

SENIOR FIREFIGHTER FRANCIS “FRANK” J. BAKER

The story of Frank Baker’s Mack Bell

I knew Frank Baker for many years prior to his unfortunate Line Of Duty Death on November 26, 1993 from complications from his injury at still box 3429, October 12, 1993.

I was and still am proud to have known Frank. He was not only a colleague. He was a man that I trusted and called him a “friend.” He would oftentimes come into the District Chief’s office and speak to me about the business of the job. He was a great family man who loved his country and the Boston Fire Department. Frank appreciated the history of the BFD especially the older fire apparatus of a by-gone era.

During Frank’s battle with his injury and after his death I became close to his wife, Barbara and to his immediate family during their grieving time. Barbara called me one day and asked me to come over and look at Frank’s fire memorabilia collection. It was extensive. She wanted my ideas about what to do with this collection. I suggested that she contact the Boston Fire Museum or Lt. Jim Teed or the late District Fire Chief Jim Freeman. Teed and Freeman were also members of the Boston Sparks Association and had ties to the Society for the Preservation of Antique Motor Fire Apparatus (SPAMFA).

Barbara also showed me this beautiful Mack fire bell complete with its mounting bracket, a Mack bull dog hood ornament and the metallic word “*MACK*.” I told her that this was worth a great deal of money and wondered how Frank managed to procure those items. She had no idea where they came from. There were no identifying markings. She wanted me to have them as a token of her appreciation and because of Frank’s friendship with me. I was reluctant to receive those valuable items and not wanting to insult Barbara’s wishes, I brought them to my home office. I did not want to see these antiques fall into the wrong hands or to be sold off in a firematic flea market. I decided that I would keep them safe until a fitting and a proper venue could be found for placement.

A dozen or more years had come and gone since Frank’s passing and I still had his Mack fire bell in my office. His “Last Alarm” prayer card and Frank’s picture were placed by the bell.

I happened to see a BFD newsletter that depicted the old Mack Engine-5 and noticed that its bell was NOT a Mack fire bell. I contacted Mr. Ted Gerber, A SPAMFA member and retired Chief of Department Paul A. Christian regarding that bell. I was told the story of how the original Mack Fire Bell from old Engine-5 had “disappeared” a couple of years earlier while the engine was in storage.

I now knew that I had located that fitting and proper venue for Frank’s Mack fire bell. Arrangements were made to have the bell placed on old Engine-5 and it was shipped from my home to Ted Gerber until it could be affixed to the old Mack Engine-5. The rest of this story you know.

This Mack Fire bell honors the memory of Senior Firefighter Frank Baker. This great bell is a shining symbol of a by-gone era that we all loved so much. The piercing sound of a ring Mack fire bell is like no other. It is as unique as Frank Baker was a unique individual. We must not forget what they both meant to us in past years and what they mean to us today.

Robert M. Winston
District Fire Chief, District 8, retired