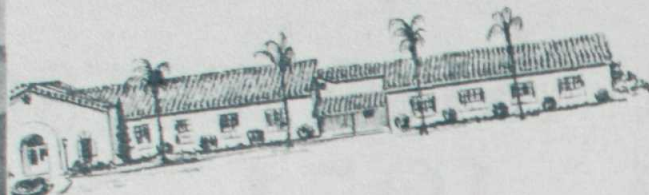


Chula Vista  
Fire Department  
50th Anniversary  
1921 - 1971







PROCLAMATION

A PROCLAMATION BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHULA VISTA DECLARING THE WEEK OF MAY 2 THROUGH 8, 1971, AS "FIRE DEPARTMENT GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY WEEK" IN THE CITY OF CHULA VISTA

WHEREAS, the Chula Vista City Fire Department was created on May 2, 1921 and is this week celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its existence; and

WHEREAS, the department has grown from seventeen volunteers and a soda and acid cart the only piece of fire-fighting equipment to its present complement of sixty-four men and one secretary, four Fire Stations, five pumpers, one utility truck, one grass truck and six staff vehicles; and

WHEREAS, this modern efficient department now protects a growing, modern city of over 68,000 in population and is a member of a mutual aid fire communications network throughout San Diego County; and

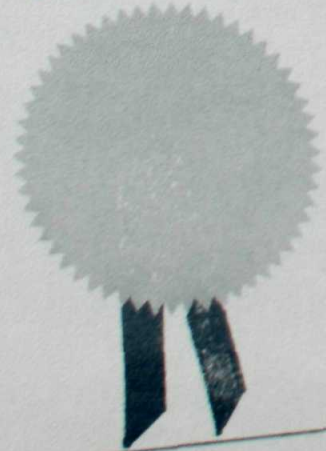
WHEREAS, the wide recognition of the excellence of the department is reflected in low fire insurance rates for residents of the City; and

WHEREAS, the department will be celebrating its GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY by a week of programs in service clubs and high schools, with appearances in two main shopping centers of old Fire Truck #1 escorted by a company of firemen to answer citizens' questions, culminating in Open House at all Fire Stations on May 8, which is NATIONAL FIRE SERVICE DAY;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, THOMAS D. HAMILTON, JR., Mayor of the City of Chula Vista do hereby proclaim the week of May 2 through May 8, 1971, to be "FIRE DEPARTMENT GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY WEEK" in the City of Chula Vista and on behalf of the citizens of Chula Vista express their appreciation for the protection of life and property and the contribution to the safety of all residents.

To this I set my hand and seal this fifth day of April, 1971.

Thomas D. Hamilton, Jr. Mayor The City of Chula Vista, California



"I hereby agree to uphold these by-laws and carry out my duties as a member of the Chula Vista Fire Department"

AT 3M4 CENTER

On May 2, 1921, seventeen young men gathered at a meeting at Hugh Skinner's Hardware Store, 316 Third Avenue, and signed this statement to form the first organized fire department in the City of Chula Vista. Until this time fire protection for the city consisted of a hand-drawn soda and acid cart, similar to extinguishers still seen in some buildings, which was pulled to a fire by whatever men were available. But by 1921 the city had a population of 1,700 and Hugh Skinner thought that a city this size needed a fire department. He also believed in recreation, for the first meeting was called "for the organization of a volunteer fire department and baseball team." All present at the meeting "heartily approved" and the Chula Vista Fire Department was begun.

The chief of this fire department was Charles E. Smith, with Stewart Murch as his assistant chief. Art Spencer was baseball captain, and H. B. Kindberg was secretary-treasurer. Charlie Smith was to serve as chief for ten years.

DECEMBER 1921, HELMS GARAGE, PRESENT SITE OF SECURITY-FIRST NATIONAL BANK, WAS THE FIRE STATION AND ALARM CENTER. THE SODA AND ACID CART WAS STORED THERE, AND OUT IN FRONT WAS A LARGE IRON RING FROM A LOCOMOTIVE WHEEL WHICH WAS

rung to signal a fire alarm. Later in 1921 the department joined the auto age when the city purchased a Model T fire truck which was also housed in the Helms Garage.

