memphis
In honor of Brier Smith Turner by Mrs. C.D. Smith II

Memorials

In memory of Clifton Bryson by Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Broer, Dr. and Mrs. John Outlan, Vawter Gammon, Norris & Company PC
In memory of Willard Sparks by Faye J. Stephens
In memory of Chief Andrew Stephens by Ed Wolbert

teered their time to aid in the construction.

Billy Hicks and Hicks Convention Services donated materials and services including the casework. Bill Oates III, of Oates Design, produced and contributed artwork and graphics for the exhibit and promotional materials.

Thanks to this group effort the exhibit opened Dec. 11, 2004, enabling Toys on Fire, the first new exhibit at the Fire Museum since it opened six years ago, to be enjoyed by all.

New Directors and Officers For Fire Museum Board

John Ellis, senior vice president with Belz Enterprises and Charles Marshall, chief idea officer for Signature Advertising were elected to the Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning in January.

Officers for the year include chairman, Thomas O'Malley, financial consultant for A. G. Edwards & Company; Jerry Gillis, vice-chairman, president of Faxon Gillis Homes, Inc.; Faye Stephens, secretary; and Nick Ringel of Penn Investors, treasurer.

The Memphis Fire Department is represented by three board members: Richard Arwood, director; Alvin Benson, deputy director and Ron Brown, fire marshal.

Other board members include Dottie Berry, senior vice president of FedEx; Hal Boyd of Pitts Boyd Insurance; Jay Buckley, Parkway Properties; Dave Chase, president, Memphis Redbirds; Lance Fair and Jerry Hanover of Belz Enterprises; Ronald Harkavy, attorney with Armstrong Allen PLLC; Billy Hicks III of Hicks Convention Services; Michael Lowe; Jack Mayer of Morgan Keegan; Terry Oldham, president, Firefighters Union Local 1784. Longtime board member and former chairman Robert G. Snowden, of Colliers Wilkinson & Snowden, remains on the board as does William M. Walsh of Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh, the board's attorney.

These community leaders work diligently to ensure the successful future of the Fire Museum.

NEW RED DOOR MEMBERS

The Fire Museum is proud to announce the following new Red Door members. There are now 889 members – that is 65% of all active firefighters – a very significant number.

Memphis fire fighters are renowned for their professionalism – and for their generosity. Thank you.

Please contact Brier Turner 901-320-5658 or email brier@firemuseum.com for information.

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Memphis Fire Director Richard Arwood and Battalion Chief Terry Norris present Donna Kirk and her daughters with her husband's flag at the MFD Memorial Service. Firefighter Trent Kirk was killed (along with Firefighter Charles Zachary) in June 2003



at the Family Dollar Store fire. They are the last, 49th and 50th Memphis firefighters to die in the line of duty and commemorated by the museum's Memorial Wall.



Memphis Fire Director Richard Arwood presents Truck 3B from Fire Station #14, B shift: Firefighter Paramedic Gigi Quillian, Private John Foote, Private Jay Grainger and Lt. Curtis Carpenter with the Company of the Year award for heroic service at the Fire Department's Award and Memorial Service held at the museum October 6, 2004.



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Memphis, TN 38103

Fire Museum of Memphis

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www.firemuseum.com

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