

# BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICER

LOCAL 964

--STAFF--

STEPHAN G. FUGATE -- MIKE CAMPBELL

*By and For the Professional Fire Officer*

IN UNION  
THERE IS STRENGTH

Volume IX, Issue 1

February/March 2005

## From the Desk of the President

*By Stephan G. Fugate*

### The Unforgettable Month of February

The month of February is many things to many people, with widely varying significance. It has, since 1926, been Black History Month (originally Black History week) and only took hold of our national conscience in the last several decades. It is also the month of Valentine's Day and Marti-Gras, but with relatively short, cold, often dreary days, it is often said to be the shortest month of the year not by accident, but by design.

For those of us in the BCFD, it is a month of historical significance and of unspeakable tragedy. Our Department was officially organized as a fully paid Department on February 15, 1859, responding to its first fire as such on February 23, 1859 at Broadway and Pratt Street. The Great Baltimore Fire was kindled on February 7, 1904 and raged for days leveling 140 acres of Baltimore's business district but, miraculously causing no verifiable loss of life. February is also, by the way, the month that The Baltimore Fire Officers' Local 964 was Chartered in 1948, having "spun-off" from Local 734 in a sense. That, in itself is grist for an entire newsletter but for another time for all of that history was tragically eclipsed on a single cold night to come.

It was the early evening of February 16, 1955 that would change the lives of virtually everyone even remotely connected with the Department, and it was as sudden and unpredictable as a flash of lightning. What started as a basement fire in a popular men's clothing store at 507-509 East Baltimore Street would escalate to six alarms followed shortly by a sudden collapse of the rear of the building bringing an additional three alarms for search and rescue. When the "dust cleared", there were six confirmed fatalities and at least seventeen injured members whose injuries would require medical attention.

There were, by all accounts, many more injuries, but the enormity of the tragedy unfolding before their eyes demanded attention to the task and, as is so often the case, a sacrifice of their own well-being. It was, in the midst of unspeakable tragedy, yet another example of the unselfish dedication to service and commitment to The Brotherhood that makes being part of America's Fire Service much, much more than a job. What would come to be known as The Tru-Fit Fire has served as a stark reminder of the heavy price we might pay, at any given moment, but we have all sworn to protect and to serve, regardless of the consequences and THAT is what makes our profession so extraordinary.

Along with the honor and pride that comes with membership in The Brotherhood of the Nation's Fire Service, however, comes an obligation to "Never Forget". While surely gaining a renewed prominence, that catchphrase did NOT originate with "9-11", but has been the postscript of countless funerals and eu-

logies for nearly two centuries and "Never" means never. This year will mark the fiftieth anniversary of The Tru-Fit Fire, and as we did on the fortieth, we will gather at the site not only to commemorate our loss, but to rededicate our efforts to our proud profession.

God Bless all who came before us, all of the brave and dedicated men and women who serve today, and all who will surely follow, and may we leave for them a brighter future.

### Unforgettable Indeed

February also marks the anniversary of the current Chief's tenure, and I had prepared a rather pointed perspective of his three years in command that, while acknowledging accomplishments, weighed "the good and the bad" with a dramatically less than flattering conclusion. But February can also be a strange month as well, and I have been struggling for several days with a dilemma that has consequences far greater than whatever might come of a personal critique.

Some of what influenced my now to be postponed writing is the manner in which significant labor issues have been shunted aside or ignored; for example, there are an unprecedented EIGHT Grievances headed to the Labor Commissioner, most because they were ignored or treated rather cavalierly. On Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, however, the Chief summoned Rick and I to "extend the olive branch" and offering to renew a working and productive relationship aimed initially at resolving outstanding grievances.

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## From the President's Desk.....

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So.... do I sit across the table and pretend to be cooperative, knowing that a rather scathing newsletter article is literally at the printer? Do I work with the Chief to (hopefully) address the needs and concerns of our members and then reveal what will clearly be offensive, possibly destroying whatever good will might come about in the process? The answers, I've concluded, are "no", "no", and it can wait. I have held up the printing of this newsletter for three days and I am to understand that there are time-sensitive issues herein so I'll refrain from further comment now, hope that the "new atmosphere" is more than another disappointment, and trust that I'm not being misled yet again.

