

Fire Life



By Deanna Alexander and Kavita Mistry



ARASTRADERO FIRE STATION
CITY OF PALO ALTO

Foreword

How would you describe what it means to be a firefighter? Does it mean to wear the uniform? Does it mean to drive the fire truck with the sirens blaring, rushing to the next fire?

How would you describe the atmosphere of a fire station? Being a firefighter is not a job to be taken lightly. They sometimes respond to situations with somber outcomes and innocent victims. Does that make the station like a serious and solemn stronghold of bravery and heroism?

With all these questions, we started to look for some answers, which only led to a larger question: Where would we find firefighters to interview? Deanna's best idea was to start a fire, because then we could get some good photos too.

Okay so we were just kidding, but lucky for us, Deanna happens to be very close family friends with her neighbor, Toby McDonell. And Toby just happens to be a fire fighter for the Palo Alto Fire Department.

Actually, Toby has been a firefighter for 24 years. And in 1990 he was hired for the city of Palo Alto, and has now worked there for seventeen years. He has been a dedicated firefighter before he even got the job, "When

I was hired I actually had to wait in line for two days and two nights. We had to camp out because they only accepted the first 250 applications for the position so there was a big line on Stanford campus. We just camped out in a parking lot and I was number one in line and they hired 11 of us at that time."

We all know that firefighters don't save kittens from tall trees all day. They respond to a large variety of calls; they are on the scene at fires, medical emergencies, traffic accidents, hazardous material spills and more. Our topic of research digs beneath the side of fire fighting we hear about on our television sets or what we catch a glimpse of while rubbernecking at a highway accident scene. There is a whole other side to being a firefighter that many people don't know about unless they share a close relationship with a firefighter. Through the experiences they have in common, the firefighters share a bond with each other that you won't find at any workplace. For a firefighter, the crew is a second family and the station is a second home.

This book follows a day in the life of a firefighter of the Palo Alto Fire Department. The schedule is a fictional story based on real events, and interviews of firefighters working for the PAFD. All the cited facts are true.

8:00am



“Just like when you are at home, you have your chores, we all have our chores here. But its not one person’s responsibility, it’s everybody. We all clean the toilets and the showers. Maybe if you are more junior like I am, you clean more toilets or more showers. You have the least desirable jobs but everybody is working.”

-Doug Slezak













air brakes: check

lights: check

horns: check

On a call, the crew relies on the fact that the fire engine and all their gear is in top working condition. How chaotic would it be if they found themselves faced with a critical emergency, and on the way they are forced to sluggishly maneuver through traffic due to a dysfunctional siren? In 2006, the Palo Alto Fire Department responded to 5652 incidents. That breaks down to about 15 calls a day, and for that, they need working equipment. Of those 5652 calls, 3434 of them were medical aid. That comes out to be about 60% of all the calls they receive. So, for the majority of their calls, there are people with injuries, some fatal, and they rely on firefighters to come to rescue with equipment that has been checked and in good condition.

9:00am





In order to avoid injuries and be in top physical condition, the firefighters workout. Doing so allows them to keep up their stamina and endurance, and to be able to lift patients who need medical attention.





10:00am









11:00am



Every day, the fire crew goes shopping for parts of lunch and dinner. The firefighters pay for all their food with their own money. For tonight's meal, Toby is buying fresh vegetables, canned pineapple, and chicken breasts.





12:00 pm

Statistics show that the 12 o'clock hour receives more calls than any other hour of the day. From January 1, 2007 to April 4, 2007, the PAFD received 226 calls between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm.

Each day the firefighters enjoy a hopefully quiet lunch, which they bring mostly their own food for. Also they sometimes share some fresh fruit, such as the strawberries, as shown in the middle of the table.



Station 17

Station 18

Police Fire Department
AAS & Station Assignments

Assignment	"A" Skill Breneman, Tyler	"B" Skill Duffy, Donald	"C" Skill Boediger, Ben
Station 1	Winters, Mike Clark, Brian Sims, E. Jack Puck, Teddie	Hall, Bill Carter, Roger Karras, Brian Carter, Joseph	Wongpan, Mark Cook, Tom Mason, Kevin Sawyer, Rick Spreng, Matthew
Station 2	Camacho, Mike Sullivan, Josh Heller, Eric Sungle, Michael Fennell, Tom Vopak, Mike Mull, Mark Agathe, Ed	McDonald, Tom Perry, Chuck Agathe, Tom Sims, Doug Avalos, Jason Sims, Charles Marschall, Jim Theriot, Patrick	McDonald, David Sullivan, Mike Hazzard, Matt Hazzard, Brian Duckert, Tom Sims, John Villarreal, David Harris, Rick Aldridge, Richard
Station 3	French, Carter Herringer, Greg	Knuth, Jennifer Fisher, Scott Merrill, Susan Choi, Catherine	Lopez, Shane Mark, David Merrill, Chris Merrill, Kevin Green, Kevin
Station 4	Wakely, Tom Hartman, Steve Sivola, Brandon McDonnell, Tony	Cardenas, Kim Taylor, Leland Brandt, Holly	Dunne, Shane Ludlow, James
Station 5	Parik, Norman Marras, Terry Mason, Manuel Yarbrough, Shane Scholz, Paul Dunlop, Will Yardley, Tommy	Blackburn, Gary Ogle, Matt Woodard, Chris Parks, John Gardner, Glen Ziegler, Jason	Schiff, Eric Minkin, Chris Smith, Tom Booth, Mark Diaz, Ray
Station 6	Con, Doug Capriles, Catherine Pelignori, Adam	Jackson, Chris Woodfin, Scott Smith, Tamara	Hull, Rocky Suzza, Derek Stubbard, Ryan