This new fire department was soon to have a test of its ability. On the night of February 1, 1923, a heavy rain was falling on Chula Vista. Suddenly there appeared a glow in the sky to the south. The Randolph Lemon Packing Plant, on K Street between 3rd and 4th, was burning. The fire department responded to the fire and worked the Model T for 12 hours but the building burned for a loss of \$19,768. With the help of the rain, however, the south end of town was saved.

Later, on November 29, 1923, a fire occurred in four buildings used for cottonseed storage at the San Diego Oil Products Company at the foot of D Street. This fire was fought by one engine company from Chula Vista, one from San Diego, one from National City, and a fire boat from San Diego. This is the only time a fire boat has ever been used on a fire in Chula Vista.

All four buildings and their contents were lost for a fire loss of \$331,135. This still stands as the largest single fire loss in the history of Chula Vista.

The year 1923 also saw some good things happen to the Chula Vista Fire Department. The station was moved to the City Hall at 292 Third Avenue, next to the Police Station. Howard Jordan, the first full-time paid fireman, was hired. Howard stayed at the fire station all the time except when he was relieved by Chief Smith.

Considering that baseball ability was a major criterion in selecting firemen, winning the San Diego County Baseball Championship of 1923 may have done as much for the morale of the Volunteers as the new station. ~~NOT FIRE DEPT~~

After these disasterous fires, the city council saw fit to improve the department's firefighting equipment. In 1924, the Model T was traded for a 1916 Seagrave pumper. This fire engine had belonged to the San Diego Fire Department and is still in existence.

In these early years, the city saw other disasters besides fires. On April 6, 1926, the journal of the fire department records that "a cyclone was going through town." The fire department offered aid to the people whose homes were wrecked by the wind. Estimated loss was \$40,000. In February, 1927, the worst flood in the history of the



Chula Vista's First Fire Alarm.

fire department occurred and firemen were kept busy rescuing persons trapped by the flood waters.

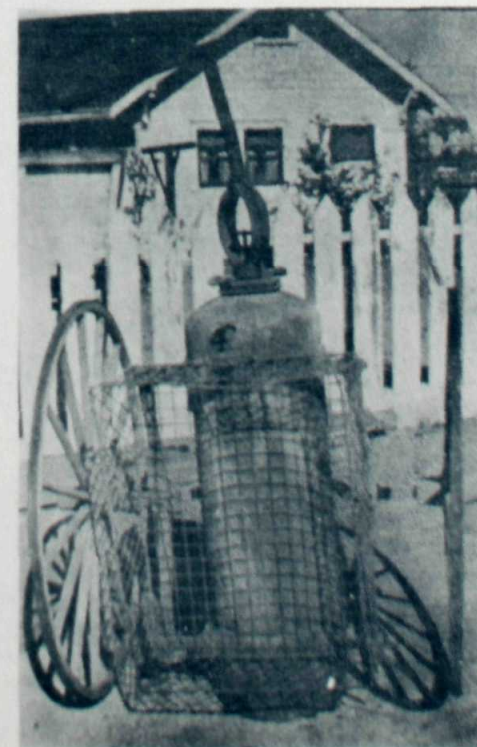
It is also interesting to note that the fire department has been involved in only one civil disturbance. A riot involving a labor dispute was reported at the cottonseed plant at the foot of D Street. The journal records that, besides the chief, only one Volunteer showed up.

In 1931, Wallace Armer replaced Charles Smith as fire chief. Smith had seen the city's biggest fire, the wettest flood, the worst cyclone, and the only riot in the history of the fire department. Armer assumed command of a department consisting of one fire engine, one station, one paid man, and about 15 volunteers.

The 1930's were a bad time for the country and Chula Vista was no exception. The volunteers were paid \$2 per meeting and \$2 per fire which was a welcome addition to their income. The following are some of the calls they answered to earn their money.

