

B SHIFTER



Alan V. Brunacini



April 18, 1937–Oct. 15, 2017





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Chief (Ret.) Alan Vincent “Bruno” Brunacini, 80, passed away Sunday, Oct. 15, 2017, in his hometown of Phoenix, Ariz. He was born on April 18, 1937, in Jamestown, New York. When he was about 5 years old, Bruno’s family relocated to Albuquerque, N.M., where he graduated from Highland High School. He moved to Phoenix as a young man, and in 1958, he joined the Phoenix Fire Department (PFD). One year later, he married his best friend and sweetheart, Rita.

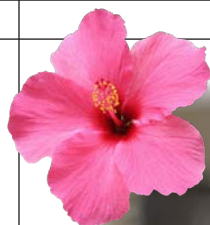
He moved up the fire-department ranks, holding every sworn position. Along the way, he took note of what worked and what needed fixing. When he promoted to Fire Chief in 1978, Bruno sparked a much-needed revolution. A gentle-hearted philosopher with a keen wit and kind disposition, his leadership creed was sincere, smart and simple: Prevent harm. Survive. Be nice. Bruno’s primary focus was firefighter safety. Second only to that, he told his charges, take gentle care of our citizens. He was a dedicated advocate for “Mrs. Smith”—that’s the name he chose to represent any fire-department customer. Treat Mrs. Smith with respect, he said. Be kind, show compassion. Chief Bruno was nothing if not genuine, and he showed those he worked with the same gracious consideration he expected for the citizens of Phoenix.

Bruno’s humor and candor made him a favorite at fire-service conferences and symposiums. His sweet brand of leadership proved infectious, and other departments across the nation began adopting his customer-service philosophy. When his 1996 book, “Essentials of Fire

Department Customer Service,” was featured in The Wall Street Journal, leaders and bosses from all industries heeded his straightforward advice. Bruno’s other books include “Command Safety,” “Timeless Tactical Truths,” “Anatomy and Physiology of Leadership,” and the renowned “Fire Command,” which many credit for improving how firefighters operate on the scene of hazardous events. Chief Bruno and his sons eventually used the principles of “Fire Command” to develop Blue Card, an innovative training and certification program that has trained 35,000 firefighters to date for the challenges faced at structure fires.

Bruno retired from the PFD in 2006 after 48 years of passionate service. The quintessential object in motion, Bruno continued lecturing, writing and teaching. He was a graduate of Oklahoma State University’s Fire Protection Technology program, and he had a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Public Administration from Arizona State University. Bruno was always learning. You would often see him scribbling notes on 3 x 5 cards he kept in his pocket. He had faith that anyone at anytime could have something clever to say, and he didn’t want to miss it.

Bruno is survived by his beautiful wife Rita; his sons Nick (wife Michele) and John (wife Holly); his daughter Candi (husband Ryan); his grandchildren Alex, Alana, Chelsea, Lauren, Olivia, Katie and Maria; and a loyal tribe of co-workers and friends. He lives on as the angel on our shoulders, reminding us to “Be Nice,” even when it’s difficult. 🌸



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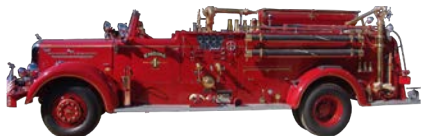
Bruno changed our service
like no one before him.

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"Be nice" is a call to action. Alan
lives on in friends, family & colleagues
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he's also remembered for a mischievous smile.

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An expression of gratitude for friendship,
humility, wisdom & countless opportunities.

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kindness & a lifetime of opportunity.

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A Love Story: Strong & Sweet

A note from the woman who helped Bruno build his legacy.

BY RITA BRUNACINI

Alan and I met at a gym in Albuquerque, New Mexico—a heavy-iron gym. He worked there between semesters at University of California at Davis (Cal Aggie), building his own body and helping kids—little and big—build theirs. The owners were good friends, and Alan helped them hang doors now and then. They had decided we should meet because I worked for a veterinarian, and Alan loved animals and wanted to become a dairy farmer.

said the two smartest things he ever did were to join the fire department and marry me (not in that order). After joining the fire department, Alan continued to do janitorial work, attend school and teach school. He soon fathered our three children. It was decided he was working himself too hard (doctor's orders), so I went to Phoenix College to earn my nursing degree.

It was a very busy time—staying one step ahead of the

The thing he loved the most was the fire department & the men who did the work...He made you his life.

Alan and I became friends, and after several months, we started dating. I was living with my sister, and she was not too happy about this. Alan looked a bit like a mafia type, with curly black hair, baggy jeans, an inside-out sweatshirt with the sleeves cut at the elbow, and old-man shoes—his happy clothes.

Alan graduated from Cal Aggie, but he decided he hated the weather in Albuquerque and didn't want to return. He decided to attend Arizona State University for some basic knowledge. He didn't like to ask his dad for money, so he started a janitor business with a friend and took a summer job building churches with a former girlfriend's father.

In Phoenix, Alan found the fire department, and our lives changed the day he was hired. He has always

bill collectors. When I got my nursing license, we sold the janitor business, and Alan settled in to get a BS degree in political science and master's degrees in public administration and fire protection. (At that time, the fire protection degree was a two-year program in Oklahoma.)

He lived his life doing what he wanted when he wanted. The thing he loved the most was the fire department and the men who did the work. He even built our home with friends from the fire department. He was not loved by everyone, however, and his bosses in the city and some in the union did not care for him and tried to fire him or have him fired a number of times. His goal was always to protect the people of the city and make life better and safer for the people he



Young, fit and beautiful: Alan met Rita while working at a gym in Albuquerque.

worked for, with and over. Alan loved firemen; he thought they were the real heroes. He was always happiest when he was with them.

He made you his life. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for caring for him at the end. 🌸



Left: Rita (on the right) working as a V.A. surgical nurse; Center: Nick, John and Candi before they were old enough to make real trouble; Right: Alan and Rita. Married, but acting like two teenagers madly in love.



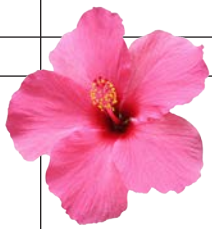
The Brunacini clan.
Top row from left: Ryan, Candi, John, Holly, Nick and Michele.
Bottom row: Lauren, Alana, Maria, Alex, Olivia, Katie and Chelsea.



Bruno & Rita, flirting.



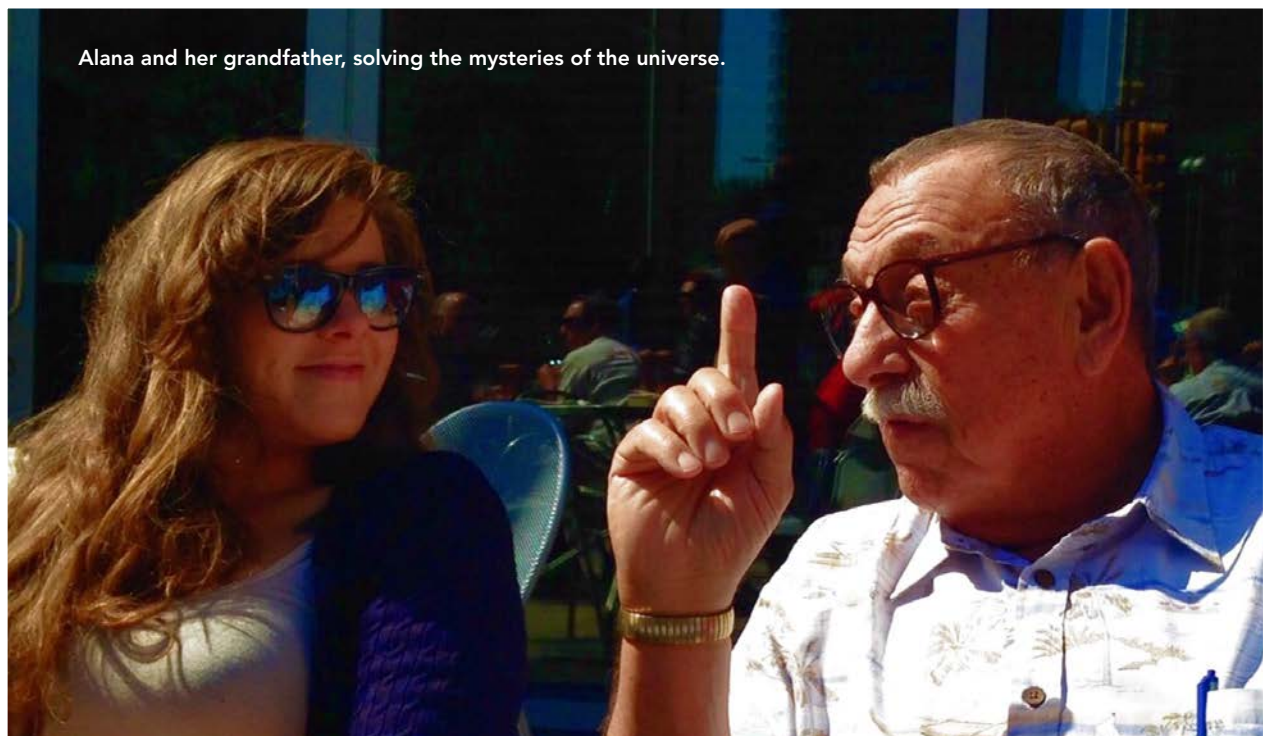
Sweethearts holding hands.



If You're Gonna Be a Bear, Be a Grizzly

Simple truths passed from grandfather to granddaughter.

BY ALANA BRUNACINI, BRUNO'S GRANDDAUGHTER



My grandfather said, “If you’re gonna be a bear, be a grizzly.” He also said, “Never trust someone who doesn’t like cookies.” As a child, these things were funny, mostly because he was talking about bears and cookies. As an adult, my grandfather’s simple, almost whimsical truisms are no longer funny, as they had been through the world view of a child; they make sense, and I see their wisdom.

I will always remember his funny little sayings. I’ll remember him showing me how to do things. I’ll

remember him letting me go with him wherever he went. He only got mad when someone hurt my grandmother’s feelings, or if the paint on his green pick-up got scratched. He was always doing something. He never complained. He never said, “I’ll do it later.” He never said, “No.” He loved to watch the pets do the silly things pets do. He loved to eat as a family. He always chopped the vegetables for our big salad. He had a wonderful sense of humor, and his laugh filled the whole house. He beamed with pride when

a project was complete. Something more than pride beamed off him when he spoke of his family.

His very presence was an influence, just watching him and getting to be around him. My grandfather taught me how to be like him without directly telling me to be like him. He never told me what I should or shouldn’t do. He never made comparisons to someone or something as though it were better. He just knew what he liked, knew what he thought was good, and that was that. He liked green, he liked cats,

His certainty in everything—from his favorite color, to his favorite meal, to the irrefutable value of a teddy bear—taught me how to be certain, how to trust myself.

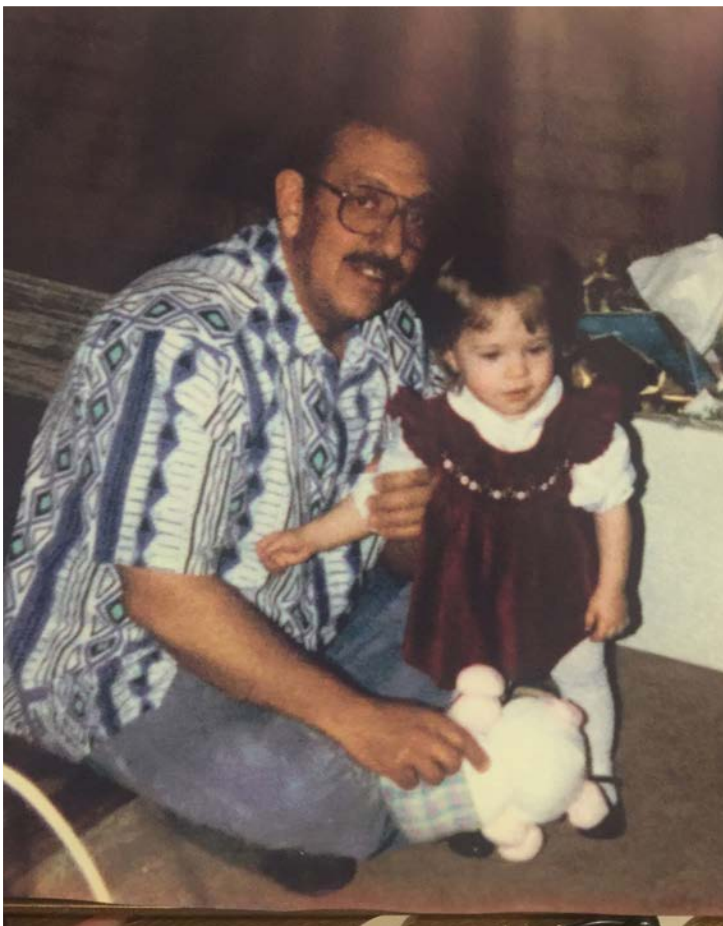
he liked fire trucks and he liked us. I'm grateful I got to spend so much time with him and learn so much from him. So many things my grandpa said are permanently imprinted in my mind. I will never fully trust anyone who doesn't like cookies.

Sometimes his influence was not just through osmosis, but through interacting with him, when you got some of his time. For as long as I can remember, I would plop down in one of his office chairs while he worked at his desk. Into adulthood, I continued to plop down right across from him. My grandfather would humor me as I asked him questions about the world and told him stories about my day while he was trying to write. Eventually, one of us would bring up something the other could not ignore, and then we were off into a winding, four-hour conversation. We were utterly pleased with ourselves and our discourse on humanity and the truths of the universe. I learned a lot about the world, myself and my grandfather during these talks. His openness to people's flaws, their struggles and his belief in their inherent potential taught me how to truly believe people are valuable. He was always paying attention. Always. His ability to observe a person, to read a room and to make note of things was astonishing. I learned that perception is as valuable as it is dangerous. His certainty in everything—from his favorite color, to his favorite meal, to the irrefutable value of a teddy bear—taught me how to be certain, how to trust myself.

Through our talks, my grandfather showed me that I was valuable, that I was worth his time and I had important things to say. He taught me about being open-minded, and how to question things around me.

He taught me about being confident but also kind and humble. He taught me how to have perspective without being jaded. He taught me about the value of service and giving people your time.

These talks were filled with laughter and seriousness, insight and a good disagreement here and there. In one of our sessions, I questioned if it was acceptable to be a polar bear. He thought quietly and looked slightly irritated. Finally, after a long pause, he pointed his finger at me and said with his eyes bright, "Yes." 🌸



As Alana grew older, her grandfather's cute sayings, which seemed sweet and funny when she was a child, took on deeper meaning.



Bruno, left, with his dad John.



Big Al: brawn and brains.



Bruno, left, with a cool pick-up.

Alan Vincent Brunacini



Bruno is shown here working on Engine 1. Years later, he would purchase this exact vehicle and restore it to full glory.



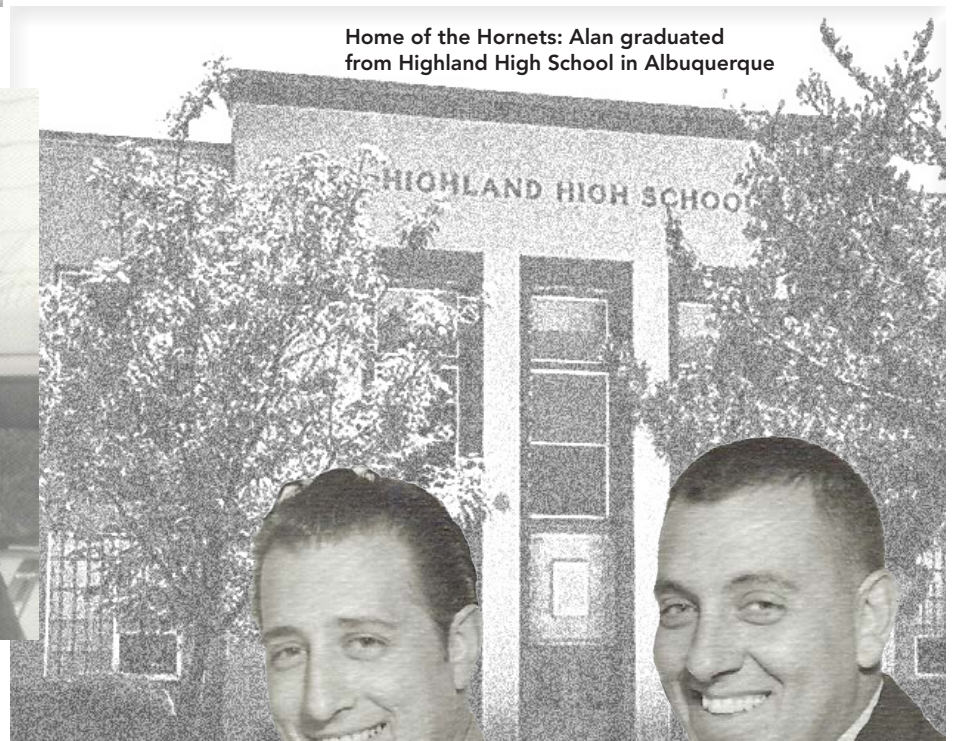
Alan in the front yard of his first house in Phoenix.



Guns, shades and a cool set of wheels. Rita didn't stand a chance.