Disability: A. Hill, August, Wallace
B. Nelson, M

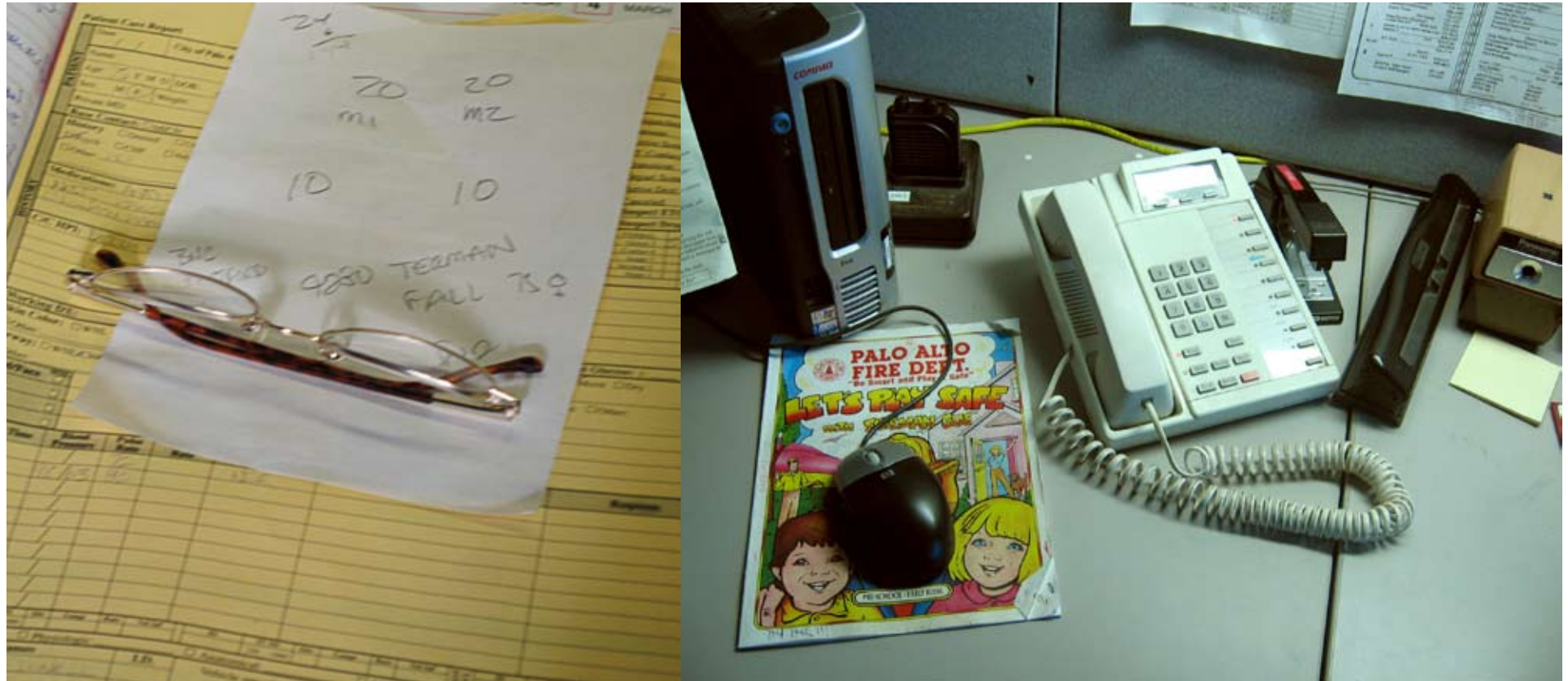
Light Duty

Legend:
 ■ Captain
 ■ A/O
 ■ FF
 ■ Made / AO

Batteries changed in all air pass devices on E-2

* HELLER: Has some more for more people. Bill

1 : 00 pm



The captain on each shift is in charge of the well being of all the firefighters, and all the paper work as well. In addition, the firefighters use the office to do their own work, research, or email.



E5

ENGINE 5

PALO ALTO
FIRE DEPT.

6112

E5

Pierce

PALO ALTO

CALIFORNIA
3072162

E5



2:00pm





The crew regularly conducts fire inspections at local businesses. A few of the items they check for are fire sprinklers, emergency exits, emergency lights, and fire extinguishers.