### From the Desk of the 1st Vice President

By Michael Waldner

This being the February issue, at the time of my posting it is cold and snow still covers the ground. But by the time this issue is in your hands, we will be thinking Spring thoughts. The renewal and regrowth of nature should be evident all around us. Likewise, this Department should be going through a revamping of its own. Assistant Chief Thomas has filed for retirement and a search for his replacement is ongoing at the time of my writing. I wish Chief Thomas well in his retirement or any future endeavors as the case may be.

Hopefully, this transition will signal new and greater cooperation between the Unions and the Administration. Perhaps a renewal of the Labor / Management Committee, that has been pretty much discontinued and is sorely missed as evidenced by the ridiculous backlog of unsettled grievances. With a fresh start, and some action from the so far non existent Labor Commissioner, maybe we can move forward and resolve these differences together in cooperation and negotiate a compromise on

these too many issues. If real cooperation and negotiation could continue between both sides, this Department could go forward united against the problems that have reduced a once great Department to a shell of its former self. Here's hoping we can all work together this time.

We are losing too many experienced people to frustration and despair, and their replacements are just not willing or sometimes not capable of picking up the cause, correcting the problems and moving forward with constructive change. This is reflected in our Unions as well as the Department. Take a hard look at both Executive Boards; you will see long tenured members retiring and literally no one waiting in the wings seeking to replace them. Most all principal positions during the past few elections have run unopposed. This may be because the incumbents have served you well, but there still needs to be a successor in training for the inevitable retirements. Many times we have had to appoint Battalion Stewards due to lack of interest, refusals, and lack of attended meetings to qualify for nomination. This is your Union and Department, and you have to take an interest in its continued success and future. Take an interest and work for progress. The future is yours to mold, or yours to regret. Fight to make it what you want it to be. Someone has to stand up for you and your Union Brothers. It might have to be you, if no one else is willing to step up. Do it for your-

self, if for no other reason.

Speaking of Spring, it is time to think of Spring Training and softball. At least it is at my house. Harford County has an excellent Senior softball program. Yes to both questions, I am that old and I am still playing softball. They have a great league playing on three nights in the spring and an additional fall league. These leagues have been a feeder system for their Tournament teams in the 50-55, 55-60, 65 and up, divisions. We have captured several World and National titles over the past 3-4 years. There are 50+ leagues on Tuesdays and Thursdays that are fun for all those who would like to get a little exercise and renew their youthful aspirations as well as have fun. Tuesdays are played at Joppa / Magnolia fields and Thursdays at Harford Community College fields. The other **more competitive** league is for 43+ year olds and also is played at Joppa / Magnolia on Thursdays. This league is well balanced and all teams are in the hunt for 1<sup>st</sup> place and the championship. Any one interested in playing in any of these leagues please contact me or Ray Fisher, Commissioner, Harford Senior Softball, at 410-679-4607, 914 Pine Road, Joppa, MD., 21085.

Also for any members not in the Senior category, I still run a team in the Perryhall area on Monday night in the Spring for Firehouse Tavern and our IAFF tournament in September. If you are interested in playing contact me at BC6 on C shift or 410-908-2179.

## ATTENTION MEMBERS OF MECU

One of our own, **BOB SLEDGESKI, LOCAL 734**, is running for a position on the Municipal Employees Credit Union Board of Directors -- opposing Chief Goodwin.

Baltimore Fire Officers, Local 964 is supporting Bob and urges you and family members to vote for him.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

1. Roof collapse at E41 has hastened repairs on the decrepit station and necessitated moving out and hopefully fast tracking repairs.
2. Still working on written confirmation system for apparatus repair reports and completion of work reports.
3. Send any Big Ed lights or batteries to shop for repair or replacement.
4. Any air mask failures are to be turned over intact to Safety Officer on scene **as is** for investigation and repair. Specials need to be forwarded as written documentation of failure for tracking purposes.
5. RIT bags and hoses are in purchase mode.
6. Fire watch at City Public Schools has been discontinued.
7. More straight trucks due in soon. (There is a cost difference of \$75,000 between a tiller and straight truck and lower height clearance for straight trucks).
8. New type glove in the field for testing.
9. Checking on volume control at Communications.
10. Working on a grant for exercise equipment for stations.