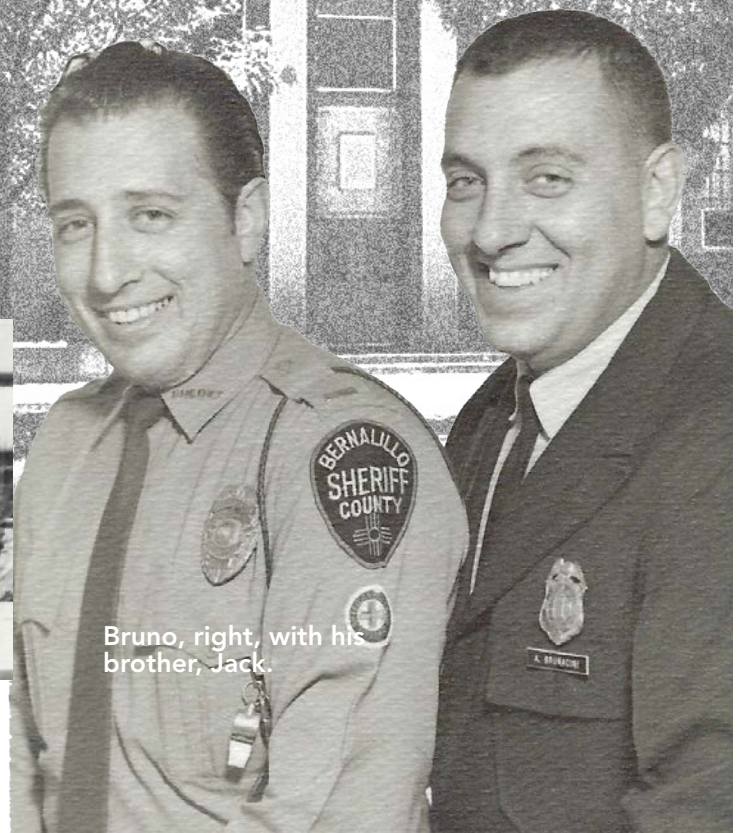
Bruno in Oklahoma with college friend Jim Lett and an infant Nick Brunacini.



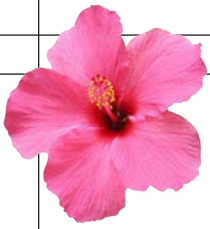
Home of the Hornets: Alan graduated from Highland High School in Albuquerque



Childhood home in Albuquerque, which his father built.



Bruno, right, with his brother, Jack.



Bruno on the Fire Frontier

Reflections on a big-city fire chief's influence on the rugged Montana fire service.

BY BRIAN CRANDELL, ED.D., FIRE CHIEF (RET.)



PHOTO STEVE LAUER

From left: John Culbertson (Director of Montana Fire Services Training); Alan Brunacini; Brian Crandell (author) and Chief Robert Flikkema (Amsterdam, Mont., Fire Department). This picture was taken as Bruno made a spot-on and humorous observation regarding the human condition.

Alan V. Brunacini was a friend to many folks in many places, including Montana. He was a fine friend, a fine leader and a fine person.

Alan came to Montana to work with our firefighters and peace officers in the early 1980s,

invited first, and frequently thereafter, by Fire Chief Butch Weedon. Montanans have been reading Alan's work since he started writing articles. He continues to create a lasting influence on responders in Montana because of who he was as a person and as a leader of providing service

to Mrs. Smith. Alan may have been from a big city, but he connected with Montanans exceptionally well. He even listened to country music.

For perspective, to say Montanans live in a rural place would be an understatement. To people who study demographics, Montana is the frontier.

Alan was pretty comfortable on the frontier.

The Montana frontier is also home to some pretty straightforward firefighters and peace officers. We work hard, we want to improve our work, we cooperate with our fellow responders, we love our families and we care for our neighbors. Alan fit in Montana's frontier-responder community like he had lived here his entire life.

Alan influences us because he worked hard, and he was always learning to do his work in a better way. He made simple, practical, doable-in-the-street work out of what seemed like complex ideas. Customer service and safety were the two constant critical factors in his work and in the work he shared with us.

Montana firefighter Steve Lauer called Alan "The B-Man." "B" for helping us be nice and be safe." And, of course, "B" for Bruno.

Alan cared for his friends, and he made house calls. When he learned that his friend Fire Chief Ken Mergenthaler was ill, he visited Ken and his wife Sue at their home in Eastgate. Alan sat with Ken and Sue

at their kitchen table and visited like the old friends they were. He gave people hope and created optimism because he showed up to deliver selfless, understated, courageously present acts of kindness, including when circumstances were challenging. As Alan said, "You call, we haul, that's all." His haulin' made and continues to make an uplifting difference in people's lives.

Undersheriff Dan Springer (who is also a retired deputy fire chief) was a friend and student of Alan's for more than 25 years. He called Alan a Godfather: He was wise beyond words. He was compassionate when appropriate, he was tough when required, and he loved through actions and relationships. He listened with intense focus and answered with simple, sage words. He personified the word humble and gave grace to everyone.

As a Godfather, Alan knew what he wanted, and he had a very effective way of asking for it. He helped us stay within the lines (sort of...) but always encouraged us to expand the lines to get better at our work. Alan knew his business, he meant business, and he came to do business. We appreciate Alan as a Godfather, especially given his Sicilian heritage.

A most durable adage that Alan has given us is to, "Keep going. Do what's next." He lived those words every day, through thick and thin. He showed us that no matter how much road rash you are experiencing, showing up and taking the next step in the process of making the world a better place is a standard to live by. Alan helped many folks in Montana gain perspective on challenging circumstances, always offering insights and strategy that helped us find opportunity in every crisis. He was gritty, resilient and persisted throughout his life, all with a happy heart. His words and actions live on, appropriately, through the persistent work of his many students and friends.

Alan is remembered every day



This picture of a young Bruno (right) proves he was a frontiersman at heart.

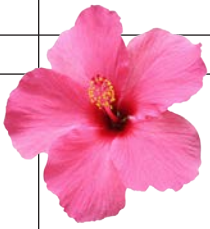
when we care for Mrs. Smith, every time we work to improve the service we provide, and every time we support our firefighters and peace officers. We keep going, and we're doing what's next, every day.

On behalf of Montana's firefighters and peace officers, thank you, Alan, for caring for your friends in Montana. And thank you, Rita, Nick, John and Candi for sharing your husband and dad with us. 🌸

Background Info

Montana is the 4th largest state by area. With about 1 million folks, we have the 4th smallest population. On average, there are about seven people per square mile, and our 16th largest "city" has fewer than 5,000 people. We do have 3 million cows, one U.S. Representative, and, at one time, about 100 ICBM missile silos.

Brian Crandell and his family are honored to be among Alan V. Brunacini's friends in Montana. Brian remains a student and practitioner of Alan's work, enjoying the "dry cold" south of Bozeman, Mont. Full disclosure: While Montanans enjoy a winter of "dry cold" (25 below), Alan preferred to visit in the summer to get away from the "dry heat" (117 above) in Phoenix. He referred to coming to Montana in the summer as "an IQ test." We are fortunate that he passed those IQ tests every time we invited him.



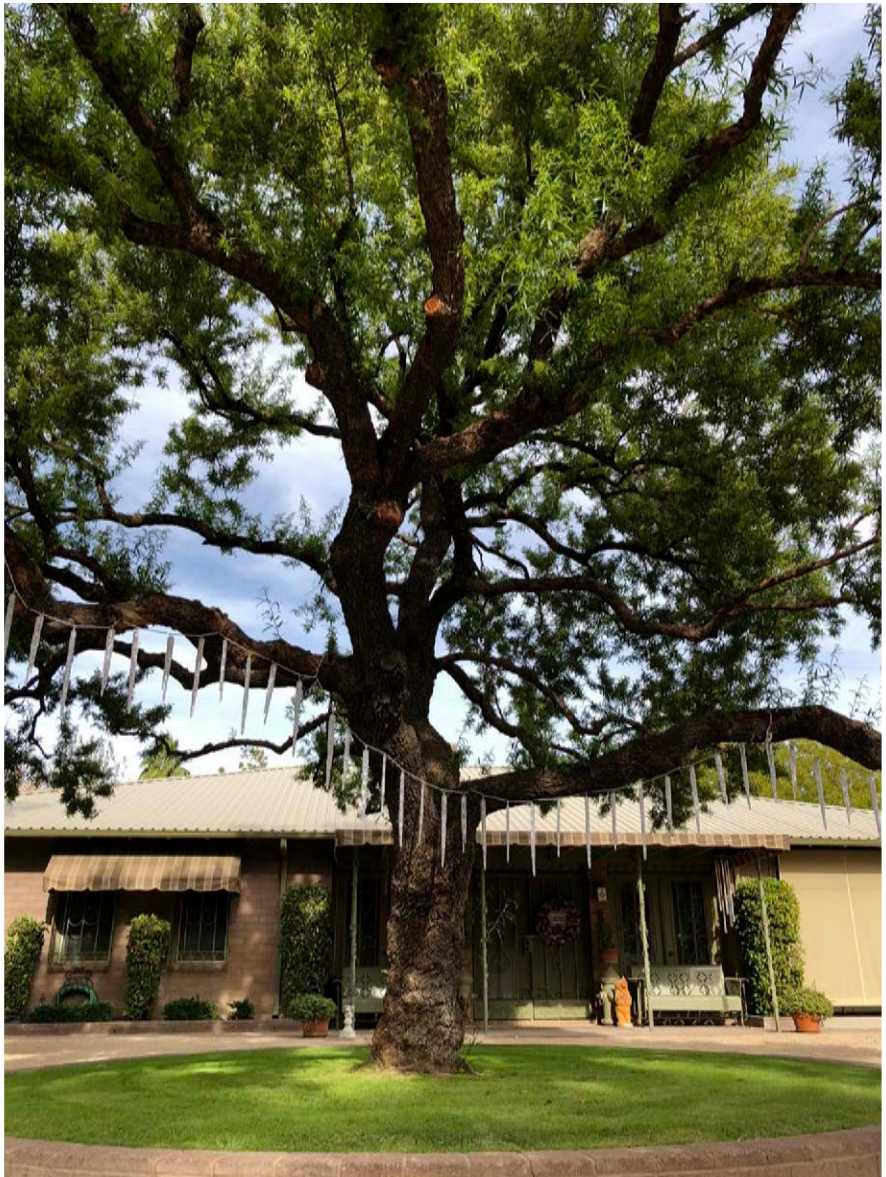
Ethics Lessons from Grandpa

**What I learned from the man who
was so good at being good.**

BY ALEX BRUNACINI, BRUNO'S GRANDSON

In all the ways that matter, my grandfather (Alan Vincent Brunacini) raised me like I was one of his sons. He did this, like he did all things, with great care and deliberate intent. The intent I refer to is Grandpa's desire to improve things, to fix things, to clean things, to restore things, to reinforce things, and to do all this in a way that would withstand the test of time. He has left everything he has touched, every place he has been, and everyone he has known better than he found them. Looking back, this was something that resided at the core of his being: compulsive, non-discriminatory improvement. I loved Grandpa for his character, his humor, and his unconditional acceptance of and regard for me, but I looked up to him (hero level) for how good he was at being good. Luckily, for a grandson, I got to spend a lot of time with him and he with me. He, of course, did his best to improve me during our time together. My grandfather helped me learn how to become an ethical man.

Sometimes Grandpa's ethical lessons were straightforward. The most basic lesson: *Take out the trash*. However, Grandpa not only told me to do this, but he accompanied the edict with a tale—a tale of a fire station in turmoil: crewmen at each other's throats, bad blood, and hostile workplace environs for all. The source of this acrimony was



Beneath the unruly canopy of an African sumac, Alex realized the value of his grandfather's favorite tools: patience, hard work and personal pride.

I knew I'd made him proud of me. I was proud of me too, like the moon glowing with the sun's light.

a debate/Cold War regarding who should have to take out the trash. Grandpa thought the feud was silly and just de-trashified the place himself (in more ways than one). It was easy for him, plus relations at the station improved. If something is simple and helps people, why not do it?

Many of Grandpa's lessons were taught through the lens of home and garden care. Often these lessons caused me to question in exasperated silence, "What if the work is complex, difficult, time-consuming, and of no immediate benefit to anyone else?" These "lessons" tended to involve sledgehammers, electric saws, concrete, and steel applied to everyday household projects like gardening, fence-mending, and (most illuminating for me) light-bulb installation.

Grandpa's house sits on the corner of 31st Avenue and Orangewood Avenue. In 2013, a set of external lights on a wall facing 31st Avenue had begun to attract the attention of local hooligans engaging in hooliganism. (They were breaking our lights! Churlish!) Grandpa and I fiercely commenced an arms race of light-fixture-protection technology vs. miscreants' blunt objects. We started with wire guards, but soon escalated to cast aluminum, tempered glass, then raised brackets buttressed by conduit. Nevertheless, each successive defensive armament eventually met with desecration. Our audacity to illuminate our wall was matched only by the hooligans' destructive prowess.

Of course, Grandpa refused to be defeated! His triumph was eventually attained with structural steel round tubing, heavily drilled by Grandpa himself on his home drill press to allow light to escape. The hooligans desisted at last, beaten soundly by over-craftmanship and sheer determination. If you ever drive by the

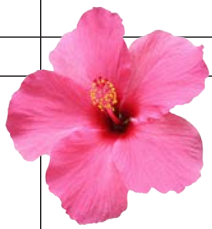
eastern wall of the Chief's house after dark, you will see his custom lights are still shining. If something is complicated and difficult, but makes the world (even if just a wall) a brighter place, why not be proud of it?

I was not spared Grandpa's innate desire to improve things. Grandpa was delighted when he noticed one day that I was internalizing some of his lessons. I was in the boughs of our African sumac tree with a machete, gently lopping off excess tree to unburden the branches and allow more light to reach the remaining leaves, with the added bonus of tree beautification. Grandpa was raking nearby and filling a trash can (to be emptied sooner than later). He offered me an electric tool to speed my work. I declined, telling him I felt more connected to the tree and the work with the manual tool and that I would do a better job with it, even if it was a bit slower. He told me, "I'm proud of you." While I knew intrinsically he was always proud of me, it was different this time. It was very definite. I knew I'd made him proud of me. I was proud of me too, like the moon glowing with the sun's light. Despite Grandpa's love of gardening, I don't think he was proud of my tree-trimming abilities. Rather he was proud that I—like he—had learned the lessons of taking personal pride and pleasure in good work, in making something better, in maintaining something.

I miss him, and I miss his lessons. I will endeavor to live up to them and pass a few of them on. 🌸



Among Bruno's lessons: Protect what is vulnerable, persevere and let your light shine.



Breakfast with Bruno

**A lifetime friendship forged
on the road & over breakfast.**

BY VINCENT DUNN, DEPUTY CHIEF (RET.)

It was 1988, and I had just published my book, "Collapse of Burning Buildings: A Guide to Fireground Safety." As the book gained popularity, I began receiving invitations to lecture at conferences and symposiums across the country. I stood at the back of the room at one such lecture opportunity, awaiting my turn to speak, when I overheard two fire chiefs talking. One said, "We are having Alan Brunacini speak next month." The other chief asked how much Bruno charged. The response: \$5,000. I delivered my lecture and collected my usual \$200 fee. The following week, I received a call to speak at another conference. "Have you ever had Alan Brunacini lecture for you?" I asked. The caller said yes. I told him, "My fee is the same as his." I couldn't even say the amount!

I became increasingly curious about Bruno. While I was the division commander of one of the FDNY's high-rise divisions, the Phoenix Fire Department sent an assistant chief to New York to evaluate our high-rise firefighting procedures. I seized my opportunity; I figured this chief would tell me the real story. One night while touring our firehouse, I asked him, "Tell me the truth. Is Alan Brunacini as good as everyone says he is?" He replied, "Chief, every year, each firefighter and officer in the Phoenix Fire Department has a performance evaluation that rates you from 1 to 10; 10s are rarely given. Most good firefighters get a 5 or 6. Chief Brunacini received a 10 rating his first year as a rookie, and has gotten 10s every year since." He



Alan and Vincent Dunn, on the road in 2003.

continued, "This year, as chief of our department, he received a 10. The mayor even asked him to run the post office mail-delivery service as well as the fire department."

As time went on, it seemed I was following Alan around the country. A fire department would invite him to lecture, and then I would soon follow. I remember one day I was being picked up at the airport at the same time Bruno was being dropped off for his departure. My firefighter/driver said, "There goes Chief Brunacini!" We waved as we passed one another.

At one symposium in Galveston, Texas, Alan and I were the featured speakers. When we met in the hotel restaurant for breakfast, the place was busy. We sat at our table, hungry, and we waited and waited for our server, who took care of every-

one except the two main speakers. We talked and talked, but we never got served. Finally, we had to go back to our rooms to prepare for our seminar—still hungry.

Another breakfast story. Many years ago, the Quebec (Canada) Firefighters Union asked Alan and me to testify about minimum staffing for ladder companies. After Alan and I checked into the hotel the first night, we began walking to our rooms. I noticed he was limping; he said he had just had surgery on both knees. My room was closer to the front desk and didn't require stairs, so Alan and I switched rooms. The next morning, I ordered room service, but it never came. I figured Canadian room service wasn't as good as it is in the United States. When Alan and I met to start the day,

I told him how hungry I was because my room service had never arrived. He started snickering and said he was wondering who had sent him the wonderful surprise room-service breakfast.

