



WELCOME MEMBERS OF BRANCH 163

AND

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

NOVEMBER 2025 NEWS/NOTES



We were an attentive group at the October luncheon; amazing how we can get so focused at the table isn't it? We were short ten members due to various reasons which is becoming a normal occurrence so let's encourage our brothers to come and also bring friends.

By the way, the fare was excellent with Hodel's chicken and great pulled-pork. Loved it all.

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“The table is a meeting place, a gathering ground, the source of sustenance and nourishment, festivity, safety, and satisfaction”, Laurie Colwin. May our assemblies bring that to each of us and certainly to our families as well.

DICK WEIGELT

- Dick took the honors among Attendees receiving recognition for being an active member of Branch 163 for 25 years!
- Thanks Dick. Keep it Up



WELCOME BACK

- **BUD McDONALD** has been gone for almost a year because of health issues and we are so so glad to have you back.



FYI, Bud's birthday is 17 December 1933 so He will be 93 coming up in a few weeks. Congratulate him when you see him next!

**Happy
90th Birthday to
Ron Huntington**



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SPEAKER FOR OCTOBER

- Dr. Cameron Guinn, Chief Systems Officer for KCSOS addressed our concerns regarding school children on school sites in KC. He took our questions head-on and I must say my fears are allayed. I now believe Bakersfield schools have the most up-to-date safety and security programs available today.
- Thankyou Dr. Guinn



Dr. Guinn mentioned six common County-Wide Initiatives aimed at standardizing training of school security efforts.

1. Great American Shakeout EOC Activation
2. Yearly active shooter training
3. Site mapping/Building numbering
4. Visitor management/Camera systems
5. Threat Assessment (CSTAG)
6. CCIC – Vulnerability Assessment / CSI Model

The Value Added for School Security Support is:

1. Meaningful discussions (State/Fed, Regional, local)
2. Sharing of Best Practices
3. Networking regional coordination
4. Planning (low cost/no cost training provided by School Community Partnerships
5. Cost support (bulk discounts, preferential pricing, standardizing templates, and product Vetting.

I don't know about you but I came away with a comfort I didn't have before and I believe the greater Kern County school system does have the best planned school protection system in place thanks to such contributors as Dr. Guinn.





“First Thanksgiving at Plymouth” oil painting by Jennie A. Brownscombe

This painting more closely resembles what most historians believe the actual setting was like. There were two witnesses, Bradford and Winslow, who wrote about that first fall harvest but their descriptions were slight. Edward Winslow's account merely states:

“Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the company almost a week, at which time amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.”

This feast most likely happened sometime between September and November of 1621 but no exact date for the feast was ever recorded. It is recorded there were 53 colonists and 90 Wampanoag Indians attending and all contributed to the food served.

NOVEMBER THINGS TO WATCH FOR

- 4th Elections at your voting places: 7AM – 8PM**
- 6th Honor Flight Breakfast at Elks Club, 8:00 AM**
- 8th Veterans Day Parade downtown, 10 AM**
- 9th Veterans Stand Down, Stramler Park**
- 11th National Veterans Day, All Day**
- 20th SIR's Luncheon Hotel's, 11AM – 2 PM**
- 24th Pool Buddies, Firehouse, Calloway, 11 AM**
- 27th Thanksgiving Day Feast**

With three days FOR Veterans' recognition, take a family member or two and visit one of these offerings. Grand Kids especially need the education.

Martin Luther claimed: I have only two days in my calendar: This Day and 'That' Day!

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YOUR BRANCH 163 LEADERS

Big Sir Jim Shapazian	Little Sir Larry Sitzman
Al Prinster – Secretary	Ron Schilling – Treasurer
Membership-Jim Smith	Barry Young-Attendee Registration

Sunshine/Nominating Committee: Richard Weigelt and Keith Montgomery

These positions will term out in 2026 so decide which one

**Would be good for you and let us know. Volunteering is so much
better than hog-tying!**

George Washington tells Citizens to Display True greatness as a Privilege from God

- The citizens of America are from this period to be considered as the actors on a most conspicuous theatre, which seems to be peculiarly designated by Providence for the display of human greatness and felicity. Here they are not only surrounded with everything, which can contribute to the completion of private and domestic enjoyment, but Heaven has crowned all its other blessing, by giving a fairer opportunity for political happiness, than any other nation has ever been favored with....!



Did you know the nuttiest find on the State Website that might pay you dividends is: sco.ca.gov which allows you to find 'unclaimed property'. Search family names, business names, or maybe tax identities. I searched family names in Colorado and came up with nearly a thousand dollars of unclaimed cash in favor of our direct relatives. It may just be worth your while to do the search. Let me know what you find. Fyi

NOVEMBER SPEAKER

Lauren Skidmore – CEO of the Open Door Network, oversees coordinated efforts to identify and assist abused children in schools reported by not only teachers but also “Mandated Reporters” who observe behavioral patterns that may indicate abuse to the child. This non-profit seeks to prevent long term hardships to children through early assessments.

“AT THE BASE OF THE FIRE”



BIG SIR JIM SHAPAZIAN with the enormous Ladder Truck—Bakersfield Fire Dept.

You may know him as Big Sir but what you don't know is his interesting life story.'

Born in Fowler, Ca., just north of here about 100 miles, on 8 July 1944 Jim just turned 81 years young. Thanks to a Blessed past you just don't look near that age Jim, you need to share your secret!