**REMINDERS**

1. Protect face pieces on fire ground from water and debris during overhaul, return to unit if not wearing.
2. Stress battery cable cleaning with drivers, maintenance more important with high tech electrical controls and equipment.
3. Drain **all** air tanks on air brake/horn system. Some units have as many as 5-6 tanks, call shop for locations or info.
4. Oil levels need topping off as some systems divert engine oil for other uses and can run low.
5. Part time work for Comp time available at Repair Shop doing various duties, contact Oscar. Help needed/wanted.
6. OSHA has been in firehouses to enforce no smoking ban in City buildings. Company Officer will be held accountable by the current Administration, as per the Memos. Be aware and fore warned, proceed at your own risk. Complaints have come from our own members who know the rules too.

Next meeting is after this writing. For an update come to a Union meeting. Contact me with items for agenda for April. If any issue is of an emergency or urgent nature, I will get in contact with Chief Heinbuch immediately to try and abate any problem.

***Stay safe, and try to attend meetings to voice your opinion and be informed of the facts rather than listen to rumors!***

**From the Desk of  
the 2nd Vice President***By Ben Alder*

P S I: At this time we have approx. 6 complaints filed with the Maryland Board of Physicians. It is my understanding that once you have filed a complaint against a Physician, that Physician can no longer treat you until the issue is cleared up. I will be looking into that and will advise when I have more information. The Sun paper article dealing with Workman's Comp said we are telling our members to file malpractice lawsuits, that is NOT correct. We have been telling our members to file complaints with the MBP. We can make a difference!

Metro Burn Fund: We will be hosting World Burn Congress Conference in August 2005 at the Marriott Waterfront. This conference is for burn survivors and their families from around the country. We are expecting about 700/800 in attendance for the conference. The Burn Fund is requesting help from our ALS providers for this conference to man an EMS room. If you would be interested in volunteering a few hours one or two days during the conference please contact me @410 908 0183 or Tom McLhinney @410 935 9075. Your help will be appreciated.

Building: We are very close to signing a multi-year deal with the Mr. David Key of the Daily Grind to lease the first floor. This is a great opportunity for us to move all operations to the second floor and to bring the building back to where it should be, a place of prominence in the Canton community.

**Next Board Meeting****March 7th****11:00 a.m.**

## From the Desk of the Recording Secretary

By Mike Campbell

Pardon the next few sentences, but I would like to get a little introspective on y'all. If someone would please dim the house lights for me. There are times during our lives when we contemplate about where we are; how we got here and where do we hope to be in the future. In my case, allow me to quote a favorite band of mine, "what a long strange trip it's been"! I have been most blessed with a beautiful and wonderfully understanding wife and two children, who are willing to share me with my Union brothers and sisters. Is it always wine and roses? Not on your life!!! Still, they understand who I am and that this is a calling for me. I would like to thank them for allowing me to pursue this passion. To paraphrase a well known baseball player, "**I am**, the luckiest man on the face of this earth"! Can I get an amen from the congregation!

As some of you already know, I listen to a lot of music. Some mainstream, some not. I was raised in the 60's and 70's and rarely stray from that era of music including The Dead, The Doors, Bob Dylan, Little Feat, Pink Floyd and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. This may or may not account for my opinionated outlook or my questioning of authority or it may be that I'm just an \*\*\*hole. I'll leave that for the rest of you to decide.

Music will always be an integral part of my life and in some respects I use it to achieve the right frame of mind when dealing with various issues. There is a Jackson Browne song on The Pretender album, "Daddy's Tune" that if you get a chance I would recommend to give it a listen. I use this song to remind me that you should not hold back when it comes to sharing your feelings, or in my case, your opinions. We only have so much time here, might as well step up rather than waiting for that perfect time, it may never come. In my estimation, this is what being a Union official is all about! Along with music, I also look to

other people who inspire me and get my juices flowing. We have been lucky in both Locals to have such leaders, those who are in it for the common good of all our members, Fugate, Jordan, Seiss, O'Connor, Taylor, Schluderberg, and Sledgeski to name a few.