Later, when Alan gave his testimony, he regaled us all with humorous and infuriating stories about the bitter battle fought in the United States when the National Fire Protection Association passed its minimum staffing standard. Our side lost, but had a wonderful time with the Quebec firefighters. During our week in Canada, Alan and I talked a lot as we traveled to and from the courthouse. He often spoke of his two sons, Nick and John. He expressed typical fatherly love, but there was something else. He truly admired what they had accomplished on their own, without relying on his reputation. He spoke of their fire-service careers, their online interactive training company and their international expansion of the command system he had created. (Nick was in Australia at the time.) They had also started an online magazine called B Shifter, he said, and he asked me if I would be interested in writing an article for it. That was seven years and almost 30 columns ago. My column in B SHIFTER, "Structural Components," inspired me to write a soon-to-be-published book called "Building Construction the Firefighter's Battlespace."

People often say New York firefighters are suspicious of everyone. Some fire officers I knew were intimidated by Alan's reputation. Before they were going to meet or work with him, they would ask what kind of guy he really was. I would tell them, "Relax. He is a great guy, and like everyone else I know, once you meet him, you will love him." I never had anyone tell me I was wrong.

Alan Brunacini, Bruno, was a good friend, a fellow traveler, and I will miss him. 🌸

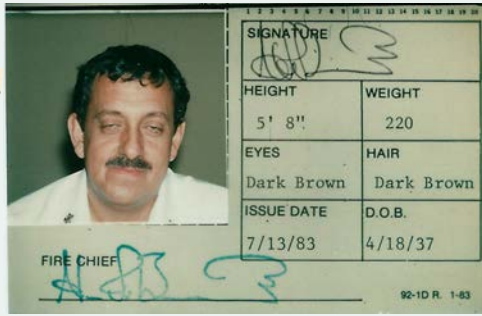


Bruno spent decades traveling and lecturing. The author often spoke at the same events. It was as if they were following each other around the country.

"I AM WHAT I KNOW"

- ① ACQUIRE THE ART OF KINDNESS & PERSUASION. KINDNESS IS AN ATTRIBUTE OF THE STRONG.
- ② PUT CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY ABOVE PAY, PROMOTION & ENVIRONMENT -
- ③ GET RID OF THE DOUBLE STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR - ONE FOR WORKERS & ONE FOR MANAGEMENT.
- ④ START A REQUEST TO SUBORDINATES WITH 'PLEASE', PROPER WORDS & ACTIONS INSPIRE CONFIDENCE.
- ⑤ GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE. PRAISE FAIRLY. IF YOU MUST TELL SOME ONE OFF NEVER DO IT IN FRONT OF OTHERS. MOST PEOPLE'S SELF-ESTEEM CANNOT TAKE IT.
- ⑥ DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE CHANGES. IF SOMETHING HAS BEEN DONE A PARTICULAR WAY FOR TWENTY YEARS, THAT ALONE IS OFTEN A SIGN THAT IT IS BEING DONE WRONG.
- ⑦ IN HANDLING GRIEVANCES LET THE EMPLOYEE TELL YOU HIS FULL STORY WITHOUT INTERRUPTION. A KIND WORD WILL HELP.
- ⑧ LEARN TO LISTEN. THE OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE OF A POOR FIRE CHIEF IS THE INABILITY TO LISTEN.

The chief's creed.



1983 Fire Chief ID card.



Family's first suburban.

FIRE PROTECTION TECHNOLOGY



A Special Program
Leading to an ...
Associate Degree



TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma State Brochure.



December 7, 2014

Dear Jeff,

I hope you are adjusting to your new routine okay. I have always thought of you as both the toughest guy I ever knew (falling into and then bouncing out of a fully involved attic) and also the nicest guy around (helping anyone). I was fascinated by your ability to positively relate to whatever person you were around - even a crazy old Fire Chief. I know your current "assignment" puts you very close to many who really need your usual kindness and leadership. I truly don't have a clue how life causes us to be where we are, but you are a special guy who has always related to anyone and everyone you met. I know you will share your very special gifts with those who need that human support.

In my teaching travels I have met a bunch of firefighters from all over who worked with you driving limos at major events and they would typically regale me with how much fun they had hanging out with you and how well you managed and arranged the whole process- they said you were an excellent Incident Commander. I am certain you will take that same capability into your current chapter. Janice indicated that you might find your way into an assignment in a wild land firefighting unit. If there is any way I could assist or support that process please include me as a former boss who could recommend you. It would be great if you could apply your firefighting experience in a helpful way. I don't know of anyone I would rather face burning vegetation (or anything else) with than you.

I have been retired since 2006 and pretty much have had no contact with the PFD since then. Chief Khan and Co (Billy Shields) took the department in a completely different direction and instructed me that my services and presence were no longer needed - sometimes (as you know) the ball takes a funny bounce and that is just "life". I had the greatest career I could have imagined and can't complain that the end was a bit nutty. I have managed to still stay busy teaching fire service management/leadership seminars around North America and it is fun to get to hang out with firemen from all over. I also write a monthly column in Fire Engineering Magazine which keeps me mentally involved.

Nick and John retired soon after I did and have developed an online training and a classroom fire simulation system that delivers the incident command system we all developed in Phoenix (Volume 2) over the years. The program has been very successful and has spread out across North America and Australia. They recently opened a command training center in Phoenix (3rd Street & Thomas) and have students from all over US & Canada train there. The PFD closed the department CTC on 27th Avenue when I retired - I guess they did not require any more command training (?). If there is any of this teaching/training/written material stuff that would assist you in getting hooked up to a firefighting assignment please let me know.

Hoot Gibson and I have finished the restoration of the '52 Mack engine we started 30 years ago. It came out very well and it has a little building next to our house where it lives. Once in awhile we take it around the block - we are both basically nuts and are going through our second childhood. Hoot and his son Wayne now have a restoration shop on the far West side and build high end (\$\$\$) hot rods and custom cars - they seem to stay very busy and do beautiful work.

Janice has sent along the application process for visitation and I will complete that and send it in. I would love to get to visit you (in person) and would be happy to send anything that would help you in any way. I don't know the exact process of us accessing each other, but I am sure I will figure out as we go along. Please take care of yourself. I appreciate your friendship throughout the years very much and while the current situation is inconvenient (to say the least) it does not change that relationship.

Yr friend
the old Bruno

**Letter from Alan to Jeff Griffin, Phoenix
Fire Department captain (ret.).**

Alan v. Brunacini
3102 West Orangewood Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85051
602-228-4261
alanbrunacini@cox.net

Alan V. Brunacini quits the local union, 1967.



ALAN V. BRUNACINI
4008 WEST CAMBRIDGE AVENUE
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85009
September 29, 1967

Dear President Ashley,

I am writing this letter to inform you of my withdrawal from the Phoenix Firefighters Association (IAFF Local #493). The recent passage of the motion and resolution opposing professional fire service education is so completely contrary to both my personal and professional philosophy that I cannot in good conscience to both myself and your Association remain a member and associate of your organization.

I would like to thank you very much for the effort and consideration that your Association has extended in the past on my behalf and wish you success in the future.

[Handwritten signature]

1971 Arizona Republic article.
A fire hydrant in the living room?

15-K The Arizona Republic Phoenix, Sunday, May 30, 1971



Alan Brunacini keeps a discarded fire plug in his living room

Creative collecting

ug in the living room?

fighting," Brunacini explains. He has just received reprints of another Currier and Ives fireman series, "The American Fireman." "In these is the 'Facing the Enemy' print which is probably the classic fireman picture," Brunacini says.

Above the prints are dozens of small prints depicting various types of fire wagons—many which were drawn by horses or humans. A special spot above the bed is reserved for a plaque of the Phoenix fire department emblem that once adorned all apparatus doors.

He owns several fire bells. One, off an old Phoenix truck, peeks out an ear-splitting gong when rung. And there is an antique 40-inch house bell hanging on the wall. "I want to find a 14-inch house bell, but they're rare," Brunacini says.

One of his favorite items is a fire hose nozzle that's been converted into a lamp. Its gleaming brass and smooth polished leather reflect great care, either by Brunacini or

his wife who, he says, is an understanding about his collection and his demands for it.

Being a battalion chief Brunacini must monitor radio communications of 9 fire department. Mrs. Brunacini shucks off the inconvenience. "We're used to it; it's time it out. But it sometimes scares the hell out of me when she hears male voices in the kitchen (where the radio kept)." Brunacini's collecting runs in cycles. There are seven old firemen's hats, including a red helmet from Chicago on top of the bedroom bookcase, and various badges affixed to the file cabinet drawers. Right now Brunacini is caught up with fire boxes. He has received several from other cities and just ordered a master tape machine—a kind that sent coded local numbers to local fire boxes when a corner firebox was off.

Brunacini is the kind of fireman who spends his

Continued on Page K-19

Dec 14, 1958

Dear Al

Well I received your letter and was glad to hear that you are still alive and not dead. It ~~seems~~ must be a good deal you have working with the fire dept. When they send ~~te~~ you to Oak, you will have a good chance to screw a oakie.

Well enough bullshit for now Al. I am out of the army and working in the Orchard. In your letter you ask me about the 6 month deal. Well Al it is a lot better than spending two years in the army. You have reverse time after you get out but you have it even if you go in for two years. I would not want to advise you wrong but it sure seems like a lot better deal than two years. Go to a army reserve place and find out information about it. Don't go to a army recruiting ~~cham~~ place them bastards will tell you to join for three years. They are real liars. If you decide to for six months don't wait until it you get your notice to report for into the army then it is late. So look into it ahead of time ~~mm~~ because you may have to wait a while before you can get into the six month program.

Well that is enough talk about the army. Are ~~you~~ getting much or not. Isaw in the paper the other day that Cory(Hank) got engage. He is suppose to get married in April. I saw Bert about a month ago he was sweating the army out he got his notice to report and he was trying to get deferred so that he could get into the six month deal. To I received a letter from chinaman writing young. I have to read his goddam letter twice to understand it. On the envelope he addressed it to Sonoma Calif He wrote Sonoma out so fucked up that the postman ~~mmmmmm~~ sent it to a town called Torrance Calif. That is no bullshit either Al. The German (Paul) was home a couple of weeks ago he is still the same crazy Paul.

Well Al about all I ~~mmmmmm~~ have been doing is some drinking and trying to lay about any old gummer of ~~mm~~ a gal when I get about a half drunk. Well Al I am going to try to make it back to see you this spring some time. I'll let you know when I come back if I do make it out to visit you. Well ~~mm~~ Al I'll sign off now try to make it out to see me and Paul. Take it easy fat and stay healthy by screwing a lot.

Your Buddy
Bob Sangiacomo

P S. Have a merry christmas and get drunk new years. Try and screw the old year out and the new one in.

Letter from good friend Bob Sangiacomo, 1958.

Bruno's Christmas safety article, 1959.

Yuletide Advice

Make Safety Project Of Christmas Tree

NOTE: The following was written by a fireman on educational leave of absence from the Phoenix Fire Department to attend Oklahoma State University's School of Fire Prevention Technology.

By ALAN V. BRUNACINI

Year after year Christmas trees are responsible for fires, many of which are avoidable and preventable if simple precautions are taken.

Obtain as fresh a tree as possible, preferably one that has been stored outdoors. Keep it outdoors until it is actually needed. Cut off the end of the trunk diagonally at least one inch above the original cut end. Stand the tree at once in a container of water, keep it in a cool location, and sprinkle the branches frequently until brought into the house for decoration. Tree stands are available with a reservoir of water in which the tree trunk may be set. Lengthwise saw cuts in the base of the trunk will also help the tree to absorb water. It is important that the tree be well supported.

CARE SHOULD be taken in selecting a spot for placing the tree. Be sure it is so located as to be away from fireplaces, radiators, heating appliances, radio and television sets, or other heat sources. The tree should not be placed near entrance doors or otherwise be in any position to block exit ways. Trees should never be placed anywhere near a stairway or any other location that is near an upward draft. It is essential that all doors leading to other parts of the house, if located near the Christmas tree, be normally kept closed.

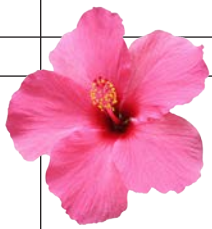
Avoid the use of flammable decorations on or near the tree. Toy trains, motors or engines should not be operated under or near the tree. Use only electric lights on the tree for illumination. Inspect all of the light strings to be certain that they are in good condition and not frayed.

DO NOT LEAVE the tree lights burning when no one is in the house. From time to time inspect the tree and see whether any of the needles near the lights have started to turn brown; if so, change the location of the bulbs. The tree should be taken down as soon after Christmas as possible. If it is desired to keep the tree up for a few days longer, then do not keep the lights on for more than 30 minutes at a time.

In case of fire, don't risk becoming trapped; leave the building in an orderly manner, and call the fire department immediately.

IDENTIFICATION			
S. GROUP	FAIRPLAY NUMBER	RECORD	
08	54 50 51	214	
IONA	SOCIAL SECURITY	NET PAY	
BONDS UNION		9 38CR	
		25 00CR	
SAFETY-IT PAYS		141 39	
City of Phoenix, Arizona			
STATEMENT OF EARNINGS AND DEDUCTIONS			
DETACH THIS STATEMENT OF INFORMATION BEFORE PRESENTING WARRANT FOR PAYMENT			
NON NEGOTIABLE			

Pay stub, 1961. "SAFETY—IT PAYS."



Die Tired, Not Bored

Immortal epigrams from a grandfather with brains, heart & backbone.

BY CHELSEA BRUNACINI, BRUNO'S GRANDDAUGHTER

My mom rarely calls me without issuing a warning text first: "I'm going to call you." On Oct. 15, as I went to pour my first cup of coffee for the day, I saw her picture pop up on my phone without the usual alert. I got the feeling something was wrong.

My feeling was confirmed when I answered the phone. "Let the dog out and come over," she said. "They think grandpa died." I am a very emotional person in general, a trait I, without a doubt, inherited from my father's side of the family. I was instantly overcome with tears and a sense of disbelief. To be honest, even though he was 80, I had never given much thought to my grandpa's dying. He had been taking steps to maintain good health for years—anyone who has ever dined with him knows he gulps down about 20 vitamins and supplements at each meal. Despite these efforts, he is gone, and he's not on an extended business trip for a lecture or conference. He is gone. It is still unbelievable to think he won't be returning.

I always knew my grandpa was someone special. I suppose most grandpas usually are, but mine was definitely different. For as long as I can remember, people would hear my last name and ask if I was related and how. Whether it was the first day of school during attendance, at swim-team practice or sitting down for a job interview, whenever some-



Continuing her family's tradition of service, Chelsea earned her nursing degree in 2017. She is pictured with her parents Nick and Michele.

one would hear my last name, the same question would follow: "Are you related to Alan?" During my years as a lifeguard for the City of Phoenix, I made a shirt that said, "Yes, he is my grandpa." I always thought it was cool people knew my family and that my grandpa was some sort of local celebrity. As I got older and I came to understand the scope of his contributions, the depth of his empathy and the strength of his character, I realized my grandpa really was a hero in every sense of the word.

It can be strange having a grandfather who is a living legend. Whenever I interacted with him, my grandpa would ask me, "Hey kid, whaddya know?" Even as his granddaughter, the question made me somewhat nervous. I thought I should have something fabulous or earth-shattering to throw back at him. (I was so happy at grandpa's private memorial when I heard former Phoenix Firefighter Scott Peltin echo my feelings about the "whaddya know?" question.) My usual response was, "Not much."

As I got older & I came to understand the scope of his contributions, the depth of his empathy & the strength of his character, I realized my grandpa was a hero in every sense of the word.

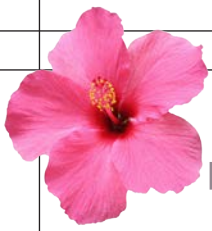
He would raise his eyebrows, tilt his head and shrug his shoulders. Then we'd go on talking about whatever we did know—perhaps that his dog Bella had just been groomed—or maybe I would share a story about having to put a catheter in an agitated old man's penis (and the subsequent yelling). I always loved making my grandpa laugh. I felt a little bit taller each time I did.

There won't be any more talking about Bella or sharing nursing stories with my grandpa. He is gone, and none of us will see him again in this realm. I can only hope he is secretly watching us do our thing down here on Earth (secretly because I am terrified of ghosts, so please don't make yourself known, Grandpa). Watching us rally around one another during this shitty time. Watching his children carry on his fire-service legacy. Watching his grandchildren find their way in life. Most important, watching over Rita.

Although he is gone, this tribute issue serves as proof that he left us his wit, grit and wisdom. There is a banner in grandpa's home gym that reads, "Die tired, not bored." Another one: "Don't pray for an easy life; pray to be a strong person." Those are good creeds to live by; whether people actually have the balls to live by them is another story. My grandpa definitely had the balls, and to anyone who may have seen them in an airport, as he hated both belts and underwear, I am sorry. 🌸



Bruno loved his beautiful ladies: Chelsea (left) and her sister Katie in front of Engine 1, Bruno's glorious Mack pumper.



The Power of Empathy

What I learned about being a fire chief from the nicest chief of all time.

BY TERRY GARRISON, FIRE CHIEF, GLENDALE (ARIZ.) FIRE DEPARTMENT

Our editor, Michelle Garrido, asked me to write an article that shares the things I learned from Bruno that have helped me as a fire chief. I can do this in one word: EVERYTHING. I have said it before, and I will repeat it to anyone who asks: I would not be a fire chief were it not for the life lessons learned from Alan Brunacini, and that holds true for any other Phoenix firefighter who has become a chief of department.

