Because of the Truck

While making our way to Howell one Sunday morning, we spotted an older lime-green fire truck in the distance that looked very familiar. We decided to check it out and caught up with it in the parking lot of Howell Hardware.

As we thought, it was Museum member Dave Getschman and his terrific 1961 Crown fire truck. His rig is definitely a head turner and was already getting some attention from a local firefighter and his Dalmatian as we pulled in.

Dave had stopped at his local hardware store to get some help extracting and replacing some unique screws on his truck. Chuck Chapman, the store owner who really likes the fire truck and has helped Dave innumerable times (thanks to having 9,000 different types of fasteners, including many that are chrome and stainless), came to the rescue once again. A few days later we got together with Dave to learn more about his truck and his experience as an owner.

Dave mentioned that his fire truck is called a “firecoach.” Crown built firecoaches between 1951 and 1985, first in Los Angeles and later in Chino, California. This particular model has a very unique and recognizable body style which has changed little over its production cycle. These rigs are pretty rare east of the Rockies, and the only one in Michigan is Dave’s.

“I’ve just always liked fire trucks,” said Dave, ‘particularly the scale/toy model ones. My father-in-law kept telling me there were organizations that do things with the big trucks. Finally I went to a muster in Frankenmuth with my brother to just look around. That’s where I met Mike Adams; he had quite a few antique trucks.

“Right after that I started taking trips with my daughter looking for a truck to buy; I really liked those from the 40’s and 50’s. But as I talked more with Mike, he said to think about how far I wanted to go with it and possibly consider a trailer, because the old rule of thumb was, ‘You can’t drive them faster than their age.’” (cont. on page 2)
Continued—Because of the Truck
“Among the 19 rigs in Mike’s collection was a 1961 Crown fire truck. He told me, ‘With the Crown, you can get on the expressway and just go.’ He showed it to me and gave me a price. I thought about it for a while and then decided to buy it, and that was 14 years ago.”

“Usually every winter I’ve done something to it, whether it was a repair job, an upgrade or another issue. But I’ve had help getting the work done, thanks to good people like Roger Engvall of Grand Rapids, the Crown Enthusiasts in LA and the guys at Cummins Bridgeway New Hudson.

“That’s not to say that it can be discouraging. Arriving back home one night after a routine oil change and inspection, I found the back end of the rig completely covered in oil and not a drop registering on the dipstick. Thankful that I had barely made it to my driveway, I immediately called the shop who did the service work. They did a total rebuild of the motor and clutch. That incident, coupled with a stay in the hospital a year earlier, got me asking myself if ‘all this has been worth it.’”

“It’s funny, I’ve had the truck since right after 9-11, when people were in awe of it and really appreciated what it stood for. But now, people don’t look at you that way when you’re on the road. They’re in such of a hurry - they cut right in front of you without thinking. There’s not the passion for this kind of collecting as a hobby anymore; so much has changed with this generation.”

“But I’ve also met some really great people. For instance, I have a friend that’s getting married in a week to a firefighter from Flint. She asked if I could bring the truck to the wedding in South Lyon, and I said sure. This will be the second time the Crown’s helped out at the altar.”

“I met a guy from Plymouth named Dan Fowler who was a former firefighter, police officer, phone company worker and Shriner clown. He would pick on me because my truck was lime green instead of red. Unfortunately, Danno passed away with bone cancer at 84. One winter day he called me tearful (he was a pretty tough guy) and asked me to come to his house.”

“When I got there, he said to me, ‘Davy, would you have your truck at my funeral?’ I told him yes, I would, but I said, ‘you’re just trying to get the last laugh on me. I know we’ll all be at the funeral and the tears will come and the minister will say that the gospel according to Danno is that fire trucks are red, you will have the last laugh.’ So he quickly turned to his wife and said, ‘You be sure the minister says that!’” He liked to kid me, but he liked the truck. The one we got for the funeral was actually red (a friend brought his instead).”

There is also a young man I met who has both Down’s Syndrome and Autism. Once a year I seek him out and we go to an event—last year we did Crusin’ Hines with his dad and his brother. I gave him a helmet and a turnout jacket and he was elated. His mom called me just about in tears and she said she wasn’t sure if she was happy or mad, because he won’t take it off. Every year we do something and he just sits in that front seat and grins from ear to ear.

I realize that because of the truck, I’ve met so many good people. But each year I wonder if it will be the year I will be done—I guess we’ll just have to wait and see. But for all the effort, the best part is something that doesn’t cost a thing; the smile it brings to the people I’ve been fortunate enough to meet.

Note; Dave is a Museum member, volunteer and event sponsor. He will be at our Fire Truck Muster on Saturday, August 20th.

Dave’s truck was red when it left the factory in 1961. In 1978, Crown replaced its Hall-Scott gasoline motor with a Cummins diesel and painted it a lime-green color, all under a federally funded program. The truck at right is similar to (or one of) the Crown trucks used in the 1960’s television series, “Emergency.”
What’s Been Happening at the Museum

Museum Visitors & Donations

**Schools, Clubs & Organizations**  S.E. Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs & the EMU Fire Staff & Command Class of 2016 (photo at right), Ann Arbor Camera Club, Huron Woods Seniors, Van Buren Public Schools Special Education Students, Custom Holidays Seniors, St. Claire Shores Adult Community Seniors, Lourdes University Senior Alumni, Howell Fire Academy, Westland Fire Academy, Huron Valley PACE Seniors, Open Arms Day Camp, VBS of Southfield and St. Philips Lutheran Church of Detroit Seniors.