In the next few years, there will be a tremendous turnover on both Locals' Executive Boards. Where will the next leaders come from? It will come from some of you, who like me, have the urge to lead and protect the rights that the names above have garnered for all of us. Not everyone has the time or the inclination to do this and that is well understood. It is a selfless act that can be very rewarding or be very troubling, but as Bob Dylan so eloquently states, "Gotta serve somebody". The Union Local is only as strong as those it serves and my decision has been made. All I ask is that you at least ask yourself the question. I would like to once again thank Leisa, Jason and Megan for allowing me this opportunity to "serve somebody". I LOVE YOU!

### Health Care

At the present time there haven't been any pressing issues regarding Health Care. Don't hesitate to call with any issues.

### President's Club

We have begun collecting for the 2005 Presidents Club. The President's Club is part of our Pac-Fund and takes the monies that are collected and utilizes them to support the politicians who support us. This is a very worthwhile endeavor and I would like to increase our membership this upcoming year. We are looking at adding a payroll deduction slot for Pac-Fund donations. We need your help so our voice will be heard! At the present time we have 17 members of the Presidents Club. I am optimistically hoping for 30 members this year.

As always, keep your Beneficiaries up to date and don't hesitate to call or e-mail me at any time. Cell: 443-629-0216/Work: 410-396-5161 E-mail: captain16@hotmail.com

## Words to twirl by...

**You may be an Ambassador to England or France  
You might like to gamble you may like to dance,  
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world  
You might be a socialite with a long string of pearls,  
But you're gonna have to serve somebody, serve somebody!**

*Bob Dylan*

## FIREFIGHTER GOLFERS

On Monday, April 25 thru Friday, April 29, 2005, we will be returning to Florence, South Carolina for our annual golf trip. We play two 9-hole Captain's Choice format rounds on Monday afternoon. We play 18 holes regular and 9 holes Captain's Choice on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday we play 18 holes, have a banquet and then return home.

The cost of the trip includes:

5 rounds of golf, 5 rounds cart fees, 3 extra 9-hole golf fees, 3 extra 9-hole cart fees, 4 breakfast buffets (including tip) 4 dinners (including tip)

Also included are all tournament fees; that covers prizes for: closest to the pins, low putts, team clears, team total scores, personal clears, Captain's Choice.

Talk to: Charlie Williams, Charlie Carroll, Ray Tosh, Pete Sullivan, Mike McCauley, Frank Martel, Jay Johnson, Ed Kilcoyne, Bob Gerwig, Ed Dix, Phil Gruss or coordinator, **Bernie Gruss at 410-391-3336.**

## Tired and Retired

by Bob Hatoff

Well I made it through the holidays, and since things have slowed down I decided to start going through the bags of fan mail piling up in my basement. Due to limitation of space, I'll list some of the questions asked, with brief answers. Is it true Engine 51, 13 and 4 were on the same box at 1625 Normal Ave.? YES! Is it true a box for a house fire at 1541 Montpelier St. drew Engines 21, 42, 5, 23, 2 and Trucks 1 and 29? YES! Is it true Engines 20 and 21 were both on a box 3623 Spaulding Av.? YES! Is it true a house fire at 2611 Cecil Av. took Engines 4, 13, 42, 51 and 5? YES! Is it true my biggest source of entertainment is listening to the fire calls and being amazed at the assignments? YES! Is it true I need to get a life? YES!

The Retirees had a bull roast on 12-14-04. President Harris and the Board started offering awards named after our former president Charlie Wetzberger and Phil Waldner. Both men I admired very much for all their contributions to our organization. Wil Tice received the Wetzberger Award and I am humbly proud to say I was honored with the Waldner Award. It's always nice to be recognized, and I hope members will continue to consider me worthy.

Janice and I will celebrate our 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary on February 6<sup>th</sup>. It's hard to imagine that anyone would put up with me for all those years, but she has. I would also like to mention that at her last visit to the doctor he found some brain damage. Please keep that to yourselves, I wouldn't want to embarrass my lovely bride.

The latest report on Tex Helfrich is he was suffering from cabin fever, with his broken leg and snuck out on his ATV. He was going to take the horse that fell on him, but the horse was laughing too hard to be ridden.

I was at the Union meeting on January 17<sup>th</sup> to see my daughter, Anita, installed as Sergeant at Arms. Below is the list of all the nice things I heard about Chief Goodwin.