I was just 19 years old when I met Bruno at the Phoenix Fire Department (PFD) Training Academy, and during that first meeting, he impressed me more than any other adult I had known. He did something I will never forget: He sincerely listened to me. You see, I was fresh out of the U.S. Army after serving my two years. (I had signed my papers to join at age 16 and was on a bus to boot camp two weeks after turning 17.) During that two years in the service, nobody was interested in what I had to say. Even after I promoted to the rank of Specialist IV, they didn't listen. But there I was, a brand-new recruit firefighter, and the assistant chief of operations was listening to me. Bruno was promoted to fire chief less than a year later.

I am fortunate that Bruno was my chief for about 28 of my 30 years with the PFD. He even sat during some of my promotional interviews. You would think having the fire chief sitting in the room would make you more nervous, but Bruno



was a calming figure, and you knew he always had your best interests at heart. Some of the most enjoyable times throughout my career were Bruno's company, captain or chief officer meetings. Can you imagine a firefighter wanting to attend a meeting with the fire chief? With Bruno, the meetings were as entertaining as they were informative. Most were standing room only, and people would attend on their days off so they wouldn't miss the interaction with Bruno and our troops.

At one meeting, one of our captains (a smart and capable guy, but just a little crazy) challenged Bruno on an issue. Bruno replied in a supportive way, but the captain just kept pushing. Finally, Bruno said, "Captain So-and-So, you and I have one thing in common." The captain replied, "What's that?" Bruno shot back, "We both have promoted as high as we are going to in this organization." I don't care who you are, that's funny, and I witnessed countless moments like

this throughout my career. I hope I got Bruno's sense of humor. It is an excellent tool and comes in handy as a fire chief. Sometimes we take ourselves way too seriously.

I learned everything I know about incident command and operations from Bruno. I remember many times being in the command van and looking over my shoulder to see Bruno there, just kind of taking it all in. He was not disruptive, and he seldom offered any advice. What he did offer was support. I only saw Bruno angry one time. (I know it is hard to believe he could get angry, but when it came to firefighter safety, he was quite direct.) Bruno's son Nick was acting as support officer at a wind-driven five-alarm fire downtown, and he was seated next to the IC in his designated position. I was the senior advisor, and I was standing behind them as I had done many times. (Command-van positioning was a well-orchestrated event.) Bruno was standing next to me and observing what was happening when one of our engineers stated over the radio that he had lost his crew. We knew this engineer and his crew were on the far west side of the fireground, and the wind was moving the fire east, consuming buildings as it went. We also knew the engineer and his crew were out of harm's way. And finally, we knew the engineer was emotionally connected to fires. Keeping him off the radio was a career goal we all shared.

Now the story starts to go a little sideways. Bruno heard the engineer screaming on the radio, and he told me to do something about the lost crew. I made the mistake of raising my hand to Bruno, showing him my palm in a gesture that said we would take care of it in a minute. OH SHIT. That was the wrong thing to do. For the first time in 20 years, I heard Bruno raise his voice and curse—and it was directed at me. I did the most logical thing I could do: I repeated to Nick the words Bruno



Tim Gallagher, Big Al and Terry Garrison. Although rarely the tallest man in the room, Bruno was always the largest presence.

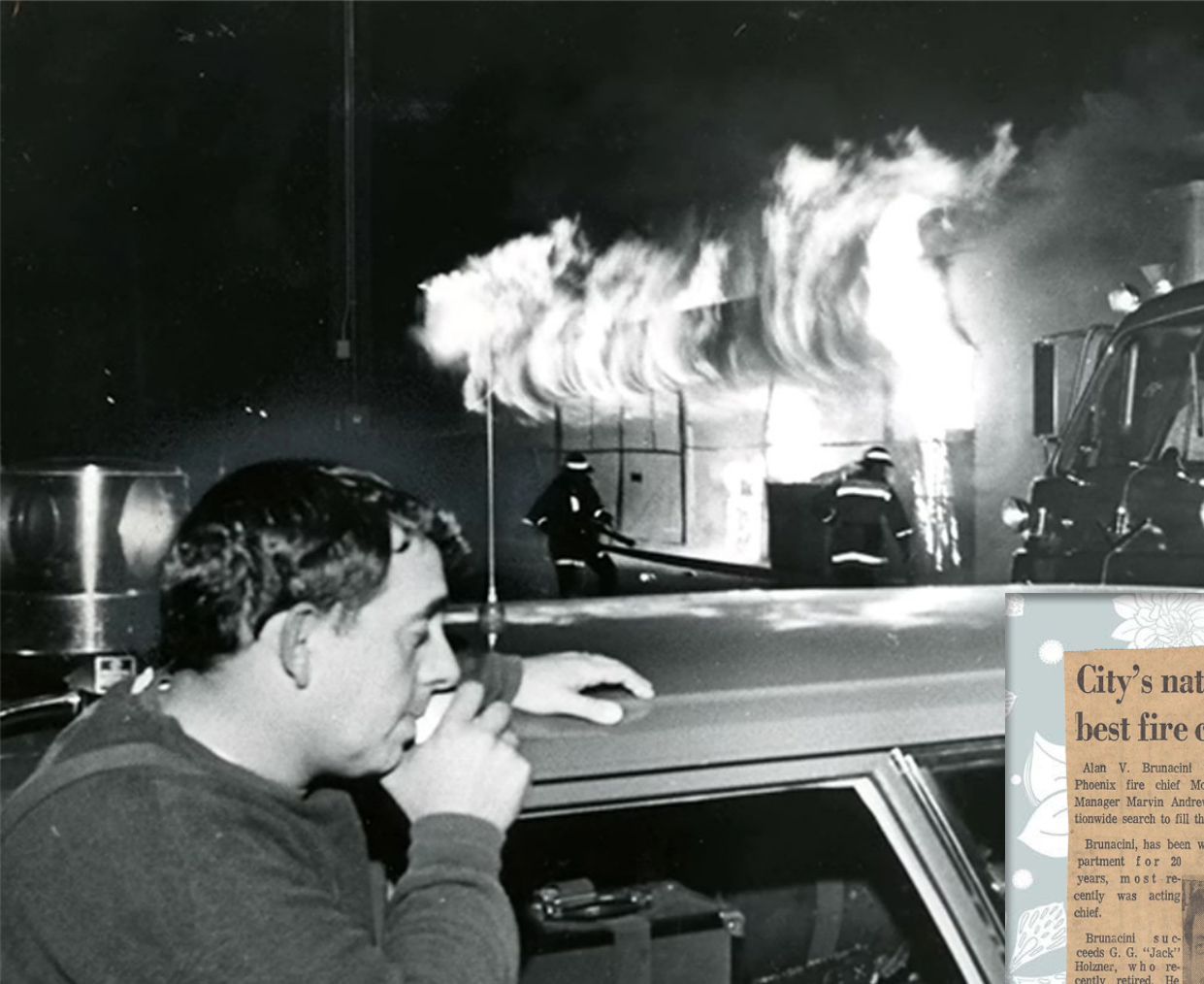
had just "shared" with me, and with the same volume and urgency. Nick repeated it all to the IC, who contacted our misguided engineer and his crew. Order was soon restored to the universe. I learned in that moment that the safety and welfare of our firefighters were secondary to nothing else. Since then, there have been times on the fireground when I have demonstrated reactions similar to Bruno's. The good news is that people were as surprised by my actions as I was of his, and they responded accordingly. (By the way, once we corrected the problem, Bruno never mentioned the situation again, but I never forgot the lesson I learned that day.)

I could go on endlessly about the things I learned from Bruno, but I promised to keep this article short, so let me share one last, very critical lesson. As you all know, Bruno was a nice guy. Not just a nice guy, but a *really* nice guy in everything he did. I think the main reason he was so nice is that he practiced empathy. He would always consider the other person's feelings regardless of the situation. Over the years, I have attempted to do the same.

Of course, I am not as good at it as Bruno, but I will continue to try.

There have been times as a fire chief when I have had to fire people, which is not fun for anyone. But whenever someone needed firing or even severe discipline, I made sure they got the news directly from me. I was never mean to them, nor did I talk down to them. In several cases, the person I had just fired thanked me for being so nice. In fact, through the years, people have asked me, "Chief why are you so nice?" I usually say, "Because I grew up in a rough neighborhood, and if I wasn't nice, I would get beat up." After telling them I was just kidding, I would say I was taught to be nice by the nicest guy I ever knew, Chief Alan Brunacini.

There will be people who confuse niceness for weakness. I have had this happen to me, and I am sure Bruno had it happen to him also. Do not let this discourage you from being nice, because when this confusion does occur, it is easy to spot and easy to fix. Kind of like when Bruno fixed Nick and me at that five-alarm fire. 🌸



Phoenix fire chief 'Official of Year'

PHOENIX — Phoenix Fire Department Chief Alan Brunacini has been named Public Official of the Year by *Governing* magazine.

The magazine lauded Brunacini as an innovator who has taken the 1,400-plus member department "beyond the minimum requirements of fire safety and turned it into an engine of community participation and pride."

He also received the James O. Page EMS Achievement Award for his leadership of the Fire Department's emergency medical service programs.

Brunacini, 60, has been a firefighter since he was 21.

City's nationwide search finds best fire chief on own doorstep

Alan V. Brunacini was appointed Phoenix fire chief Monday by City Manager Marvin Andrews after a nationwide search to fill the position.

Brunacini, has been with the fire department for 20 years, most recently was acting chief.

Brunacini succeeds G. G. "Jack" Holzner, who recently retired. He will earn \$2,769 monthly.

Andrews said that in interviewing applicants "it was very evident that our fire department is one of the most progressive in the country."

Andrews said that Brunacini, who is one of the youngest big-city fire chiefs

in the nation, will continue and expand programs that have given Phoenix a progressive reputation. He said these programs include the paramedics and stress on fire prevention rather than just dousing flames.

Brunacini, 40, will direct 795 employees in 42 fire companies.

Brunacini received a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in political science from Arizona State University.

For 17 years he was coordinator and instructor of the fire science program at Phoenix College. He is writing a textbook for the National Fire Protection Association and is writing for the International City Management Association.

He is serving a second term as chairman of the fire service section of the National Fire Protection Association.



Brunacini

© The Arizona Republic Tues., Jan. 10, 1978 A-9

Assistant Fire Chief Appointed

A veteran of 14 years in fire fighting was appointed today as assistant chief of the Phoenix Fire Department.

Fire Chief G. G. (Jack) Holzner announced the appointment of 35-year-old Alan V. Brunacini.

Brunacini was promoted by City Manager Marvin Andrews from the position of acting chief.

"CHIEF Holzner selected Brunacini for the position after a series of tests, including a written exam, a physical exam, and a board," Holzner said.

"Direction of the department will be his responsibility," Holzner said.

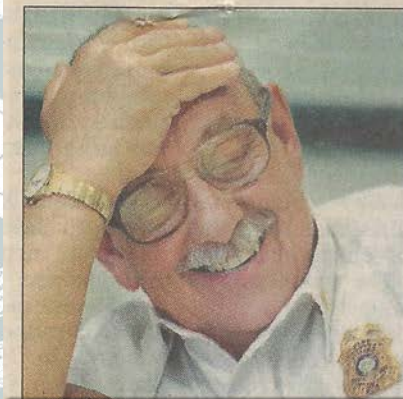
from Highland High School in Albuquerque, N. M., where his parents reside.

He also graduated from the Oklahoma State University School of Fire Protection Technology, where he earned an education degree in the absence from the Fire Department.

THE CHIEF Holzner, a bachelor of science in political science from Arizona State University, where he is working on a master of public administration degree.

Brunacini, his wife, and their three children live at 4008 W. Ave.





Fire chief retires today; legacy one of caring, stressing safety

By Lindsey Collom
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Every weekend for 25 years, Alan Brunacini has stripped, sanded and fine-tuned the same open-cab fire engine he rode as a rookie in 1958.

He bought the truck at auction for \$500 in 1981 and has been restoring it ever since with the help of a long-

"You better take your time and you better do it right."

Brunacini, who has been at the helm of the Phoenix Fire Department since 1978, retires today. His philosophy of approaching every task with care and patience took him from rookie to the top job, and has helped him forge a legacy as one of the best-known chiefs in the na-



Carry It On

**In his absence, we'll do our best to continue
Dad's personal & professional legacy.**

BY JOHN BRUNACINI, CAPT. (RET.), BRUNO'S SON

Many of the people reading this article knew my dad personally, have listened to him speak at one of his many thousands of presentations or have heard about him from other people and through his books. Anyone who has met and interacted with him knows firsthand that he really cared about people. He took the time to listen to you, and he was a world-class communicator.

Fire-service folks are always saying to me, "You must be so proud of your father and what he has done for the fire service." Yes, of course I am, but I'm more proud of him for being my father than being the fire chief. Dad raised all of his children to grow up and become fine, outstanding B-shifters. He only cared about the big stuff that really mattered when we were growing up. He never dwelled on the stupid, petty stuff that would have made most other parents hold their children under water until they stopped breathing. He taught his three kids the importance of having a good work ethic, respecting other people, and taking responsibility for our actions. He also insisted that we always followed the golden rule, which he summed up in two words: "Be Nice." I'm very proud of my father's professional career, but his greatest accomplishment to me was being the best father anyone could ask for. I'm going to miss you so much, Dad. I'll try my best in your absence to carry it on. 🌺



John says he lived to adulthood thanks to his father's patience. Bruno didn't sweat the small stuff that would have driven other parent's to kill their children.



John proudly followed in his father's footsteps. He served as a Phoenix firefighter for 26 year and retired as a captain. He's shown here with Ladder 11, B shift.



Bruno with John and Holly's daughters, Lauren (left) and Maria. The girls often worked alongside their father and grandad at conferences and Blue Card events.



Big Al developed a strong work ethic in his kids. Example: He had them help build his house. s

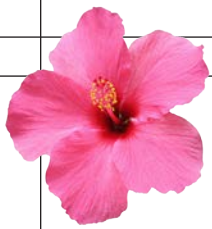
I'm more proud of him for being my father than being the fire chief. Dad raised all of his children to grow up & become fine, outstanding B-shifters.



After retiring from the Phoenix Fire Department, the chief continued to develop and teach his incident-command principles through the Blue Card program. He's shown here in John's studio.



John and Big Al, someplace cold, standing in front of the most beautiful Mack pumper of all time.



The *Original* Original

Bruno's wide range of talents, passions & emotional intelligence changed our service like no one before him.

BY ANTHONY KASTROS, BATTALION CHIEF, SACRAMENTO METRO FIRE



The first time the author met Bruno, he grabbed him by the cheeks and gave him a smooch. He's been kissing him ever since.

To say Alan Brunacini was one of a kind is to call the Grand Canyon a pothole. It doesn't do him justice. He was and remains the *original* original. Often imitated, but never duplicated. We can attempt to understand his significance to our profession by vainly comparing him to others, but in doing so, we see he surpasses all of them in his uniqueness and his commitment to the fire service, the greatest of all callings.

Bruno was the founder of fire-service philosophy. Like Plato, whose

teachings have endured for 2,400 years, Alan's principles will endure for generations. He was a brave pioneer like Christopher Columbus, a genius like Albert Einstein and a timeless icon like Neil Armstrong. Like Walt Disney, he had a whimsical and fantastic vision and the ability to make it a reality. (Walt had his train in the backyard, and Bruno had his 1952 Mack.) Bruno came all wrapped up in one sweet, unassuming, humble, inquisitive, lovable package. Perhaps that's what made him so endearing.

Bruno had a rare combination of command and leadership genius. He understood the fireground and the people who worked there like no one before or since. By simplifying hazard-zone operations into easy-to-understand principles, Bruno paved the way for thousands of ICs, officers and future fire chiefs.

Chief Brunacini also simplified the complex human-leadership experiment, making it understandable and funny. He made us better leaders within our departments and better servants to our

Bruno made you feel important and relevant; he made you feel that your opinion, no matter how inexperienced or naïve you might be, was worth hearing.

customers, who had somehow eluded our awareness for years. He introduced us to Mrs. Smith and reminded us that we have countless opportunities to make her life better—opportunities we had failed to recognize until he showed them to us.

Chief Bruno was a mentor, a friend, an ear, a shoulder to lean on and an inspiration. The ultimate teacher, Bruno always remained a student. I believe he kept traveling the country so he could keep seeking, probing, and tinkering with firefighters (his life-sized white mice). Maybe that's why he would roll his hands together, in a sort of devious yet innocent way, when you sat with him. It was as if he could hardly contain the ideas that flashed through his mind—always at light speed—as he considered what topics you might discuss.

Bruno was larger than life but always available to anyone who needed him. So many of us put him on a pedestal, but he always picked up the check. When he spoke to you, he spoke to you. Bruno made you feel important and relevant; he made you feel that your opinion, no matter how inexperienced or naïve you might be, was worth hearing. This helped you develop a sense of self-worth and pride and the confidence to lead. His grandfatherly style is one of the reasons I love him.

Bruno could teach the timeless tenants of command and leadership while remaining relevant and current. He understood how to reach, inspire and lead the Greatest Generation, the Old Salts, Generation X, Generation Y, Recliner Jockeys, Recliner Snipers and Millennials. He was around long enough to know all of these

demographics, and he respected each of them for their unique contributions and qualities.