The Way I See It # 218

I don't know if something can be
so colorful. Color is one of the
great properties of glass and is

CAUTION: VERY HOT

Tea

Milk

Sugar

Custom

Toppings

Drinks

After you order

Starbucks' opinion, not necessarily that of Starbucks
or its partners. For more information, go to www.starbucks.com/wayisell.

Today



Starbucks is committed to reducing our
environmental impact through increased
use of post-consumer recycled materials.
Help us help the planet.

First-ever 10% post-consumer fiber cup
60% post-consumer fiber sleeve

intended for single use only
© 2011 Starbucks Coffee Company. All rights reserved.
U.S. Patent nos. 5,295,473 and no. 6,863,842 and other
foreign patents pending.

www.starbucks.com/wayisell

Use with
post-consumer
recycled fiber

Careful, the beverage you're
about to enjoy is extremely hot

3 : 0 0 pm

“A non-fat, half-caf,
venti, toffee nut latte
with whip- and don’t
forget the sprinkles.”
-Toby McDonell

After inspections, the crew makes a quick stop at Starbucks for a much needed coffee run.



“A lot of guys [at the station] spend more time with the guys here than they do with their own wife at home or their own kids. You pretty much know each other inside and out, when their having a bad day and bad mood and when to stay away from them.”

-Mike Espland



Elvin Goodacre



Herbert W. Nelson



Louis F. Ledford
CAPTAIN



Wm. Clemo
CHIEF



George H. Freedman
CAPTAIN



Armand Andrews Jr.



John Baker



C.T. Alexander



A.A. Dyer



H.P. Bowman
LIEUTENANT



Frank W. Kleins
LIEUTENANT



Chas. H. Brown
LIEUTENANT



Emil H. Magnusson



L. Van Eaton

PALO ALTO FIRE DEPARTMENT
JUNE 1939

PRODUCED BY
Yeston



Being able to predict the reactions of other firefighters helps the situation run more smoothly during an emergency call. The firefighters can quickly distribute jobs based on their strengths and performance of certain tasks. On a serious call such as a major car collision, there can be a large variety of jobs required to rescue trapped victims in a car. Firefighter Ed Aguilar recalls a similar situation, which required a large group of firefighters with varying talents to save two victims.

“The medics were inside the car with the two individuals giving them first aid and performing whatever they needed to do inside the vehicle. And the rest of us outside the vehicle were taking it apart so we could get them out. And then there was a group outside of that ring of people working in the car, assisting by bringing equipment and whatever someone needed.”

-Ed Aguilar





A call doesn't always end with a happily-ever-after fairytale ending. There are tougher calls when people or children don't survive, and these situations can take a toll on the firefighters. After these serious calls many of the firefighters and other individuals that responded to the call with the engine company will gather at the firehouse for a meeting of the Critical Stress Debriefing (CSD) team. The firefighters use this meeting as a method of stress relief, a time to understand the chaotic events of a call, or an opportunity to share their reaction/experience during the call.

“Often times we’ll go out on a call, we’ll take care of the individual, we’ll package them up, we’ll put them on the ambulance, we’ll get them to the hospital, and this happens obviously very quickly. And then we release them to the nurses and doctors and then we back off after we’ve given them our information and sometimes it still bothers us. It’s hard to let go. So we want to know now ‘how did we do?’ ‘How’d that person fare?’” -Randy Fisher



4:00pm



The crew stays prepared for emergency situations with safety drills.









5 : 00 pm

For dinner this evening, Toby will be cooking. The delicious meal includes: barbequed vegetable kabobs, barbequed chicken, pineapple cornbread, and rice. And even though Toby is the chef, the other firefighters help out, and enjoy chatting while the tasty smell of the cooking food fills the firestation.



Dinner

6 : 00 pm



...then dishes!

8:00pm



Dessert...



& a movie.

THANK YOU
FOR SAVING
GRAMPA!





It's difficult to describe what it means to be a firefighter because there almost never will be a lone firefighter at work. Instead, they work as one team, one unit, one crew of firefighters.

Every aspect of the job is evidence of how they are brought together and how they work as one. Glued together for 24 hours at a time, they share many experiences with one another.

The light atmosphere they create at the stations sets up the family environment. During free time at the station they share laughs and memories of great times. They can easily relate to one another. Sometimes they get to know each other better

than their own family members at home.

Knowing each other inside and out creates an efficient team when breaking up the various tasks to be done in a day or on a call. Whether they're simply cleaning the station or saving lives the firefighters can quickly divide their responsibilities and back each other up. Their experiences from their calls and time spent in each other's company also tie them together emotionally.

So what does it mean to be a crew of firefighters? It means to always work together to conquer any task. It means to always be there for someone else and knowing they've got your back too. It means to understand each other emotionally, especially in hard times. But above all, it means to be a family.



Thank you to all of the Palo Alto Fire Department. Especially: Toby McDonell, Doug Slezak, Ed Aguilar, Mike Espland, Randy Fisher, Norm Park and Randie Revilla and all the other firefighters.