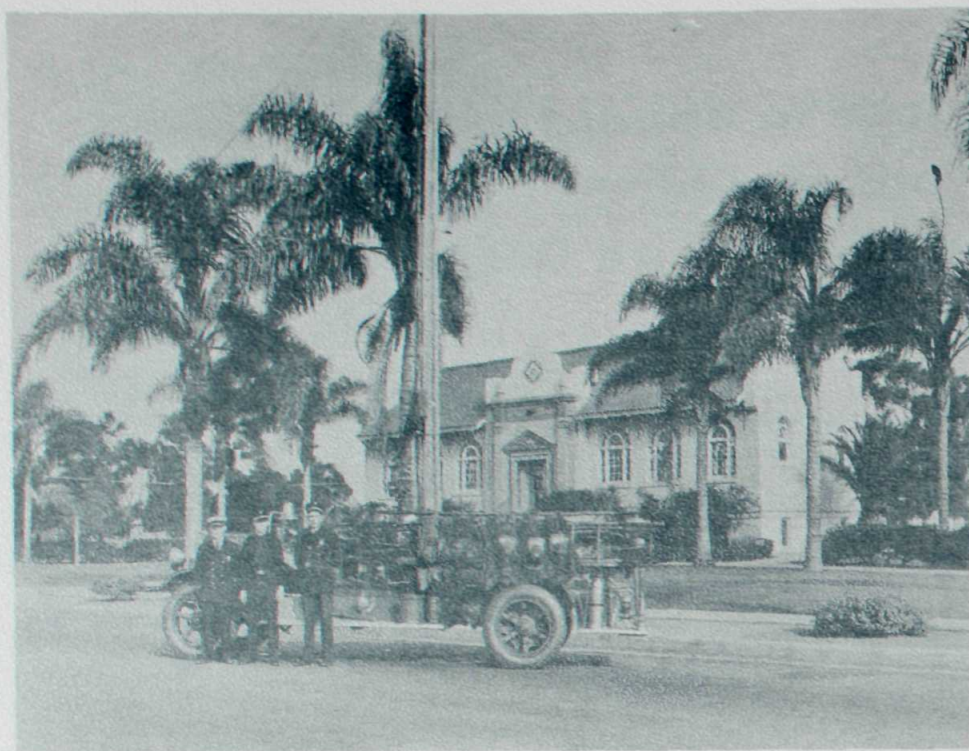
May 30, 1934 - 12:10 PM Location: Fredericka Home Cause: left iron on

July 8, 1934 - 10:40 AM Location: Chula Vista Junior High School



Chula Vista's First Fire Equipment.





Engine #1, the 1916 Seagrave in front of City Library. Photo taken May 27, 1932

March 19, 1935  
Location: 4th (now 2nd) and F  
Cause: Oil burner overflow

April 1, 1936 — 8:30 PM  
Location: 4th (now 2nd) and E  
Cause: electric heater too close to davenport

In 1931 Louis Cook and George Lee became members of the Volunteer Fire Department. Both later became regular firemen and Cook is still a member.

In 1936, G. Hirst Perry became a volunteer. He also later became a regular fireman and remained until retirement in 1970.

In 1941, Bud Wooden became chief. A 1941 Chevrolet 3/4 ton truck with a water tank and pump was purchased to double as the chief's car. Along with this the city bought a new 1941 Seagrave pumper to replace the 1916 Seagrave, nicknamed the "Goose," which was put in reserve.

In 1942 George Lee replaced Bud Wooden as Chief. Lee remained as chief until retirement in 1970 and guided the department during the period of maximum growth following World War II. He took over a department with 2 trucks and one station at a time when the nation was at war. The firemen were active in civilian defense programs and would report to the station during a blackout. During this time, in 1943, Chula Vista suffered its first death due to fire at 364 Del Mar. By the end of the war there were 6 full-time paid firemen besides the chief.

In 1947 William (Bud) Smithey, later to become chief, joined the department.

Nineteen forty-eight was another major year in the development of the fire department. The volunteers, after 27 years of good service, were disbanded and became a social club. The 1916 Seagrave was traded in on a new 1948 Seagrave and all the equipment was moved into the new station at 447 F Street. This station is still the headquarters station. By the end of 1948 there was a complement of 11 men to provide fire protection for the city.

In 1953 the 1941 Chevrolet truck was replaced by a 1952 Dodge truck, custom built as a fire engine.

In 1954 the Fire Prevention Bureau was inaugurated with the appointment of William Smithey as Fire Marshal. This bureau, which is responsible for insuring the fire safety of all businesses and property in the city, was built from scratch by Smithey until today there are 3 full-time members in charge of seeing that the City of Chula Vista is as fire safe as possible.