Iwould like to thank Bruno's family for sharing him with us, especially his wife, Rita. It's been said that the toughest job in the Navy is being a wife. The long tours away from home require patience, grace and faith in the mission. Rita demonstrated these and more. In her, Bruno found a life partner who shared a love that created an amazing family to carry on their legacy. The apples did not fall far from the tree; the kids and grandkids are brilliant in their own right. They're nurses, biochemists, cops, aerospace engineers, accountants, behavioral-health doctors and teachers (imagine that). It's wonderful to see Bruno's big heart and big brain live on in his family.

Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Alan Brunacini's church was the fire service, and he gave himself up for her. He never ceased—not until the day he died.

I will miss him: our regular phone conversations and pontifications. I will miss knowing he is just a phone call away. I take solace in the fact that he will live on in all of us. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, he will live on in our decisions, ideas, words, deeds, style and hearts. Thanks to his sons Nick and John, his work will continue.

We love you, Chief. Thank you for all you have given. We, either collectively as the American Fire Service or as individuals, have been forged by your work, your passion, your brain and your heart. 🌸



Never Take Yourself Too Seriously.



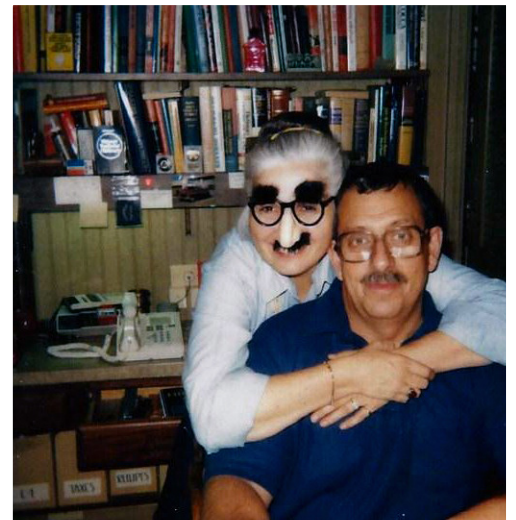
Trust us, Santa. He's been nice.



Love the engines, all the engines...



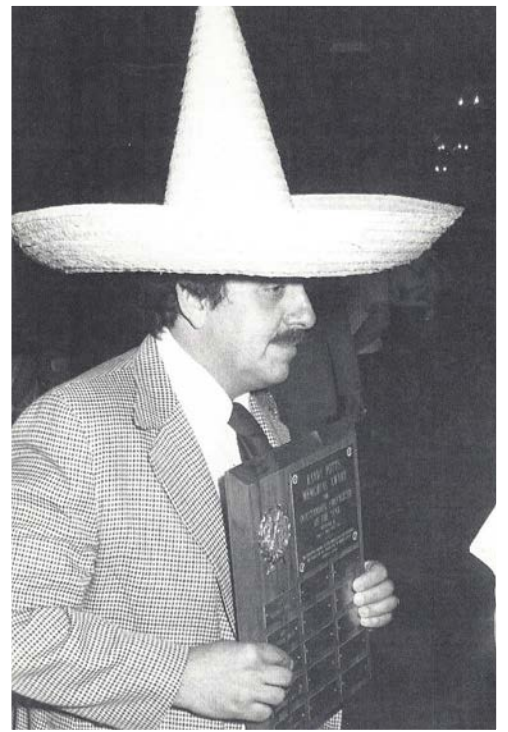
Big Al demonstrates the safety equipment available when he was a recruit.



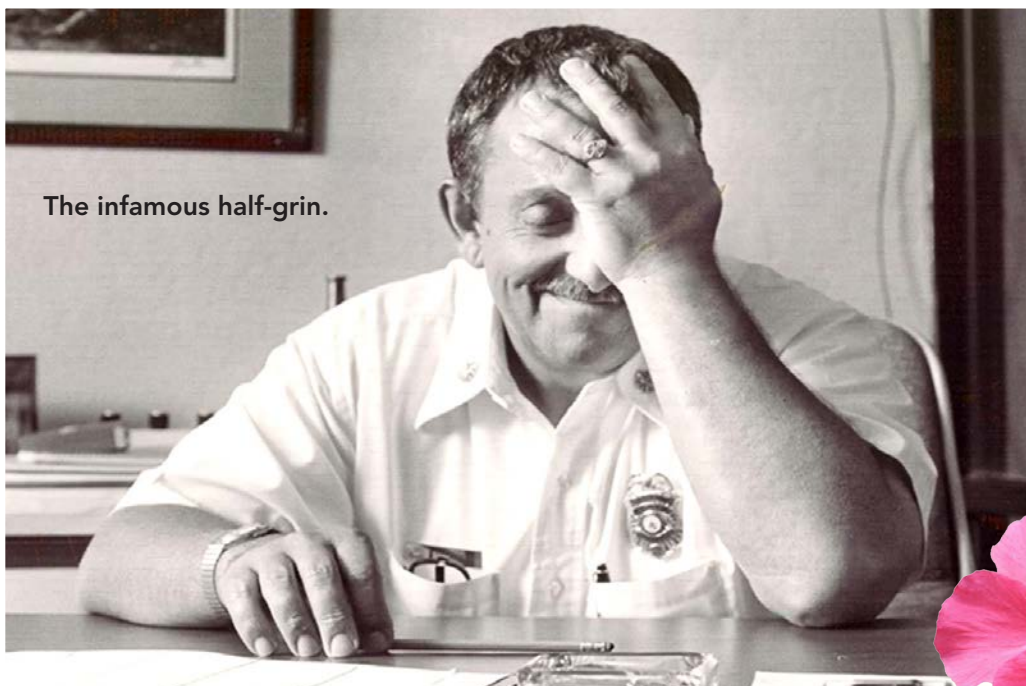
Rita and Bruno had been together so long, they started to resemble each other.



Bruno & Bella



Anything for a taco.

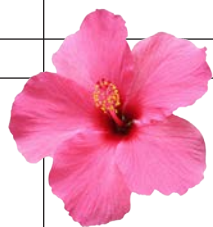


The infamous half-grin.



The Chief, 1989.





An Heir of Kindness

For the Brunacini clan, being nice is an undeniable family legacy.

BY KATIE BRUNACINI, BRUNO'S GRANDDAUGHTER

I have survived 23 years on this planet without suffering the loss of a family member, so when my mother called me Oct. 15 to tell me grandpa had died, it was a shock. The feeling isn't something I can put into words. I didn't see my grandfather all that often, but since his death, it does feel like the world has gotten slightly dimmer, and a small piece of me left with him. Although Alan was my only grandpa, I don't have any fun anecdotes anyone would be interested in reading. Instead, I want to share the profound impact he had on my life.

When I was growing up, I thought I had to become a firefighter to carry on the Brunacini name. I didn't see either one of my sisters or any of my cousins going that route, so I believed I'd be best suited to it. When I got older and only slightly smarter, I realized I did not *have* to be anything. But public safety courses through my veins, and it was the only thing that genuinely interested me. I knew I would either become a police officer or a firefighter. In high school, I vacillated between the two, but my parents convinced me (thankfully) that the police department would be my best option.

I joined the Oceanside Police

Department and was sworn in as a peace officer Oct. 15, 2015 (that date has definitely come full circle for me. As a descendant of Alan Brunacini, Chief Bruno, Big Al, Bruno, etc., I found myself saying, "Yes, I'm Alan's granddaughter, Nick's youngest daughter," all the time that first

comments by calling the fire department for a medical evaluation right around 2 a.m.

I saw more tragic human condition within my first year as an officer than I had in all my years prior: a person who stabbed himself to death (very messy and not quick—I don't

recommend it); insanely high people who tried to remove their skin from their bodies; a man with a family of maggots living inside an open sore on his foot; and a woman who smeared her feces on a barbershop window. The list goes on. One thing all of these incidents had in common is the police arrived because someone cared enough to call us for help.

Alan Brunacini truly lived by the words he preached. "Be nice" were his most famous and simple. He genuinely cared about people, and he could make you feel like the only person in a room full of other people. Not only was he nice, but he also validated everything

good you thought you were. I try to do the same on the job each day. People don't call the police to share their best days with us. They call because something very shitty is happening in their lives, and they need us to fix it. Most of the time, these are problems five years in the making, and we walk in on the last 10 minutes and put a Band-Aid on



Skin in the game: Katie's new Be Nice tattoo reminds her of her grandfather's kind, helpful nature.

year on the job. Police and fire typically run a lot of calls together, and firefighters would often look at my nameplate and ask, "Brunacini... are you a part of *The Family*?" then they would make a snarky remark like, "What? You couldn't pass the firefighter test?" In true Brunacini form, I usually repaid these douchebag

His essence...lives on forever in the people who are nice & the people whose lives we affect daily. Alan gave us a part of himself ...He raised us all.

an amputated limb. It can seem futile, but we still gotta try.

I went on a call during my first year that still sits in the back of my mind. A mother called 911 and said her son had stabbed himself. I had been on many similar calls, and 99.99 percent of the time, the cuts are superficial, and the child is motherfucking us and telling us to leave. This time, I walked into the front yard of the enclosed property and saw a man who had opened his carotid artery with a serrated kitchen knife. He was lying in what I believed was his entire blood supply. His sobbing mother, covered in his blood, was trying to roll him onto his back. This call remains the most wretched and the most influential I've experienced.

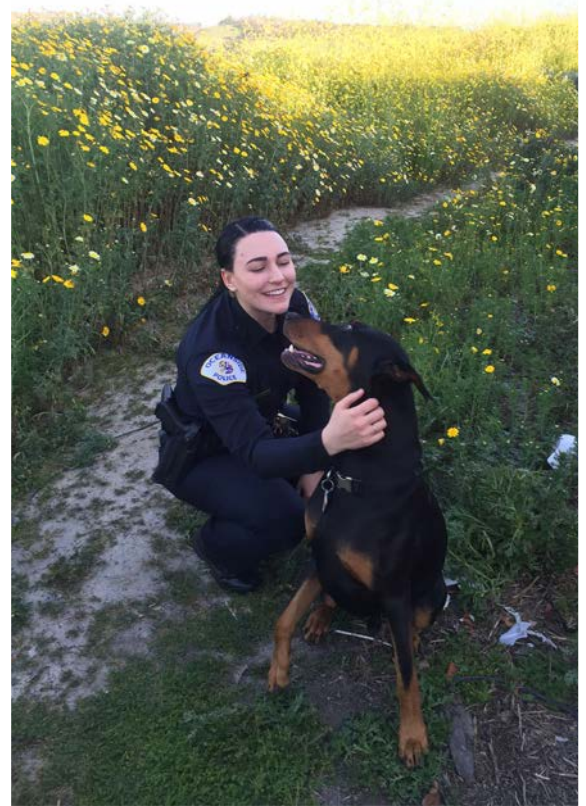
I spent the next two hours with the mother, driving her to the hospital, waiting with her in a private room and holding her when the doctor told her that her son had died. I gave her everything I had. I emotionally depleted myself and gave her and her family a part of me that day. I realized then that I am a Brunacini through and through. I didn't have to think at all; everything felt like muscle memory. Being nice to her was the only option I had. The mother won't remember my name, the color of my hair or anything I said. She will remember I was nice, and she will forever have a piece of me.

The days following that call were difficult. I took my dad's advice and wrote about it in an attempt to purge it from my mind. Getting it out on paper helped. My dad shared what I had written with my grandparents, and I soon received a text from my grandma that I knew was propelled by my grandpa: "Your dad shared your day with us. I want you to know how much I thank him for that and how proud I am of you. You are an amazing writer and a beautiful person. I believe

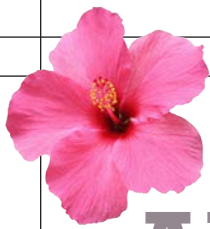
you have learned the most important thing in life. Be nice—even when it is difficult; that's when it matters most. I would love you to share more of you with me." She ended her text with love and a slurry of rainbow and smiley-face emojis.

I think we could solve the world's problems by trying to understand other people's points of view and what they are experiencing. Alan is dead. Physically, we will never see him again. He will never ask us, "Whaddya know and when do ya know it?" We'll never get to watch him spill something on his shirt, then proceed to spot clean it in the middle of a restaurant. He's dead, and I don't know where he went. But his essence—his larger-than-life presence that was somehow contained in his 5'6" body—lives on forever in the people who are nice and the people whose lives we affect daily. Alan gave us a part of himself and helped create who we are today. He raised us all.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank everyone who was a part of his life and who shared themselves with my grandfather in turn. The world might be a bit dimmer now that he has left it, but this loss brings us closer together. Even his funeral didn't feel like a funeral; I have never been in a room filled with such love. I don't know what comes after this life, but until we find out and get to see Alan again, just keep being nice. 🌸



Katie carries on the family's public-safety tradition as a police officer in Southern California.



Always Nice, Never Weak

It took the young Alan Brunacini strength & mettle to build the department he envisioned.

BY NICK BRUNACINI, SHIFT COMMANDER (RET.), BRUNO'S SON

On Oct. 15, 2017, Alan V. Brunacini (AVB) died when his heart stopped beating. He was 80 years old. Over the next couple of months, firefighters from all over the world expressed their heartfelt condolences and thanks for AVB's professional contributions to our service. I consider myself fortunate to have been Big Al's son. I joined the Phoenix Fire Department (PFD) two years after he became the fire chief of the department. My dad joined the department in 1958 and served in every position within the Operations Division before becoming the fire chief in 1978. He served as our chief for 28 years, retiring in 2006.

The three decades that Big Al served as the fire chief of the PFD remain the most unique in occupational history. Three events confirm the preceding sentence:

1. My father had been retired from the PFD for more than 10 years when he died. The secretaries and fire-truck mechanics who had worked with my father openly grieved when they learned of his death.

2. In the late 1990s, our union suggested it might be time to require certain levels of education in order to promote. The union was concerned the fire department's compensation package exceeded our training and qualifications when compared to other occupations. Many company officers in our department earned more than professionals in



The Phoenix Fire Department was not a progressive, illuminated organization when Alan Brunacini joined in 1958, so he dug in his heels, fought the good fights and made it that way.

other industries requiring extensive education (beyond a master's degree).

3. The final benchmark in Big Al's tenure with the PFD is the community's satisfaction with the department. Surveys always measured public community satisfaction with the fire department in the mid-90th percentile. No other organization came close.

As a young boy, Big Al witnessed a structural firefighting operation that set him on a mission from God. He was very fortunate to have figured out what he was going to do with his life when he was just 5 years old. My dad was 21 when he joined the PFD, and he immediately began his quest to improve the organization. "Kind, wise, patient, supportive and

fatherly" are all adjectives used to eulogize my father. None of these words accurately describes the first 20 years of Big Al's career, when the fire department was more rigid and traditional than today's service. In 1968, the PFD's wonder kid had a whopping 10 years of seniority, and he was dragging the department in a direction most of the workforce wanted no part of. Back then, a kind and patient person would have gotten the concept of Level 1 Staging stuffed 8 feet up their ass by the freelancing workforce. It was akin to making pirates give up stealing in favor of being nice to Mrs. Smith.

AVB was the rare boss who understood (and helped define) the task-level requirements of being a firefighter along with the strategic vision of how our actions should be

My dad was 21 when he joined the PFD & he immediately began his quest to improve the organization...He had a more idealized vision of our workforce than any union president, mayor or city manager.

applied, expanded and managed. He felt there was no human task that firefighters could not be taught and quickly master. He had a more idealized vision of our workforce than any union president, mayor or city manager. He spent every waking moment thinking about ways to improve emergency-service delivery and firefighter safety. He went to school his entire life (either as a student or instructor) in service of his mission from God. The knowledge he gained help develop and drive:

1. EMS in Phoenix—The first group of PFD paramedics were trained in the mid-1970s against the fire chief's orders. AVB was the ops chief at the time and did it anyway. Providing this service allowed our department to save many more lives, improve the quality of life in our community and make our department more vital.

2. Hiring and promoting minorities within the PFD—During his 28-year tenure as fire chief, our department never operated under a federal court decree; this is a rarity for a large metro fire department. Any employment/personnel issues were handled within the department. This approach to personnel management educated and prepared more than 40 members of AVB's administration to leave the nest and become fire chiefs in other cities. Big Al's "be nice" approach showed that operational excellence is an effect of treating people with dignity and respect.

3. Firefighter safety, including SCBA use; yearly physicals for

firefighters; NFPA 1500; and the concept that it's not okay to injure or kill firefighters (this ran counter to the "our job is dangerous and needs to stay that way" crowd)—AVB achieved one of his missions from God when he was able to invest more money in the care and maintenance of the workforce than the apparatus fleet. Like many changes, this one wasn't embraced by large swaths of our industry. The NFPA made him the chairman of the board because they never dreamed anyone could get the 1500 standard ratified by the American Fire Service.

4. RBO (relationships by objectives)—Big Al was a major architect of the modern labor/management relationship. My father's relationship with the union deserves its own book.

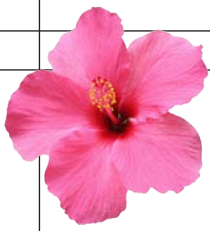
5. The management/command system fire departments use to conduct local incident operations—Traditionalists did not embrace the concept of incident command. Many felt that managing a structure fire was too complex for firefighters. Blue Card is the child of "Fire Command." The internet was the most effective way to teach incident commanders how to apply AVB's command principles. Big Al trained 600+ officers using a certification-style training approach during the last 5 years of his career—that's quite an achievement. In the 10 years since he retired from the PFD, Blue Card has trained 35,000 officers all over the world.