If you have any special occasions coming up or newsworthy items you can reach me at:

1805 Greencastle Dr.,  
Balto., 21237 or 410-866-3235.

If I don't hear from you, I'll have to keep making this stuff up by myself. The choice is yours!!

## SICK AND INJURED

by Bob Hatoff

Ray Freeman is doing much better after back surgery. 12/24

Bud Cornell continues to get treatments for macular degeneration. 1/31

Barry Blackmon is doing good and was able to travel to Flint, Michigan. 12/28

Gil Wurzbacher is scheduled for surgery on both knees. 1/28

Harry Stone continues to have problems with his blood sugar. 1/2

Don Gow had angio-plasti on his left leg and needs a bypass in his right leg.

George Moeller had successful surgery on his carotid artery. 1/9

Joe Andresini has been able to leave the nursing home and is back home. 1/1

Tom Chambers had a bad case of the gout. He's back home recovering. 1/16

Joe Nosek had to get a pacemaker and is home doing good. 1/18

Chuck Johnson has been battling shingles for a couple of months. 1/18

Bill (Beetle) Baum was in the hospital for awhile and is back home. 1/20

The following people have passed away. Gone but not forgotten.

Donald L. Hoyle  
Charlie Best  
Henry Hartman  
Gordon Baer  
Ursula Geoghagen, wife of Paul  
Donald T. Williams (Active)  
Mary Robinson, wife of Ken  
Richard H. Mason Sr.  
Marie Wingate, mother of Reese and my  
bingo pal  
Phil Meagher lost his long battle with cancer on 1/27.

## From the Entertainment Chairman

By Tom Nosek

**INSTALLATION OF UNION OFFICERS** was a superb event. The food was great and the turnout was fantastic. Congratulations to Bob, Bill and Anita.

**SOCIAL NIGHT:** Again, will be on Wednesday, March 9, 2005 doors open at 7:00 p.m. MENU includes steamed shrimp, wings, pit beef and gravy. Catered by Lt. Darby, T-2. Cost \$10.00.

**RETIREEES DINNER DANCE:** April 28, 2005 dinner, dancing and open bar. Tickets are thirty dollars. See the list of retirees from 2004 below. Call Tom Nosek for tickets at T-3 or home, 1-410-638-2231.

**ANNUAL VEBA FUND RAFFLE:** This is the only time the UNION will ask you to sell something. In the past, we have asked each active and retired member to sell 10 one dollar chances. Next week you will receive two \$5 dollar chances, buy one and sell one. The grand prize is a two-night stay at the Bavarian Inn located in Sheperdstown, West Virginia. The Inn oversees the Potomac River, has a world-class restaurant on the premise. All proceeds go to the VEBA Fund. Please make the effort to sell the chances!!!

### Congratulations to the members listed below for their many years of service to the Baltimore City Fire Department

William Arnold	E-23, Captain	Ernest Banse	E-30, Lt.
Duane Bridges	Med. Bur., Lt.	John Burdynski	B.C. #1
Daniel Christ	E-29, Lt.	Frank Giotis	B.C. #3
Roland Greaver	FCB, Lt.	Charles Hicks	E-26, Lt.
Wendell Jones	T-23, Lt.	Glenn Martin	E-30, Lt.
Wayne Melchior	T-30, Lt.	Charles Minderlein	E-51, Lt.
John Petrovic	T-1, Capt.	Thomas Poe	E-56, Capt.
Thurman Pugh	FPB, Lt.	Charles Rebstock	E-51, Capt.
William Shives	B.C. #6	Joseph Buckholtz	B.C. #3
<i>(honorary lifetime member)</i>		Ronald Wolff	E-44, Lt.
Jack Zoppo	E-6, Lt.	Robert Stewart	FPB, Lt.
<i>(deceased, line-of-duty death)</i>		Charles Lewis	Safety Officer, Lt.
Phillip Carpenter	T-5, Lt.	David Smith	T-20, Lt.
Robert Williams	B.C. #2	Mitch Fisher	F.A., Capt. (retired 2003)

#### THE BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICERS

##### Local No. 964

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1030 S. Linwood Avenue  
Baltimore, MD. 21224  
PHONE: 410-276-6964

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