Nineteen fifty-seven saw another expansion of the department when the city acquired Station #2 at 80 E. J Street, from the California Division of Forestry. A 1957 Seagrave pumper (#3) was purchased to provide equipment for this station. By this time there were 28 men on the department.

As the city grew to the southeast it became necessary to extend fire protection for that area. Station #3 at 266 E. Oneida, a modern one-company station, was constructed and a 1960 Seagrave pumper (#4) was purchased for the station.

By 1963 the 1941 Seagrave was over 20 years old so a 1963 Seagrave pumper (#5) was purchased to replace it.

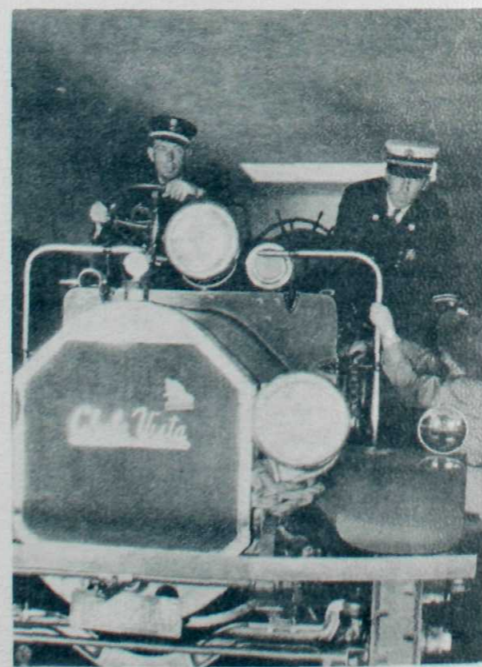
Station #4 at 5295 Otay Lakes Road was put into service in early 1965 to provide protection for Southwestern College and the rapidly developing residential area around the college. A 1965 Seagrave pumper was purchased for this station. Also in 1965 a training tower was built at Station #2 so that firemen could better practice skills necessary for fighting fires above ground level.

In 1968 the city re-acquired the "Goose," the 1916 Seagrave that was originally purchased in 1924 and traded off in 1948. It was restored by firemen and is now used in parades and displays to allow the public to see what fire engines were like 50 years ago.

A 1970 American-LaFrance pumper (#8) was purchased to replace the 1948 Seagrave. This pumper will pump 1250 gallons per minute and has a diesel engine, making it the department's most modern fire apparatus.

George Lee, chief since 1942, retired with honors in June 1970. He had helped the fire department grow from a half-dozen men and two trucks to 63 men and 7 fire engines. William Smithey was named his successor and now stands at the head of the second largest fire department in San Diego County, but one which is second to none in quality and concern for the welfare of the public.

The fire department is an organization which must always strive for perfection. The lives and property of the citizens of Chula Vista deserve no lesser effort. The Chula Vista Fire Department has grown constantly larger and more professional since 1921, and it will continue to grow and improve as long as it exists. Hopefully, Hugh Skinner would be proud of what his brainchild has become.



Engine No. 1 in 1923. Morris Lamb—driver, Charles E. Smith, Chief, and an unknown Boy Scout.

## Firemanship Code Of Ethics

HE WILL QUALIFY AS A PROFESSIONAL FIREMAN

Who keeps himself physically, mentally, and morally fit; who is obedient; who has the grit and tenacity to hang on under trying conditions; and has the moral courage to stand by his honest convictions;

Who is an expert, thoroughly familiar with the various details of his business, but who also respects the experience and knowledge of his associates;

Who subordinates his own immediate desires and profits to the Fire Department needs and welfare and who maintains his own sense of proportions in respect to his importance;

Who would not stoop to underhanded methods or tactics for personal gains; and who willingly puts service ahead of self;

Who realizes the necessity of reason and sensibleness of rules and regulations to the end that will justify and not criticize them;

Who will not align himself with any group or organization which may affect his loyalty, responsibility, or obligation to the Department and the regular constituted municipal government, and who openly stands with the organization and defends it against unwarranted attack by chronic faultfinders, disgruntled and dissatisfied persons;

Who appreciates that wages and compensation are never right if the quality of service rendered is wrong; who makes it his business to see that everything practicable is done to lessen and reduce Department expenditures without sacrificing the essentials;

Who realizes that he does not have the right to jeopardize public safety at any time, at any place, or for any reason; who will work toward that end in making the Department honest, clean, efficient, and responsible;

Who, when he enters the fire service, recognizes that he is entering the most friendly and helpful service maintained for the citizens by the City Government;

Every act as a fireman is the performance of his duty and worthy of the trust and confidence imposed upon him by every man, woman, and child in this city. May the service receive his fullest courtesy and respect.