6. The radical concept of viewing victims as customers and the community as the owner of the fire department—Big Al didn't invent

"be nice"; it's what he became. He evolved and grew with the position. It pissed him off when people referred to him as "America's Fire Chief." Like it or not, it's who he became.

Alan Brunacini had more to do with the public safety in Phoenix (and Maricopa County) than any other human being. During his tenure as fire chief, the local news channels would devote 5 minutes or more of each newscast to stories featuring the PFD. The recurring message was, "Firefighters respond quickly, they're well trained, they take care of the customer and they're nice." Big Al felt one of his greatest professional accomplishments was that most citizens believed our PIO was the fire chief. Big Al always remained anonymous to anyone not connected to the fire service.

My father never thought it was about him. He shunned the spotlight and taking credit. He identified himself as a firefighter. I never once heard him boast about himself, it was always about the department. The saddest thing about his demise is the world has lost an individual who was overqualified and gave a shit. Every great *anything* is driven by an individual who gives a shit. Every decision he ever made was in support of his mission from God. My dad didn't drink, cheat, talk shit or take advantage. He was the most forgiving person I've known. He thought the primary limiting factor for most organizations is the leaders. He also believed the factor that enables organizations to soar is good bosses. 🌸



Bruno Forever

"Be nice" is a call to action. Alan lives on in friends, family & colleagues who strive to follow his example.

I remember selling the Phoenix Fire Department its first honor guard dress uniforms. Chief Brunacini was adamantly against the idea of dress uniforms, and when he finally capitulated, he did so with the understanding that these dress uniforms were to be called "away," uniforms, and he didn't need one because he wasn't going away.

*Steve Cohen, President
Lighthouse Uniform Company
Seattle, Wash.*

My husband was always talking about all the great things Chief Brunacini had accomplished and what an impressive man he was. One night, my husband and I were attending a fire-service awards program, and I was not happy having to sit by myself while my husband emceed the program and introduced people. There was a very quiet man at my table, and I couldn't understand why he was wearing a Hawaiian shirt to this formal dinner. Then I heard Chief Brunacini's name called, and that man in the Hawaiian shirt stood up. I couldn't believe it! He walked up to the stage, humbly took the award, said a few words, and cracked a joke (that I don't remember), and everyone started laughing. I was laughing along with them. Chief Brunacini quietly walked back to his seat. That was when I realized what my husband saw in him.

About a year later, Chief Brunacini came to our town to present a program, and I was asked to go along for another dinner. It was



Alan was a devoted animal lover (beyond the beasts on B Shift). Bella, shown here on his lap, was Bruno's favorite canine girl.

then that I was able to really get to know him and see what my husband saw in him. I am sending the Brunacini family this message to let them know their husband, father and grandfather not only influenced firefighters, but impressed their wives and families too. It was a joy and pleasure to meet you and know you, Chief Brunacini.

*Alissa Kerwood, wife of Fire Chief
Scott D. Kerwood
Hutto (Texas) Fire Rescue*

Everyone else said it. The phone would ring, and all you would hear is, "Hi Glenn. It's Alan Brunacini." You snapped to attention to listen. We were in the presence of a legend, and he had the patience of a saint. Alan knew how sharp he was, but he never made you know that he knew. He truly loved people and

was as nice to the gal serving him breakfast as he was to the mayor or senators. I'm not quite sure if most of the fire service truly understands what a loss we have suffered, but I know everyone that knew him is shattered. RIP Bruno.

*Glenn Usdin
Lancaster, Penn.*

Bruno was a speaker at our regional fire conference. Afterward, he asked me about a nice place to eat. I gave him suggestions and told him if they don't pan out, we lived 5 minutes away. Knowing he would never stop by the home of a paramedic he just met, I left. Twenty minutes later, my husband yelled that somebody was at the front door. There stood Bruno, looking a little less professional in his flowered shirt. He sat

on our deck, ate burgers and had a couple of beers. He entertained us with stories well into the night. Our paths crossed several times through the years, and he never failed to remember my name and remind me that I made the best burgers ever. Only in my dreams would an icon like Bruno become my friend. Dreams came true that evening. My life is richer for having known him. He will be missed, but his words and humor will live on.

*Arlene Zang
Cincinnati, Ohio*

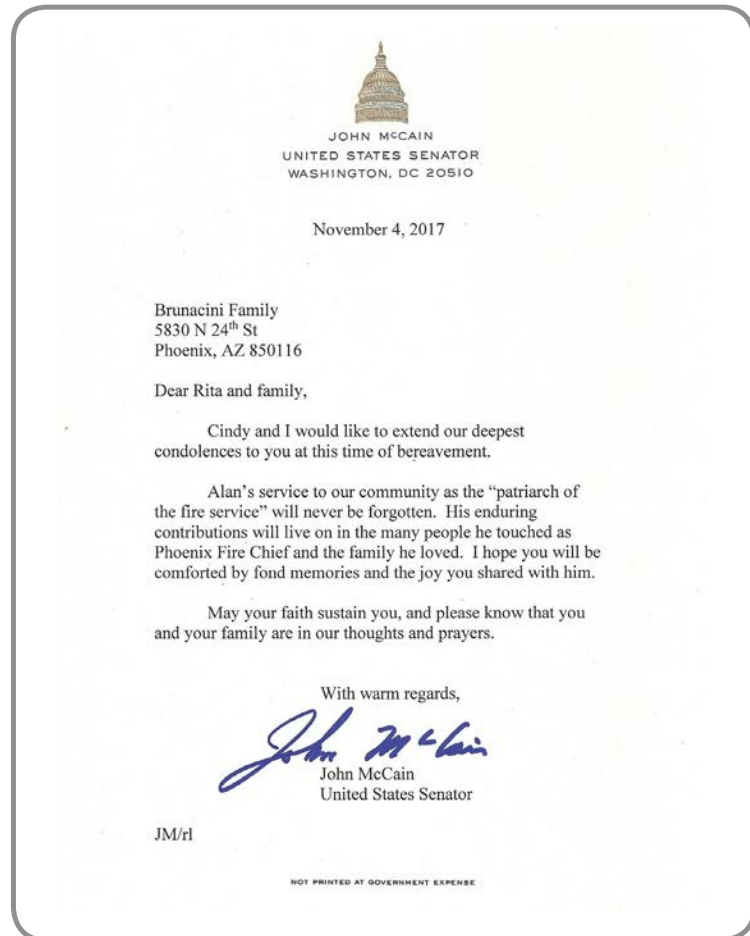
I was walking by the registration area at FDIC a few years ago, and I ran into Chief Brunacini. He asked me about a sign and what "LEAD retrieval" was. I addressed him as chief, and he stopped me and said, "We are all firefighters here, and he told me to call him Al. I explained the LEAD machines, how they scan your badge and send you information. He stated he always throws them out because he hates junk mail. I offered him some peanut M&M's; he took some and said to have a great training. My co-worker was watching and asked me, "Do you know who that is?" I replied, "Yes, that is Al. Duh!" Loved his humor and enjoyed many of his classes at FDIC.

*John Dunn
Twinsburg (Ohio) Fire Department*

Rest in peace, Chief Bruno. You pinned my first badge and taught me endless lessons about customer service, incident command and being nice! You were a trend-setter, a Renaissance man, and a true fire chief who didn't stop sharing the beauty of his organization so all of us could fight to do the same. You will be missed but never forgotten.

*Javier Crespo,
Sugar Land, Texas*

I first met Chief Brunacini at a fire conference in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, in the late 1980s or early 90s. We



Condolence letter from Arizona Senator John McCain.



Alan and John Vance, Blue Card instructor and master emcee of Blue Card events. In the back but still the center of attention: glorious Engine 1.

MAM,

10-24-17

For the rest of my days, I will never be able to wrap my emotions around the fact, A man, such as your husband and my friend Chief Brunacini, chose to ~~love~~^{choose} me as a friend? I am deeply saddened by his departure as I always looked forward to visiting with him. Normally, he showed up on Sunday Afternoons around 1 or 2 p.m. Strange, as he came fully stocked up with quarters so that I was able to indulge myself on Prison vending machine junk food, for an hour or so. Still too, I am at a loss of words that describes

how humble I was every time my little friend showed up, lowered himself and even made the 6 hr. round trip excursion to visit me in prison in Tucson. What type of man would do this sort of thing? Alan Brunacini is that man and I will never be able to repay that debt to him and your family for accepting his decision to visit me, in such a degrading atmosphere and venue. However, there was my friend, ready to chat and mostly listen to my stories. What a gift he brought every time to me. So many folks in this environment have lost it ALL, family, friends, and homes. But yet somehow I remained more than I could have ever imagined. Who said that angels are young? With Awe and Respect
Jeff Griffin (Capt. ret.)

chatted for 30 minutes or so with other firefighters. I met him again about 20 years later. I indicated we had met many years before, to which he said, "Are you still in Brandon?" Wow. I was impressed! I'm not sure how he did that. Great respect for the man and his works. He has made an impact. Condolences to his family and his fire family.

Bernie Van Tighem,
Vermilion, Alberta, Canada

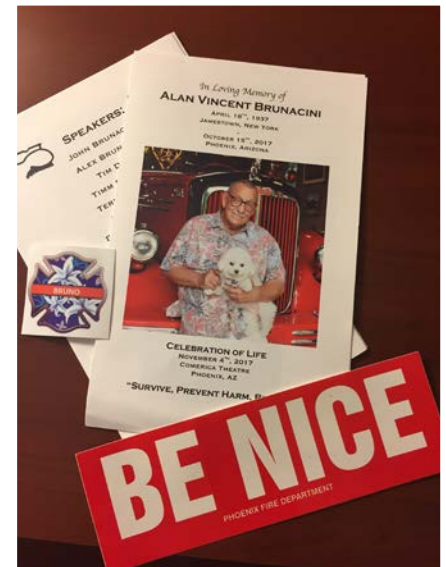


Bruno with Blue Card instructors Pat Dale (left) and Chuck Kahler (right).

My first year at Oklahoma State University was Alan's second. Shortly into one semester, we had the first meeting of our fraternal organization, the Fire Protection Society. Bruno was president of the society and presided over that meeting. I had met him previously but had not gotten to know him well. I just remember coming away from that meeting thinking, That guy has more natural leadership ability than anyone I have ever known.

Mickey Jackson
Fayetteville, Ark.

In a lifetime of public service, I have never been given better advice for universal solutions to life's dilemmas: "Do the right thing," and "be nice." While underplaying his amazing wisdom, Bruno would pass on simple solutions to helping Mrs. Smith. While learning the complicated aspects of fireground command from this great man, the entire fire service took home his even greater message. I'd like to think that people around the world are being treated better because of this man's influence on all of us. My condolences to his wonderful



family. May great memories help each of you lighten the burden of his loss.

Jim Elmer
Ops Chief (ret.)
Sedona (Texas) Fire District

Brunacini family: I grew up in Phoenix hearing the Brunacini name time and again. I'd like to thank Chief Brunacini for his dedication and service to our community. We are all better off for him having served



* A friend of mine hand drew this card with a golf pencil and A regular old Bic-pen. *

The card shown here and on the opposite page is from Jeff Griffin, a retired Phoenix Fire Department captain who is currently incarcerated. Alan kept in touch with Jeff by mail frequently (see letter on pg. 19), and he would often make a 5-hour round-trip drive to visit Jeff in person.

so faithfully. I'm very sorry about his passing. Please accept my deepest condolences for your loss.

*Penny Keaton
Phoenix, Ariz.*

I met Bruno in a little hot dog joint in DePere, Wisc. Chief Dennis Rubin arranged for me to meet Bruno and listen to him speak, as I had been trying to get to one of his classes for a long time. A special spot was saved for me next to Bruno, and we ended up talking for at least an hour. He then said to me, "You get it." We became friends that night, and every time I saw him, I always got a big hug. So glad I made it to one of his Hazard-Zone Conferences. Miss you forever, my friend.

*Carrie Rydzik
Mukwonago, Wisc.*

My deepest sympathies to the Brunacini family and the Phoenix Fire Department. One of the first books I bought when I entered into this fire career was "Fire Command," and I would read it and laugh at the drawings over and over. He was an amazing author and fire chief. I

am currently completing Blue Card Command online and enjoy listening to Chief Alan's experiences and stories! He will be truly missed!

*Janis Kimata
Asst. Fire Chief
Barking Sands Fire Department
Kauai, Hawaii*

I met Chief Bruno in 1990 at his Fire Command Symposium. I was a newly appointed fire captain with the San Jose Fire Department, trying to learn the business. His presentation was impactful. Throughout my 34-year career, I would attend as many of his symposiums as I could. I tried to model his dedication to Mrs. Smith. What was most amazing is he would greet me by name when he saw me. The Chief met thousands of people, and he remembered my name. That was flattering. There will never be another Chief Bruno. A true genius.

*Nicolas Thomas
Benicia, Calif.*

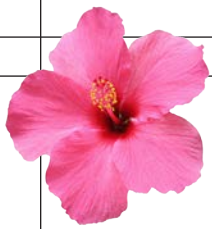
Chief Brunacini set the standard for decency and kindness for the fire service. All the while, he made it fun and exciting to be a part of

it. You never knew what Big Red was going to come up with next, but you knew it would be good! He also knew how to make complex subjects simple—the mark of a genius. Thank you, Bruno, for leading the golden era of the fire service! Rest in peace.

*David Strayer
Florence (Ariz.) Fire Department*

Few men can truly be called giants in their profession. Bruno was one of those men, although he would downplay it in a minute! His love for the profession seeped into many areas of fire protection, both public and private. My first training session with him in 1977 at the Tulsa Fire Academy was amazing. His commitment to firefighter safety through his leadership at NFPA was second to none. His restoration of that Phoenix fire engine speaks to his love of the fire service. I am only scratching the surface. This world is a much better place because of Alan Brunacini, and God alone knows how many lives he saved and how much suffering he prevented. RIP, Chief.

*Lowell Black
Chesterton, Ind.*



Hero with a Half Grin

He was a giant, a genius & a legend, but he's also remembered for a mischievous smile.

BY SCOTT PELTIN, BATTALION CHIEF (RET.)

I first met Chief Brunacini in the summer of 1984 at Firehouse Expo in Baltimore. I was a volunteer sergeant at Station 14 (Berwyn Heights) in Prince George's County, Md., and a career firefighter on Engine 55 with the Alexandria (Virg.) Fire Department. At the time, I thought I was a pretty good firefighter (mostly fueled by a lot of testosterone and a naive sense of confidence), but my deputy chief, Jimmy Yvorra, convinced me to go listen to a man he described as the best fire-service thinker he had ever met.

That advice and my decision to attend Bruno's session changed my life. During his talk, Bruno spoke about the Phoenix Fire Department (PFD) and how its rules and regulations fit on one page. He referenced the 10 commandments, saying, "If you can get into heaven with 10 rules, you sure as heck should be able to run a fire department with 20." I laughed and thought, *I love this simplicity and practicality.* He ended his presentation, which had covered "Fire Command" and firefighter safety, with 10 slides that showed engines and ladders driving through half-open apparatus bay doors. He paused, and I remember thinking, *Oh man, here comes the hammer.* Instead, he got a half grin under his thick mustache—a grin I have now seen thousands of times since—and he said, "What a great job I have. My guys want to get to work so bad, they can't even wait for the door to open." I looked over at my firefighter buddy and said, "I am



Scott and Chief Brunacini on Scott's promotion day, early 2000s.

going to work for that guy one day."

I soon flew out to Phoenix to take the written exam. Shortly after, I returned to take the physical-agility exam. Just 15 months after hearing Bruno speak for the first time, I gave my two-week notice to the Alexandria Fire Department, packed up my little blue Nissan pickup, and moved to Phoenix with the hope of working for one of the smartest, most authentic, most caring and most innovative leaders I had ever met. I made that assessment (and a life-changing decision) based on hearing Bruno give one presentation and from what I had learned during my trips to the PFD. That is impact, and that is what Alan Brunacini had on me, on every Phoenix firefighter and on every person who ever met him.

Chief Brunacini never wore an SCBA, yet he knew that no firefighter should ever breathe smoke. He never went on an EMS call, yet he knew firefighters should be cross-trained to deliver EMS. He rode on the back step of a pumper, yet he knew that firefighters should be protected by fully enclosed apparatus (equipped with air conditioning and a stereo system). Bruno saw things others didn't, and he never let his own experiences limit his thinking. He asked great questions, he listened intently, and he constantly challenged the status quo.

I worked for the Phoenix Fire Department for 20 years. I retired as a battalion chief six weeks before Bruno retired because I couldn't imagine working for a Phoenix Fire Department without Chief Brunacini.

I consider those 20 years the most incredible, the most impactful, and the most meaningful of my life. My father passed away just 18 months after I became a Phoenix firefighter. Bruno was my father figure, my mentor and my friend. I am sure that he was these things for thousands of others across the nation.

Through the years, I had the privilege to go to many breakfasts, lunches and dinners with Bruno. I also got to share some time with him on the road as we worked on the IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Program and the CPAT (candidate physical abilities test). During those times, we talked about life, family, politics, leadership and, occasionally, work. Of all of these, he loved talking about his family and his firefighters the most. Bruno had the angelic ability to see the good in people, to focus on their potential and to find the humor in almost any situation. His ability to cut through the obvious crap that most people worried about and to focus on the stuff that was truly important was inspirational.

