



A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO OUR FRIEND AND BENEFACTOR Mr. Ernest N. Day



"Despite the rainy weather, the late Ernie Day attended the first ever Family Fire Safety Muster held at Allaire State Park in October 2003. Ernie was in his usual spirits dispensing humor and advice relative to fire apparatus of every vintage. He instantly recognized one of the fire apparatus on display as a unit that he had sold to the original owning fire department many years earlier. Here, Ernie is sharing his wisdom with Don Mulligan, acting Executive Director of the museum project"

On January 29th, 2005 we lost a great friend and citizen of America, Mr. Ernest N. Day or as he was known to thousands, Ernie Day. His 94 years on this earth witnessed many great events, both inspirational and tragic. Ernie stood firm throughout, a clever fellow, a kind friend and a role model for generations.

Born in September 1910, Ernie became a Boy Scout at 15 and attained the rank of Eagle Scout by age 17. The following year he joined the volunteer fire department of New Market and in 1933 he established the New Jersey Fire Equipment Company. Under Ernie's untiring energy and enthusiasm, the company prospered. Fire engines would prove to be one of Ernie's great interests. As he sold fire apparatus throughout the northeast United States, Ernie took the opportunity to purchase obsolete and unwanted apparatus when delivering new equipment. Over time, Ernie amassed a collection of vintage apparatus and equipment to rival any museum collection.

Ernie's interests in the community reached far beyond the fire department. His years of dedicated service to Rotary International were recognized with his nomination to the Rotary International Hall of Fame in 1997. In that same year, Ernie was named the Distinguished Eagle Scout of New Jersey in recognition of his many years of support to the Boy Scouts. He also generously supported a variety of children's hospitals, summer camps, animal shelters, the Salvation Army and similar humanitarian organizations that focus on children in need across the state and region.

In 1987, Ernie retired from New Jersey Fire Equipment Inc. after selling thousands of fire apparatus across the Northeast USA but he remained in frequent contact with the employees to whom he sold the company which remains in business today.

As far back as 1963, Ernie started donating his museum collection to the state which agreed to erect an appropriate museum to place the collection on public display. A site was chosen adjacent to Allaire State Park in the center of the state and approximately \$500,000 was invested in design work and site preparations including water and sewer services. Over the last 15 years, Ernie's persistence in lobbying politicians to honor the agreement to build a museum came very close to reality. By 2001, the necessary legislation to fund actual construction came very close to passage but the tragedy of 9-11 and the subsequent state financial crisis pushed the museum aside once more. A non-profit organization was formed to support the museum and today it is focused on non-governmental financing. A Capital Fund Drive is currently underway to build the museum and education center that will be home to Ernie's historic collection.

Ernie was a favorite speaker at organizations across the state. He had great lines and a polished routine that charmed and entertained his many audiences. As he pointed out at his 90th birthday party a few years ago, he had reached the point that when introduced as the oldest living member of the organization hosting the event, he would smile and point out that he was the oldest living member of every organization he belonged to! In October 2003, despite an overcast day that turned to rain, Ernie attended the first-ever Fire Museum Muster at Allaire State Park where his sharp eye pointed out several apparatus that he had sold many years earlier.

Selfless men who work hard, do well, and share their wealth so freely as Ernie do not come along very often. We will miss his wit and personality and remarkable example of how to live a good life. In the fire museum project we have the opportunity to raise a structure that provides a permanent home to his treasured collection and a place of honor where the story of his life will be on display to encourage and inspire future generations to follow his example of hard work and a kind heart.

We encourage friends of Ernie and citizens of New Jersey to help us bring his museum to reality. In lieu of flowers, his daughter and son have requested his friends make a donation in his name to the museum project. Donations may be made to the New Jersey Fire Museum, P. O. Box 241, Piscataway NJ 08855-0241.