•••

IF PROMETHEUS WAS WORTHY OF THE WRATH OF HEAVEN FOR KINDLING THE FIRST FIRE UPON EARTH, HOW OUGHT ALL THE GODS TO HONOR THE MEN WHO MAKE IT THEIR PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS TO PUT IT OUT.

## PORTRAIT OF A FIRE CHIEF



In the year 1898 Charles E. Smith was born in Chula Vista when the community consisted of only forty families. As he grew up he developed a keen interest in the fire service. He became a member of the Hercules Potash Company Fire Department prior to entering the Army during World War I.

After being discharged, he volunteered as a fire fighter to serve his home town. In May 1921 Chula Vista organized its fire department and Charles Smith was appointed the first fire chief for the city.

Chief Smith worked hard and diligently to provide the best fire protection possible for his community. Through his efforts many techniques were developed which are standard procedure in modern day fire departments.

Leaving Chula Vista he joined the California State Fire Marshal's Office in 1931 and continued his efforts to improve fire protection. Through his research an effective building code was created which brought him a national award for his fire prevention work. He was later instrumental in establishing the Uniform Building Code

as a guide for all State construction.

With the outbreak of World War II, Mr. Smith again answered the call to the service of his country. He fought fire aboard ship as well as ashore, experimented with new fire fighting techniques for the government, and he instructed school in fire fighting.

After the war he returned to the State Fire Marshal's Office where he served until 1955. During his last ten years he served in a supervisory capacity that dealt primarily with inspection and research work.

In 1955 Mr. Smith went into private practice as a consultant and continued to be active in all phases of fire and life safety. After 13 years in private business he is now retired in San Rafael, California.

In looking back over his years of service he says he was very fortunate because he says of his entire career, "It was like looking through a hole in the fence — into tomorrow."

Charles E. Smith certainly exemplifies the type of man that has made the fire service the great institution it is today. We are proud to call him "Chief."



## William M. Smithey

### Fire Chief

CHULA VISTA FIRE DEPARTMENT



William M. (Bud) Smithey came to Chula Vista in 1939 and attended Southwest Junior High School and Sweetwater High School.

He served three years in the Air Force, participated in the Aviation Cadet Program and was commissioned Second Lieutenant. He held a dual rating of Bombardier/Navigator and served as a Bombardier instructor.

He returned to Chula Vista and joined the fire department April 16, 1947. He was promoted to engineer October 31, 1950 and held that position until December 15, 1953, at which time he was appointed as the City's first Fire Marshal and as such established the department's first Fire Prevention Bureau. He served in that capacity until February 16, 1968, when the department was reorganized and he was appointed Assistant Chief.

On August 26, 1970 he was appointed Chief of the Chula Vista Fire Department.

During this time he has acquired a "Certificate of Proficiency" in Fire Science and an Associate of Science degree in Fire Science. He has also successfully completed courses in Municipal Fire Administration, Fire Department Supervision, Fire Service Staff and Command Schools, Seminars

covering Emergency Operations Planning, Fire Disaster Planning, and Fire Prevention & Arson Investigation.

He has also instructed at San Diego City College in the Fire Science curriculum.

In addition to his regular duties as Chief of the Chula Vista Fire Department, Chief Smithey also serves in the following capacities:

Member of a study committee appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer considering feasibility of Police-Fire Department consolidation;

Zone Chief, South Bay Zone, under San Diego County Master Mutual Aid Plan;

Secretary-Treasurer, San Diego County Fire Chiefs' Association;

Member of Fire Science Advisory Committee - San Diego City College;

Member of County Wide Fire Study Committee.