I remember one lunch at the Matador, Bruno's favorite Mexican restaurant in Phoenix. We were talking about the PFD allowing shorts as part of the duty uniform. I asked him if he felt this would make our firefighters look unprofessional. He gave me that half grin and proceeded to take me on a trip down Bruno's Logic Lane. "Scott, do you have a favorite restaurant?" he asked. I replied, "Yes I do." He followed with, "Do you have a favorite waitress?" I got that usual blank look that I often got when I was around him, and I realized my intelligence was grossly outmatched. "What does your favorite waitress wear, Captain Peltin?" he asked. I couldn't remember. He continued, "What you recognize when she serves you is the smile on her face, the service that she delivers, and the way she

makes you feel. I'm not saying she should dress like a mechanic, but as long as she looks presentable and clean, you probably don't care what she wears." His point was well taken. It didn't mean firefighters should not look clean, well groomed, and professional, but it did mean we should be able to dress appropriately for our job and deliver absolutely fantastic customer service. Two things for Chief Brunacini were non-negotiable: customer service and firefighter safety.

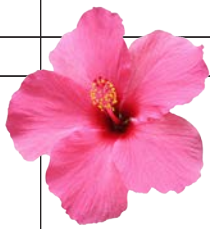
The road to becoming fire chief was not easy for Bruno, and neither was the road to developing RBO (our labor-management process), chairing his NFPA committees, being the leadership frontman for many IAFF/IAFC initiatives, or leading the recovery process after the PFD's Brett Tarver tragedy. During these times, people didn't always treat Bruno well. I remember discussing my frustration and pain over some changes we were trying to implement at the training academy, which often serves as a monument for the status quo. Once again, Bruno got that half grin. "Captain Peltin, do you think it is hard today to be a young guy with new ideas? You should have seen what it was like in my day." He pulled up his Hawaiian shirt, and then turned to show me his back. "Want to see my scars?" If you met Bruno, you would never have known he had any scars at all. He had a superhuman ability to forgive those who wronged him. He chose to see the good in everyone and to forgive the human weakness of those who hurt him.

PERSONNEL AND PAYROLL RULES OF CONDUCT	PHOENIX FIRE DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES M.P. 106.01 New 2/26/80 PAGE 1 OF 1
The following list of directives represents the personal conduct standards for members of the Phoenix Fire Department. The basis for these regulations is the following policy:	
Every member of the Phoenix Fire Department is expected to operate in a highly self-disciplined manner and is responsible to regulate his own conduct in a positive, productive, and mature way.	
ALL MEMBERS SHALL:	
1. Follow Operations Manuals and written directives of both the Phoenix Fire Department and the City of Phoenix. 2. Use their training and capabilities to protect the public at all times, both on and off duty. 3. Work competently in their positions to cause all department programs to operate effectively. 4. Always conduct themselves to reflect credit on the department. 5. Supervisors will manage in an effective, considerate manner/ subordinates will follow instructions in a positive, cooperative manner. 6. Always conduct themselves in a manner that creates good order inside the department. 7. Keep themselves informed to do their jobs effectively. 8. Be concerned and protective of each member's welfare. 9. Operate safely and use good judgement. 10. Keep themselves physically fit. 11. Observe the work hours of their position. 12. Obey the law. 13. Be careful of department equipment and property.	
MEMBERS SHALL NOT:	
14. Engage in any activity that is detrimental to the department. 15. Engage in a conflict of interest to the department or use their position with the department for personal gain or influence. 16. Use alcoholic beverages, debilitating drugs, or any substance which could impair their physical or mental capacities while on duty. 17. Fight. 18. Engage in any sexual activity while on duty. 19. Abuse their sick leave. 20. Steal.	

Bruno believed if you could get into heaven with 10 rules, you should be able to run a fire department with 20.

I can picture Bruno going to heaven and being greeted at the pearly gates by Jesus, Yahweh, Buddha, Jehovah, Krishna, Allah and Hephaestus (the Greek god for fire). As he walks up, they say, "Bruno, we have been waiting for you. Whaddya know?" He gets that famous half grin and says something clever and witty like, "I don't know; Be Nice?"

Alan Brunacini was a man among boys; he was a giant to me and to the entire fire service. His selflessness, curiosity, compassion and unconditional love for everyone he met combined with his perseverance, leadership and inability to settle for the status quo made him one-of-a-kind. I feel so grateful to have known him, worked for him, and to have shared our friendship. Bruno, I will live my life trying to share what you have taught me and to make you proud. Thank you for everything. I love you! 



Phoenix, Rising.

A front-row account of how Alan Brunacini made the Phoenix Fire Department great.

BY J. GORDON ROUTLEY, DIVISION CHIEF, MONTREAL (CANADA) FIRE DEPARTMENT

It is widely recognized that Alan V. Brunacini (AVB) was the visionary architect, advocate, leader, mentor and change-agent who had the greatest influence on the North American fire service, and beyond, at least for the past half century. He was loved, respected and admired by many, as we can clearly see by the reaction to his sudden and unanticipated departure. There are so many stories that can be told about his influence on various individuals and organizations, but I feel privileged to have known him for longer than most and to have worked closely with him for several years. I would like to share some of those memories.

Early Encounters

I landed in Phoenix in 1974 through an unpredictable set of circumstances and encountered an environment that was very different from everything I was used to, beginning with a climate and urban landscape that caused me to wonder why the area was inhabited by humans. I was going to work for the Phoenix Fire Department (PFD), an organization about which I knew next to nothing, but they had offered me a position and I was ready to explore the unknown.

Alan Brunacini had been on the board that interviewed me, and he struck me as friendly and intelligent in that brief encounter, but I didn't really get to connect with him until about the third hour of my first day on the job at PFD headquarters. From that point, we began a relationship that would take me to a lot of interesting places over the next 43 years.



The author as a young "Brunoite."

Traditionalists vs. Revolutionaries

It didn't take long to figure out that there were two different organizations coexisting within the department at that time. There was the traditional "old school," inflexible, authoritarian component that was supposedly in charge, and there was a subculture flowing in the opposite direction, shepherded by the young buck Brunacini, who was the second in command.

My position reported directly to the fire chief, who believed in maintaining tight control to ensure that nothing happens, while the revolutionaries were working furiously to cause all kinds of radically progressive things to happen. I was quickly seduced by the Brunoites, but I had to maintain an extremely low profile in my subterfuge due to my placement within the organizational structure. I had been hired as the department's first fire protection

engineer. The expectation was that they would be hiring an engineer who knew about fire protection, but they accidentally hired a firefighter who happened to have an engineering degree and was really preoccupied with fire-department operations. That fit well with Brunacini's vision of a radically different and progressive fire department that would be built on a foundation of operational excellence. We were tuned to the same channel, but he was operating in high definition while I was still analog.

Homestead & the Matador

Very soon I learned that the focal point for all of this incendiary progressive thinking was the Brunacini homestead, an impressive Western-style residence that seemed to be open at all hours for the Bruno disciples to come and go and to engage in passionate discussion of any topic related to the fire service. The

Arriving at the Matador with AVB was similar to landing on the lawn of the White House in Marine One.

disciples included several members of the PFD as well as countless others from near and distant places who were all connected to the fire service in one way or another. The list of occasional guests could be published as a "who's who" of the fire service.

Every few hours, a delicious meal would be served to whoever was present by Rita, the lady who ran the establishment. Between meals she would offer palm readings and crystal-ball predictions of subjects that had absolutely no connection to the primary subject matter of the household, which included all aspects of the fire world. There were occasional diversions related to the current building project or the next planned improvement on the estate property, as many of the faithful were also highly skilled in various building trades.

In addition to the steady stream of visitors coming and going, there was a continuing sideshow provided by the second-generation members of the Brunacini family. Nick and John were never restrained in offering their observations on almost any subject and engaged in an endless series of quasi-bizarre antics. Candi appeared to be a genuine sweetheart who had inherited her mother's ability to ask penetrating questions.

In addition, there was the

continually evolving menagerie of felines and good-natured monster dogs who slept most of the time and slobbered by the gallon. I still have an image in my head of a tiny kitten perched on the huge forehead of a drowsy mastiff who didn't seem to be even slightly bothered. If the dog had yawned, the kitten would have been swallowed in an instant.

All of this activity created a highly synergistic environment, although it was often hard to keep track of everything that was going on!

The other significant focal point was the Matador Restaurant, where over many years the conceptual plans for most of the important advances in the American Fire Service were developed in green ink (mixed with red salsa) on paper napkins and 3 x 5 cards. If there was anything highly significant to discuss, the discussion occurred at the Matador and involved the consumption of copious quantities of iced tea. Lunch discussions often continued through mid-afternoon. Arriving at the Matador with AVB was similar to landing on the lawn of the White House in Marine One.

ALS Service Arrives

There was a lot going on within the PFD those first few years, in spite of determined efforts by the establishment to suppress the

revolutionaries. One of the many notable accomplishments was the initiation of advanced life support service. Those were the days when we all tuned in on Saturday evening to see what Johnny and Roy were up to and discuss which one was supposed to represent Jim Page. Paramedics were still a Southern California phenomenon that had not reached the Colorado River.



Bruno pushed the fire department to deliver ALS services, a move the mayor called the best advancement in public service he had ever seen.

Below the official radar screen, a group of Phoenix firefighters had been covertly assigned for six months to Arizona's first (unadvertised) paramedic training program. Right about the time their training was completed, the State Legislature adopted a bill that would allow paramedics to be certified and to practice in Arizona, and approximately 24 hours later, Rescue 1 went into service in downtown Phoenix.

Rescue 1 had been running calls for two or three days when the fire chief began to ask questions about things he was hearing on the radio. From the point of learning of the existence of Rescue 1, it took less than 60 seconds for his blood pressure to reach the level where it might have been appropriate to call for them to respond. Magically, just a few minutes later, Mayor Tim Barrow was on the phone congratulating the fire chief on the best advancement in public service that he had ever seen. It's funny how it all worked out.



The homestead paw patrol: Bruno's "monster dogs" slept all day and "slobbered by the gallon."

City's nationwide search finds best fire chief on own doorstep

Alan V. Brunacini was appointed Phoenix fire chief Monday by City Manager Marvin Andrews after a nationwide search to fill the position.

Brunacini, has been with the fire department for 20 years, most recently was acting chief.

Brunacini succeeds G. G. "Jack" Holzer, who recently retired. He will earn \$2,766 monthly.

Andrews said that in interviewing applicants "it was very evident that our fire department is one of the most progressive in the country."

Andrews said that Brunacini, who is one of the youngest big-city fire chiefs

in the nation, will continue and expand programs that have given Phoenix a progressive reputation. He said these programs include the paramedics and stress on fire prevention rather than just dousing flames.

Brunacini, 40, will direct 795 employees in 43 fire companies.

Brunacini received a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in political science from Arizona State University.

For 17 years he was coordinator and instructor of the fire science program at Phoenix College. He is writing a textbook for the National Fire Protection Association and is writing for the International City Management Association.

He is serving a second term as chairman of the fire service section of the National Fire Protection Association.



Brunacini

© The Arizona Republic Tues., Jan. 10, 1978 A-9

Four years after the author's arrival at the PFD, Asst. Fire Chief Alan Brunacini became Fire Chief Alan Brunacini. "The inmates gained control of the asylum," Bruno would say.

Spreading the Progressive Evolution

The covert progressive evolution that was occurring within the Phoenix Fire Department continued for about four years after my arrival until there was a changing of the guard and "Car 2" moved up to "Car 1" or, as he described it, the inmates gained control of the asylum. By that time, the Phoenix Fire Department was already developing a reputation as leader in innovation and progressive thinking, based primarily on the fireground commander program and the growing volumes of standard operating procedures that were being developed, printed, copied and widely distributed.

Bruno and his two straight men, Bruce Varner and Chuck Kime, were off on American Airlines almost every weekend to present the roadshow version of modern incident management to an enthusiastic audience somewhere or other. The influence and reputation of the PFD were spreading faster than a wildland fire on a windy day. From Monday to Friday, the mission was to develop the

Phoenix Fire Department into the best that it could possibly be, and on weekends, it was to spread the vision to anyone who would listen.

It is almost impossible to count all of the positive changes and innovations that sprouted over the following years, but they all radiated from one person who had the vision, the skills and the perseverance to make it all happen. He was a visionary master of leadership, change-agent and enabler, and he seemed to absolutely enjoy what he was doing right up to his last day with us.

Success & Respect

The Phoenix Fire Department was his pride and joy, or at least one of them, and every dimension of that organization today is a reflection of his talents. He had a team of very competent supporting actors whom he counted upon and trusted to work out a lot of the details, but he set the direction and provided the inspiration. Many of his management methods were unorthodox, but they were effective as a result of his unique combination of intuition and innovation and his ability to be serious momentarily, but only when it was absolutely necessary, and disarmingly low key and humorous the rest of the time.

We often had visiting fire chiefs, management professors and other interesting folks sitting in on senior staff meetings to try to figure out how the PFD managed to be so avant garde and successful. One of them described the experience as a board meeting at Animal House with John Belushi presiding. It was unstructured, unconventional and sometimes unbelievable, but a lot of things got done.

The most important factor that made Bruno successful, aside from being highly intelligent and

naturally talented, was that he truly loved the fire service and firefighters. He wanted to make the fire service as good as it could possibly be, and he wanted every firefighter to be safe, healthy, happy and satisfied. As he loved to say when he made a point, "It's just that simple!"

He had a few favorite phrases, but that one was particularly appropriate. He had a knack for distilling complicated discussions down to the key points and presenting them in a manner that would make the conclusion self-evident, then wrap it up with, "It's just that simple!" and by that time, it was. How many times did I hear him say that?

He also had the ability to wait for the right time to make a move to accomplish something significant. He would have something all figured out, waiting for the circumstances to fall into the proper alignment, then he could pull a new program out of his sleeve at just the right moment like a gambler playing his hidden ace. He not only knew when to play it, but he knew how to play it to get what he had been planning for months or years, and that is the simple explanation why PFD had the equipment, facilities and programs that were envied by every other fire department.

His self-effacing nature is legendary. As much as he was admired and respected, he never ceased to refer to himself as "the dwarf" or by some equivalent description. One afternoon he arrived at the training academy accompanied by an FDNY deputy chief who was visiting Phoenix and had just experienced the Matador. As they entered, a firefighter was exiting and said, "Hi Bruno" as they crossed paths.

The visitor was aghast. "Did you hear what he called you?" he asked. "Do you let your men call you Bruno?"

"That's better than last time," came the reply. "The last time he saw me, he called me Fatboy."

Controversy & Unions

Of course all of this radical progressive stuff did not meet universal acceptance throughout the fire service. On a significant number of occasions, the Brunacini movement precipitated negative reactions from more traditional elements of the fire service that did not share the same vision. Sometimes those reactions were openly hostile. On more than one occasion when he was informed that a particular individual was unhappy over something, Bruno replied simply, "If he doesn't get over it soon, he will be unhappy for a long time."

To be more precise, he would bargain and negotiate for as long as it took to make things happen for the right reasons, but he would not compromise one inch for the wrong reasons. Anything that was contrary to his core values of promoting a better fire service and taking care of firefighters was non-negotiable.

The relationship between Local 493 and the Phoenix Fire Department became legendary during the Brunacini era. Labor relations experts came to Phoenix to study what was going on that allowed such a positive relationship to exist. The secret, of course, was Alan Brunacini and a leadership team within the local that shared his vision and appreciated his management style.

It was no secret that if he hadn't been the fire chief, Bruno would have been the union president and that his core values included every positive thing that a union should be striving to provide for its members. This was sometimes described as Brunacini's three-step process for successful labor relations:

Step 1: Call Pat Cantalme and ask him what he wants.

Step 2: Give it to him.

Step 3: Call him back and ask him what else he wants.

Common Positive Vision

The truth is there was a common positive vision of what could be achieved



Bruno's restored L-Model Mack pumper.

by working together to build a great fire department and to take care of the members who make it great. That also explains why Brunacini was the primary initiator of the movement to make occupational health and safety an important component of the fire service locally, nationally and internationally. He truly cared about all firefighters, and he did everything within his power to promote their health and safety as a personal crusade. No one even comes close to his level of accomplishment.

Bruno was a lifelong student of management and leadership, but he was really in a league of his own, whether it was building the Phoenix Fire Department into the model of his vision or spending hours engaging in casual unstructured educational conversation with ordinary firefighters on an endless variety of topics.

One day he told us that Rita had become understandably agitated over something and told him, "Honestly Alan, sometimes I think that you love Ladder 1 more than you love me." He told us that he reassured her by responding, "Rita, nothing could be further from the truth. It's Engine 1 that I really love." And if you have ever seen Engine 1, you will understand. Next door to the Brunacini home is the custom-built single-bay firehouse that is occupied by the most perfectly restored and polished L-Model Mack pumper that exists anywhere; the very same Engine 1 that Alan Brunacini rode as firefighter, engi-

neer and captain. That says a lot about how much he loved the fire service, but his family really did come first, always!

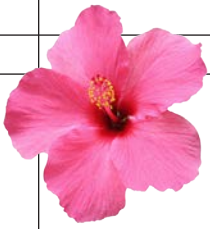
Thankful for Bruno

To say that he was well known and respected is an understatement. One day, a few years ago, I was crossing the border from Quebec into New York State. The U.S. border agent was understandably curious about a guy with a U.S. passport driving a Montreal Fire Department SUV. When the conversation revealed my past connection to the Phoenix Fire Department, his eyes lit up and he quickly asked, "Do you know Brunacini?" He was very impressed when I replied that I knew him quite well.