**Donations**  Dan & Dave Egeler, Norma Weaver, Scio Township, Henry Burger, Jack Miller, Bonny Forsyth, Matt Lee, Bill Emerson, Richard Nagy, City of Ypsilanti Fire Dept.

**A Special Thank You**  to the **Ypsi Alehouse** for donating a portion of their proceeds to from May 24 - 26 as part of “Dine & Donate” to the Michigan Firehouse Museum. Thank you to all Museum members who participated!

Double The Fun—Casino Night

The Michigan Firehouse Museum & Education Center held its second annual Casino Night Fundraiser on Saturday, April 9, 2016. Guests enjoyed themselves playing blackjack and roulette. They were even treated to a special guest appearance by Elvis Impersonator Matt King. Thank you to everyone who attended, plus a big than you to our sponsors!

**Specialty Table Sponsors**
Craig Hegstrom - CISG  
Dan Egeler

**Blackjack Sponsors**
Biggby Coffee  
Dave Egeler  
Detroit Shields  
Tom Urquhart  
Cueter Chrysler Ram Dodge Jeep  
Ann Arbor Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and YpsiReal

**Color Wheel Sponsors**
- **Detroit Shields**
  - Bill Milliken  
  - Jacque Frenette  
  - Matthew Lee  
  - EMU Fire Staff & Command  
  - The Sidetrack

**Prize Donors**
- Eagle Crest Golf Resort  
- Rita Wetzel  
- Ypsi Alehouse  
- Henderson Castle Inn  
- Sidetrack Bar & Grill  
- Norma Weaver  
- Yankee Air Museum  
- The Henry Ford  
- Mix
Upcoming Events

The Michigan Firehouse Museum & Education Center is very pleased to present an exhibition of the artwork of Paul Combs. This special exhibition of thirty of Mr. Combs’ fire service cartoons will open on Thursday, July 21 and remain on exhibit at the museum through September 30, 2016.

Mr. Combs is currently the editorial cartoonist for Fire Engineering Magazine, Fire Rescue Magazine, JEMS, as well as a nationally syndicated political cartoonist. He is the author of three books: Drawn by Fire, Drawn by Fire, Too and Drawing Lines.

He has worked for the fire service for 21 years and is currently a firefighter/EMT for the City of Bryan Fire Department (Ohio).

Paul’s artwork combines his artistic talent for drawing, with his fire service experience and his amazing sense of humor to bring to the forefront important issues facing the fire service profession today. His cartoons appeal to both the fire service and to the general public.

Please join us at the Michigan Firehouse Museum on Thursday, July 21, at 7pm for a very special Artist Reception & Presentation by Mr. Combs entitled, The Art of Making a Difference.

This presentation will give you an inside look at Paul’s creative process and see what makes his zany, yet thought provoking cartoons come to life. He will also show a selection of work that has made a difference in his career and has evoked the strongest reactions - as he would say, “The good, the bad, and the hilarious.”

Tickets for this special evening are $10 for members; $20 for non-members (includes a 1-year individual membership). Light appetizers will be served. For more information or to purchase tickets online go to www.michiganfirehousemuseum.org or call the Museum at 734.547.0663
Michigan Firehouse Museum

FIRE TRUCK MUSTER

Saturday, August 20 at Riverside Park 10am-3pm
An Event for Fire Truck Lovers of All Ages!
Fire Trucks | Bucket Brigade Demonstration | Hand Pumper | Smoke House
Fire Prevention Information | Sketch Artist | Craft/Coloring Station | and More!

2016 Golf Outing
Friday, September 23
EAGLE CREST RESORT

Great Cause, Great Course, Great Price, Great Fun!
18 Holes with Cart
Coffee/Bagels/Donuts
Lunch & Dinner
Team Photo
Prizes

$90/Player
$360/Foursome

Mulligans
Longest Drive
Closest to the Pin
50/50 Raffle
Top Team Trophies

Photo by Meredith Egeler
Meet the Stovers

The Stover family stopped by the Michigan Firehouse Museum on Sunday, June 19th and was excited to learn that the Museum was part of the MotorCities National Heritage Area. They quickly grabbed their passports from the car and stamped their Find Your Road Trip booklet with the Special 100th Anniversary stamp. They proudly told museum staff member Maura Overland that they were from Tucson, AZ and had visited eight National Park sites so far on their vacation this summer including Saguaro, Bryce Canyon, Marble Canyon, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Devil’s Tower, Mount Rushmore, and the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. The Museum was honored to be included as part of their tour!

Please remember to stop by the museum and pick up a copy of the Find Your Road Trip booklet published by the MotorCities National Heritage Area in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the National Park Service. Reward yourself and find your park this summer. As Teddy Roosevelt would say, “Bully for you!”

A Little More With Dave Getschman’s 1961 Crown Firecoach

PHOTOS  Upper Left  Just after making it home the night before, the 1961 Crown Firecoach on its way back to the shop for an engine (and clutch) re-build. Lower Left  The first firefighter bridal party photo shoot with the truck.

Extra Benefits

A few years ago I was in Lyon Township, where they have lime-green fire trucks. I was driving near the fire station, when suddenly the station doors went up, and out came two fire trucks. I pulled over so they could go by and waved, getting some rather perplexed looks in return. They took off down Grand River, so I pulled out and went on my way. But for the next two miles, everyone got out of the way for me - I even got waved through a red light.

I store the truck in Grand Rapids. On my way there I stopped to see a friend. When I was leaving he asked me to drive to a particular intersection, where he’d be waiting to take my picture. He told me to hesitate for moment when I made the turn, so he could snap the photo. I got there and did as he said, but when I tapped on the horn to say good bye to him, the whole intersection pulled over.