Chief Smithey resides with his wife, Sarah; and their three children, son William, Jr. age 19, daughter Sallei age 17 and daughter Marsha age 13, at 351 Brightwood Avenue, Chula Vista.

### CHULA VISTA FIRE DEPARTMENT & MUTUAL AID

Fire knows no boundaries. It is not economically feasible for a city, regardless of size to provide the resources on a standby basis to cope with any emergency which may occur.

To make available the resources needed during these infrequent emergencies, a mutual assistance plan has been in effect either formally or informally throughout the last 50 years. This provides for neighboring departments to assist when local resources can no longer handle the situation. This is a reciprocal arrangement and has been very effective in reducing losses and improving protection.

The Chula Vista Fire Department has been called upon to assist neighboring departments on a number of occasions and have in turn received assistance several times.

In 1923, the fire which destroyed the San Diego Oil Products plant was fought with a pumper from National City, a pumper from San Diego, and a fire boat from San Diego in addition to the Chula Vista personnel.

During the 1927 flood, Chula Vista Fire Department attempted rescue of a family trapped atop their home in Sweetwater Valley but was unsuccessful. The National City Fire Department was called and succeeded in bringing the people to safety through mutual assistance.

In 1969, Bonita assisted this department in the extinguishment of the Rosebank School fire.

Some of the more notable recent emergencies to which the Chula Vista Fire Department has been called upon to render assistance were as follows:

1965 - Tijuana Airport; commercial aircraft, 65 passengers aboard, unable to lower landing gear.

1967 - Poway; major brush fire, 30,000 acres, 46 homes.

1968 - Tijuana business district; paint factory.

1970 - Laguna Fire (Pine Valley): 185,000 acres, 388 homes, 1,000 structures.

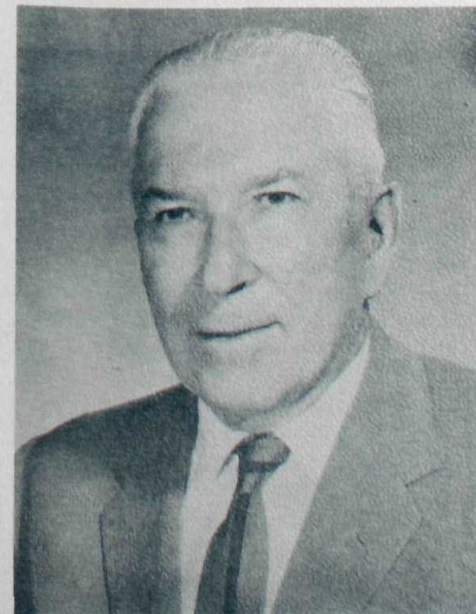
One of the major obstacles noted in all past mutual aid activities was lack of effective communications. This deficiency has largely been overcome locally by the development of a coordinated fire radio net. This provides the ability for any fire vehicle so equipped to communicate with fire vehicles from other county fire agencies any where in San Diego County. The Chula Vista Fire Department is proud to be a part of this fire radio net.

Mutual assistance works to the advantage of everyone. It permits use of manpower and equipment where needed and in quantities beyond the economic

means of most jurisdictions thus providing a greater measure of protection for all concerned.

### MAJOR FIRES

- February 1, 1923 - Randolph Marketing Co. (lemon packing house) \$ 19,000
- November 23, 1923 - San Diego Products cotton seed storage - 4 buildings (largest single loss in history of Chula Vista) 331,135
- September 22, 1925 - Tijuana (business district) 1,000,000
- October 8, 1956 - Davies (residence) 52,000
- October 7, 1960 - Tyce Engineering (processing buildings) 46,500
- July 5, 1963 - Mayfair Market (sales area) 62,000
- April 7, 1964 - Bay General Hospital (maternity wing) 50,000
- May 23, 1968 - Walter Bowering (residence) 25,000
- September 15, 1968 - Feaster Elementary School (two classrooms) 37,000
- September 15, 1968 - Feaster Elementary School (two classrooms) 28,000
- October 20, 1968 - Feaster Elementary School (three classrooms) 54,000
- March 14, 1969 - Rosebank Elementary School (four classrooms) 123,000
- January 20, 1971 - Curtis L. Price (residence) 36,000