Jim's Dad was a farmer of grapes for raisins, peaches, and farm animals so he was taught the values of hard work and good stewardship caring for the land and animals and wasting not. Jim grew up playing with many farm worker kids and made long term friendships with them. In addition to Armenians, there were Chinese, Japanese, and Hispanic families who farmed next door so Jim grew up in a multi-cultural economy which gave him an appreciation for who he was and how great America was to all. He has a fond memory of wandering off with his dog at the age of 4 or 5, getting lost, and being spotted by a neighbor lady who reported to his mom! Other memories included swimming in the irrigation ditch, collecting pollywogs and watching them turn into frogs, and riding his bike all over the farm. I can remember similar days as I grew up on the farm and enjoying that freedom, though taken for granted, was a joyful experience.

Going to Fowler High School Jim befriended five pals who remained friends to this day. They still attend the annual Fowler HS class re-union. Jim played two years of football and played trumpet for the HS band. He particularly enjoyed marching in parades especially the All-Western Band Review in Long Beach. When he was a senior Jim recalls playing Taps at a local Veterans Day tribute. He said that was an emotional, tense, and sobering experience but one he would do again.

After graduating in 1962 Jim went to Reedley College majoring in accounting. But because his friends went to Fresno City Jr. College Jim got his parents approval to go there as well. But life soon changed when He met Toni! They were married in 1965. While taking classes both worked at odd jobs to make a living; Jim worked at a Shell Service station and Toni at a side walk café. Barely getting by, Jim recalls how the café would give unserved food to Toni to take home for them to eat! Remember those lean years men? We all made it but wasn't easy!

Jim found a job in LA for an accountant and on his way down the water pump failed. As he was stranded he soon realized this congestion and smog was not for him, he was an outdoor guy so back to Bakersfield he went. In 1966, Jim landed a job as a Land Surveyor working on the California Aqueduct. He learned this profession quickly, enjoyed the work while it lasted about seven years, and then realized there was no where to advance in that business. They needed a dependable career as the family had grown to one two year old and one 7 month pregnant Toni.

In 1973 Jim applied for a Fireman position at the Bakersfield Fire Department, the beginning of a 28 year career. He started at Station #1, 22nd and H streets, the headquarters for all of Bakersfield units. He worked one 24 hour shift on and one off, 8 to 5 daily, sleep when you can, polish trucks when needed, clean the building, maintain every thing!

In 1977 Jim was promoted to Fire Engineer which made him Driver-Operator of a 500 gallon Fire Engine (not a truck as he quickly corrected me. Ladder Trucks were called 'trucks'). He remained at Station #1, A-shift. I soon learned this is a highly detailed operation not just driving around which always looks fun but maneuvering around fire areas, protecting the truck, positioning effectively, controlling the water pump, setting pressures adequate for the fire fighters, and a whole lot more. This position does not actually 'fight the fire' but runs the support vehicle which is a full-time job. The technical part involves fire assessment, length diameter of the hoses, type of nozzle, friction loss per linear foot of hose activated, providing pressure and flow to the nozzle. I actually went deep into the weeds about details and Jim taught me the intensity of a smooth operation. There is so much to know and learn, the eagerness of the fighters to engage fires, the pride of the force, the desire to serve those in harms way, etc. etc. etc. I am impressed!!!!!!

In December 1981, Jim was promoted to Captain at Station 8 across from Bakersfield College. He and a crew of 3 operated engine driver, fire fighter, the Patrol 4wd for brush fires, and himself as Captain. This station was responsible for not only the BC area but all the way out to the canyon. Needless to say they handled many a brush fire. This position was a joy for Jim and he loved every day's challenges. He particularly liked reconnaissance in the easter hills which is basically surveying access and obstacles to effective fire engagement. Jim tells me brush fires are the #1 cause of fighter injuries because of back drafts which will push a small fire into an inferno within minutes. This type of fire work consumed a lot of his teaching of new recruits.

In 1996 Jim was promoted to Battalion Chief whose responsibility was to Observe & Command at the fire incident bringing in equipment as required from other stations, etc.

After 4 years Jim was assigned as Fire Marshal in charge of fire prevention, hazmat, and arson assessments. He no longer worked near the fire, but after the fire. So you might say Jim's career went from the beginning of a fire to the end assessment, a career that should be envied and applauded as a job well done. He will tell you he liked serving in most positions and especially loved the camaraderie of fellow workers who became good friends. He was able to develop his innate skills and grew as a person. Jim retired in 2001.

There were other moments in his life that were challenging such as when his Dad died and Jim tried to run the farm and work full time at the station, a challenge that soon taxed he and his family. They sold the farm which lightened his load.

When asked how he developed all the skill sets needed for his job, Jim said “God Gives Wisdom” and “Learning breeds happiness”. One of his proudest moments was being baptized with his youngest daughter in 1988; she was 13 and Jim was 44!

Jim joined SIR at the urging of Dick Weigelt and he has been a member for 5 years. He likes SIR because it is so similar to the fire station crew where one can develop friendships, share a common meal, and enjoy outside activities.

His concern for SIR is that it is aging out faster than drawing in new and younger members. He said there are many men out there that are single and needing social interaction with other men. It is a proven fact that quality social interaction allows us to live longer more fulfilling lives. Bring a friend – make a friend. And he also put the call out for members to step forward and help serve as replacements for current position holders.

THANK YOU JIM for letting us know you more.!

Little Sir Larry Sitzman