Charles E. Smith, First Fire Chief 1921 - 1931

### CHULA VISTA FIRE DEPARTMENT SALUTES ITS RETIRED MEMBERS

	Joined Department	Retired
Chief George Lee	1937	1970
Captain Carroll Frey	1942	1964
Captain Gordon H. Perry	1943	1970
Captain Charles Culver	1947	1968
Engineer Lawrence Nissen	1945	1965
Fireman Clinton Kimball	1943	1955
Fireman Robert Boyce	1946	1969



Chief George Lee



Captain Carroll Frey



Captain Gordon H. Perry



Captain Charles Culver



Engineer Lawrence Nissen



Fireman Clinton Kimball



Fireman Robert Boyce



Lowell "Fuzzy" James original member of Chula Vista Fire Department.

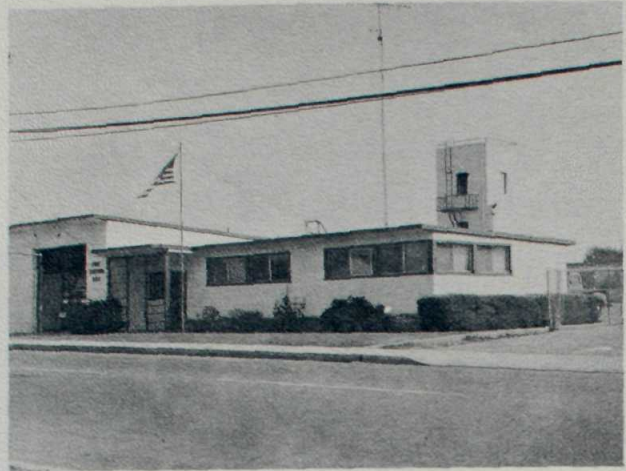


Arthur Spencer original member of Chula Vista Fire Department.

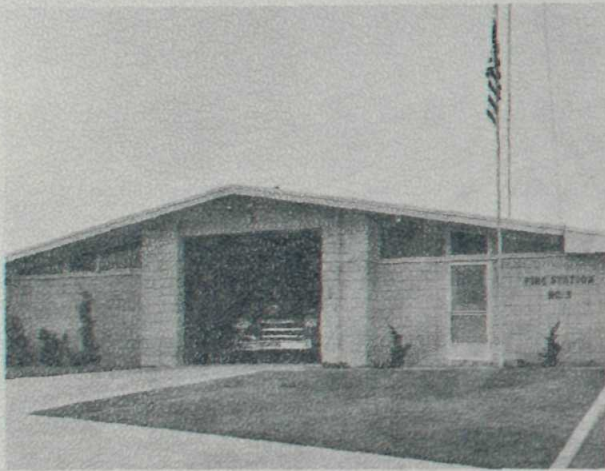




*Fire Station Number One, 447 F Street, 1947*



*Fire Station Number Two, 80 East J Street, 1957*



*Fire Station Number Three, 266 East Onieda, 1960*



*Fire Station Number Four, 5295 Otoy Lakes Road, 1965*

#### THE MEN WHO WORK INSIDE

Should you chance to see a fire  
 On your city's thoroughfare,  
 With the ladder trucks and engines  
 And the water in the air,  
 And the speed of your department  
 That you laud with civic pride,  
 Then will you give a thought to  
 The men who work inside?

Now if you want sensation  
 Just don a rubber coat,  
 And follow in a line of hose  
 Through water, heat and smoke;  
 There you'll find the scene of action,  
 Where men's grit and strength are tried,  
 But the smoke won't let you see much  
 Of the men who work inside.

If it wasn't for the darkness  
 You might know what happens there,  
 But you'll feel your eyeballs aching,  
 And you'll note the lack of air;

If a wall begins to topple  
 Or a floor begins to slide,  
 You'll only take the chances  
 Of the men who work inside.

There are duties that require  
 Outside work at every fire,  
 And the men who fill these places  
 Cannot justly be decried;  
 But still the hidden actors  
 And the most important factors  
 Are the men behind the nozzles -  
 The men who work inside.

So, if you feel elation  
 For the fire's short duration  
 And your fire department justifies  
 Your surge of civic pride,  
 Then don't forget to mention  
 (For it's fair and just contention)  
 That the men who knock the flames down  
 Are the men who work inside.