There is so much more that could be said, but these are just a few of my personal reminiscences of the person we will all miss for a very long time. We are thankful for everything that he did for the fire service, for all of us collectively and for so many of us individually.

To Rita, Nick, John, Candi and all of the spouses and grandchildren, thank you so much for sharing him with us. We all share your loss. We find it hard to believe that he has left the building, but his accomplishments and his memory will linger for a long time. 🌸

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Thanks, Boss

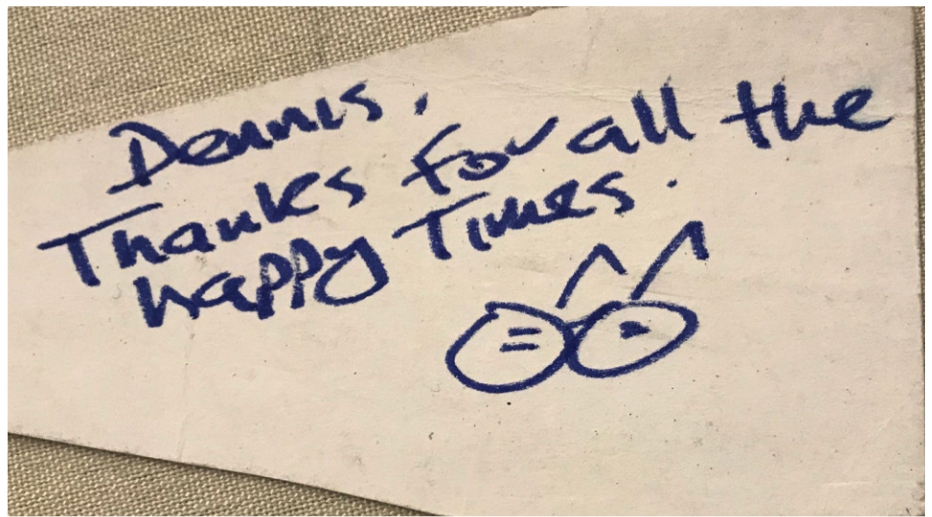
An expression of gratitude for friendship, humility, wisdom & countless opportunities.

BY DENNIS RUBIN, FIRE CHIEF, PETERSBURG (VIRG.) FIRE, RESCUE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Chief Bruce Varner called to deliver the unfathomable news that Chief Alan Brunacini had passed away at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. I went silent, overcome with disbelief and denial. Chief Brunacini had been like a father and an older brother to me; I simply adored him. Saying I will miss him is too hollow a statement when compared to the hole his passing leaves in my heart.

After getting that surreal phone call, I thought back to the previous week. Chief Brunacini had just spent five days with my fire department in Petersburg, Virg. He was amazing, as I'd come to expect from witnessing hundreds of his presentations: clear mind, quick wit, full of energy, and in good health. The Chief was always talking about how to improve command and control for emergencies, and our final time together had been no different. As we drove to the hotel, Chief looked over and said this visit had helped him finish the Cool Command program he had been "fussing with" for a while. He also asked me to bring in the A team to produce a day-long discussion on unified command. The Chief was on top of his game, which made his death seem even more sudden and inexplicable.

In the months since his passing, I have vacillated between shock, grief, pain and guilt. Like so many reading this, his death left me devastated. I take some comfort in remembering



A treasured note from Bruno.

my personal history with the chief.

I first met Alan Brunacini about four decades ago, during one of his many visits to Maryland, the Free State. He was the keynote presenter for the University of Maryland's Fire Service Extension (FSE) weekend training program. I was a part-time fire instructor with FSE. Having some seniority, I was offered the opportunity to pick up Chief Brunacini at Baltimore Washington International Airport—then called Friendship airport. It was easy work and great money. Without hesitation, I agreed to be the chauffeur for America's Fire Chief and his teaching entourage.

When we first met at Friendship's baggage claim, Chief Brunacini struck me as quite the enigma. He was engaging, funny and easy to be around. He made eye contact and

seemed genuinely interested in a nobody from nowhere: me. That was confusing to a guy who worked for a great yet pretty old-fashioned fire department. One of the first things we had learned in rookie school was to salute all officers. I can still recite the Order Book passages: "Members shall, when in uniform and on-duty, salute when meeting a member of higher rank." The standing joke on my job was that a member with less than 10 years of seniority was to be seen and not heard. Yet here was the most impressive and important fire chief of our generation taking a sincere interest in a kid. Wow!

Something else I remember from that day is the number and size of the Chief's gray slide-tray travel containers. It seemed as if we had to carry at least a half dozen

of those jumbo reinforced plastic cases, and I wondered what in the world this man could have in all of those boxes. The Chief traveled with Phoenix Fire Department Assistant Chief Chuck Kime and Captain Bruce Varner. All three of them treated me, a lowly fire-service private, exceptionally well.

I had no idea that day that this was the beginning of lifelong and life-changing friendships. Through the years, Chief Bruno gave me dozens of opportunities I know I did not deserve. Bruce Varner has become one of my best friends, and just like the Chief, has always been there for me.

I ended up traveling and teaching with the Chief on many occasions. One time, I met up with him at the Green Bay, Wisc., Airport. He was in town to present his customer-service program. I waited for the Chief at the top of the stairs, near the security checkpoint. It was late August, but there was a cold front (45 degrees) with steady rain. Anyone who knows the Chief understands he doesn't much like the cold. Still, I hadn't seen the Boss for a month or so, and I was looking forward to a warm greeting from my dear friend. Instead, the first thing out of his mouth was, "Get me a coat." I didn't want to disappoint him, so I took off the blue windbreaker I was wearing and insisted he put it on. The jacket happened to have the Brunacini Education Service logo on its front. Chief B had given it to me as a Christmas gift the previous year. (He always sent something amazing; I could never top his cool gifts.)

When Chief Bruno was leaving the cold, wet northland, he handed me the windbreaker with his sincere thanks. Knowing he was headed to the FDSOA program in Detroit, I insisted that he continue to wear the jacket. After a short-lived revolt, he realized that it was likely colder in the Motor City than in the Bay of

Green. As we parted, we agreed that he would return the windbreaker at our next stop together. But after teaching with the Chief a half dozen times or so, the windbreaker never showed up. Had he forgotten to return one of my treasures?

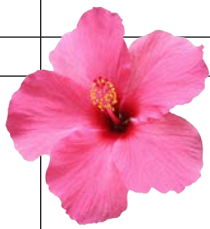
Three months later, a few days before Christmas 2015, a large parcel arrived at my house. The label indicated it was from Chief B. The little boy inside me emerged, and I ripped that package open like there were gold bars inside. Low and

behold, inside the box was a full-size The North Face coat with a hood. The logo that I loved was embroidered on my newest treasure. A nice windbreaker had morphed into a great winter coat.

At times like this, we learn just how much we value family, friends and life. Cliché maybe, but it is true. The Chief has taught us to take the time to value what is important to us. AVB, I will miss you and think of you often. I can only hope to see you again. I love you, Boss! 🌸



Clockwise from top left: Selfie with the Chief; Classic Bruno—iced tea and a brilliant napkin doodle; Big Al enjoying Mexican refreshments with the author at the last IAFC conference held in Atlanta.



5 Bugles, No Belt

My fire-chief father ditched the one piece of safety equipment that could prevent unique types of trauma.

BY NICK BRUNACINI, SHIFT COMMANDER (RET.), BRUNO'S SON

Following in my father's footsteps has not mellowed the taste of grief, but it did prepare me for the finality of life. I have known for a long time that I would one day bury my dad. He wasn't as certain. During our younger years, my father would say, "When my sons were young, I envisioned them going to a university and becoming pillars of society. Before they graduated from high school, I hoped they wouldn't end up in jail. Soon after they got hired on the fire department, I prayed they wouldn't kill themselves." We both survived our recreational years to outlive our father.

Being a firefighter provides a full-spectrum view of the injustices that cause our human bodies to stop functioning. In my father's case, he had just deplaned an American Airlines flight from somewhere in Indiana. It was Sunday, Oct. 15, at around 12:30 in the afternoon. As was his ritual, he texted my mother, who was staged in the cell-phone lot, to tell her he had landed and that he would notify her when he was ready to be picked up at the North Curb. They planned on grabbing a quick lunch, then going to the nursery to get some veggies to plant in their backyard garden. Next up in his little 3" x 5" weekly planner was dinner with Hoot and Bev Gibson. The next day, Big Al had planned on flying off to speak at a conference in Nashville.

For 15 years, I lived next door to a full-time flight attendant who did not fly as much as my dad. Despite my sadness about his death, I am so



Nick, Bruno and John. The younger Brunos kept their dad's life colorful. The Old Man, as his sons affectionately called him, kept the kids on their toes.

happy he was in his hometown when it happened. It strikes me as tragic to die in a hotel room (with or without a hooker). Big Al was getting ready to pass TSA on his way to the escalators that would deliver him to the North Curb. He was home and was going to spend the night in his own bed. I have made these trips with him many times—hundreds of times. You don't know what you've got till it's gone.

My most vivid AVB travel moment took place at Reagan Washington National Airport in D.C. My brother, father and I helped the D.C. Fire and EMS Department customize its Blue Card program. We flew in once a month and spent two

days with DC's ops staff. We did this every month for about a year and a half. It was epic. We got to hang out with the DC Fire Department—responding to fires and mixing with firefighters. I was amazed to watch my universally lovable old man, with his droopy britches, interact with turnout-wearing firefighters like they had known one another their whole lives. It was love.

We stayed at the Liaison, an old Holiday Inn that got turned into a boutique hotel. When you stood in the middle of the street in front of the hotel, the U.S. Capitol filled your line of vision. The Liaison had a very nice restaurant and bar. On Sundays, the natives would line up for bags

I was amazed to watch my old man, with his droopy britches, interact with turnout-wearing firefighters like they had known one another their whole lives. It was love.

of homemade potato chips. I had been retired for a year or so when we landed this gig, and I looked forward to spending time in the city. I always traveled light for these trips. It was a direct flight from Phoenix. My brother and I flew with carryons and a computer bag. My dad, on the other hand, traveled with his rolling filing cabinet/briefcase and the largest rolling duffel one could legally bring on a flight. This thing could hold a week's worth of clothes, a mini fridge and enough vitamins to constipate an airplane full of people.

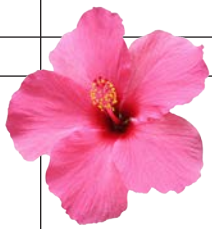
My dad always had to check a bag, which meant my brother and I had to follow him to baggage claim to collect his portable storage unit, then trudge back the way we just came to catch a cab to the Liaison, where draft beers and salty potato chips awaited us. On one particular trip, we had collected dad's bag, and my brother led the way for us to catch a ride. My dad was doing his little baby gorilla shuffle with his leather filing cabinet in one hand while the sausage fingers of his other hand pulled his enormous wheeled coffin bag. I walked really slowly behind him. I made myself be patient and happy while my dad moved his feet without picking them up. Then his pants began to fade. Very slowly at first. We walked about half the required distance to our exit door and had another 300 feet to go. He obviously was not going to make it. I have no idea why he didn't stop and pull up his pants. They fell down far enough that I could tell he wasn't wearing any underwear. About 50 feet before freedom, his pants hit the floor. Determined as ever, Big Al pressed onward. I caught up with him and momentarily made an effort to help him from behind, but there was way



On the road with Big Al: Nick, Blue Card Instructor Greg Timinsky and B Shifter Editor Michelle Garrido Sutton. Everyone pictured was wearing pants.

too much going on down there, and I backed off. He shuffled his way to the curb before pulling up his drawers while verbalizing his disdain for belts and suspenders. He seemed unfazed by all of it. Following in my father's footsteps—in work and while traveling—has taught me there is a big difference between spilled milk and spilled guts.

One of life's major lessons is to squeeze as much joy as you can from each moment. This is particularly true when dealing with life's shittier moments. It is a gift when we can refocus the world through this lens. I am not a big fan of the crush of airports, rental cars and hotels that come with travel, so it is odd that the memories spent traveling with Big Al flood my mind today. In many regards, this makes me one of the most fortunate people currently drawing breath. As I said, you don't know what you've got until it's gone. 🌸



Decades of Friendship

Honoring the man who gave me support, kindness & a lifetime of opportunity.

BY BRUCE H. VARNER, FIRE CHIEF (RET.)

Iknew Alan Brunacini for 51 years. He was a combination of big brother, mentor and dad to me. (Rita, this is one of the reasons I call you mom.) More than anything, he was my closest friend, and no one's death has impacted me more. Even though we all knew better, I think many of us thought Alan was invincible, that he would live forever. Alan was one of the kindest and most intelligent individuals I've ever known, and when I look back at my life and career, I see he is the person most responsible for my fire-service successes.

I first met Alan when I was preparing to test for the Phoenix Fire Department (PFD) in 1966. Bruno was a captain on Engine 1 at the time, and he mentored me on taking the oral board portion of the exam. With his support and encouragement from the crew at Station 3, A shift, I was ready.

When I wasn't working my swing-shift job at Luke Air Force Base or attending classes at Phoenix College, I was taking fire pictures. Alan was teaching in the community-college system at the time, and he liked to use my photographs in his tactics classes; I was happy to provide the pictures. I was hired by the PFD in September 1967, my friendship with Alan continued to grow over time.

My relationship with Alan, Rita and the kids evolved when Alan hired me and Chuck Kime, a firefighter and former brick mason, to



Bruce and Alan at FDNY 10 across from the World Trade Center memorial.

work on the house he was building. Rita was frequently on hand with iced tea, all kinds of food, praise, critiques and questions. Watching Alan and Rita interact was a lesson in love, patience and humor. In fact, if you paid attention, and I wish I had paid a lot more attention, any time spent with Alan was full of lessons. (Chuck eventually promoted through the ranks to become the Operations assistant chief, and he played a major role in developing the PFD's Volume II Operations Manual.)

I remember Alan during that time as someone who was tough yet fair. He challenged the status quo if he knew there were better ways to do business. He used his platforms

as a college teacher and a captain on Engine 1 to work toward his goals. When he became a battalion chief in the third battalion, he made any changes he could there. He continued making changes as the training chief. Through a series of interesting events, Alan became the assistant chief of Operations, which gave him even greater opportunities to improve the PFD.

In the early 1970s, Alan was invited to speak on the main program at FDIC in Memphis. He would have 30 minutes to present the principles of Fire Command. Alan, Chuck Kime and I spent hours discussing the best way to present the material. It would be the first time the FDIC audience

Alan was one of the kindest & most intelligent individuals I've ever known & when I look back at my career, I see he is the person most responsible for my fire-service successes.

saw a dual-screen program, based on a case study, with one text slide and an accompanying fireground example of the issue at hand. This presentation led to the fireground commander road show and the "Fire Command" textbook. For the next 15 years, Alan, Chuck and I spent most weekends at fire departments all across the United States presenting this new way of managing hazard zones. This innovative approach eventually became known as local incident management, NIMS Type 4 and 5 incident management, and the Blue Card Incident Command Certification Program.

Through the years, Alan would sometimes ask me to pick up people at the airport and bring them to meetings or to his house for dinner. (Rita frequently fed me, yet another reason to call her mom.) My relationship with Alan gave me the opportunity to hang out with folks who were way above my pay grade—some very notable fire-service leaders who thought the world of Alan or simply wanted to see if everything he said about the PFD was true. Thanks to Chief Brunacini and his peers, I learned a lot about the American Fire Service and differences between departments across the United States.

My development as a fire officer in Phoenix took me on an interesting path with some twisting turns, but Bruno continued to mentor me, and I tried my best not to disappoint him. My assignment as the fire department safety officer precipitated additional opportunities and interactions with the Boss. The PFD was becoming recognized as a leader in firefighter safety. We were involved in projects with the IAFF,

the NFPA and the USFA. Chief Brunacini was instrumental in developing NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program. To say that this was without controversy would be a gross understatement, but Bruno never wavered from doing the right thing, and today NFPA 1500 is an accepted way of managing fire department safety.

In what seemed like a flash of time, I had spent 25 years with the PFD, and I got the idea that I wanted to be a fire chief. Again, Bruno was my mentor and offered advice (meaning he would ask me questions until I figured out the answer). I became the fire chief in Carrollton, Texas, and stayed for 12 years before becoming the fire chief in Santa Rosa, Calif., for the next seven years. During those 19 years away from Phoenix, I remained in frequent contact with Bruno, and we still had opportunities to attend events and deliver programs together. But it was not the same as being there, as being part of his team.

When I retired and returned to the Valley in 2010, my greatest pleasure was getting to hang out with Bruno. We were part of a group that met monthly for breakfast, but I most enjoyed our frequent Mexican lunches ("BHV are you in town? Lunch/taco AVB.") He did use his phone to text and after retirement wrote most of his stuff on an iPad. I was fortunate to be able to travel with him to conferences and



Bruce and Rita, the early years.

participated in a number of programs with him. He asked me to take responsibility for the Baggers list and meeting logistics, which is an honor and pleasure.

Oct. 15, 2017, is a day that I will never forget, but so much more important than that are all the days that preceded it. From the Fall of 1966 until the afternoon he passed away, I was privileged to have Alan V. Brunacini as my friend, as someone who accepted and encouraged me, as someone who helped me to be a better person. I will continue to do my best to make him proud and to carry on his messages: be safe, be nice and always take care of Mrs. Smith. I love you boss, and I miss you every day. 🌸



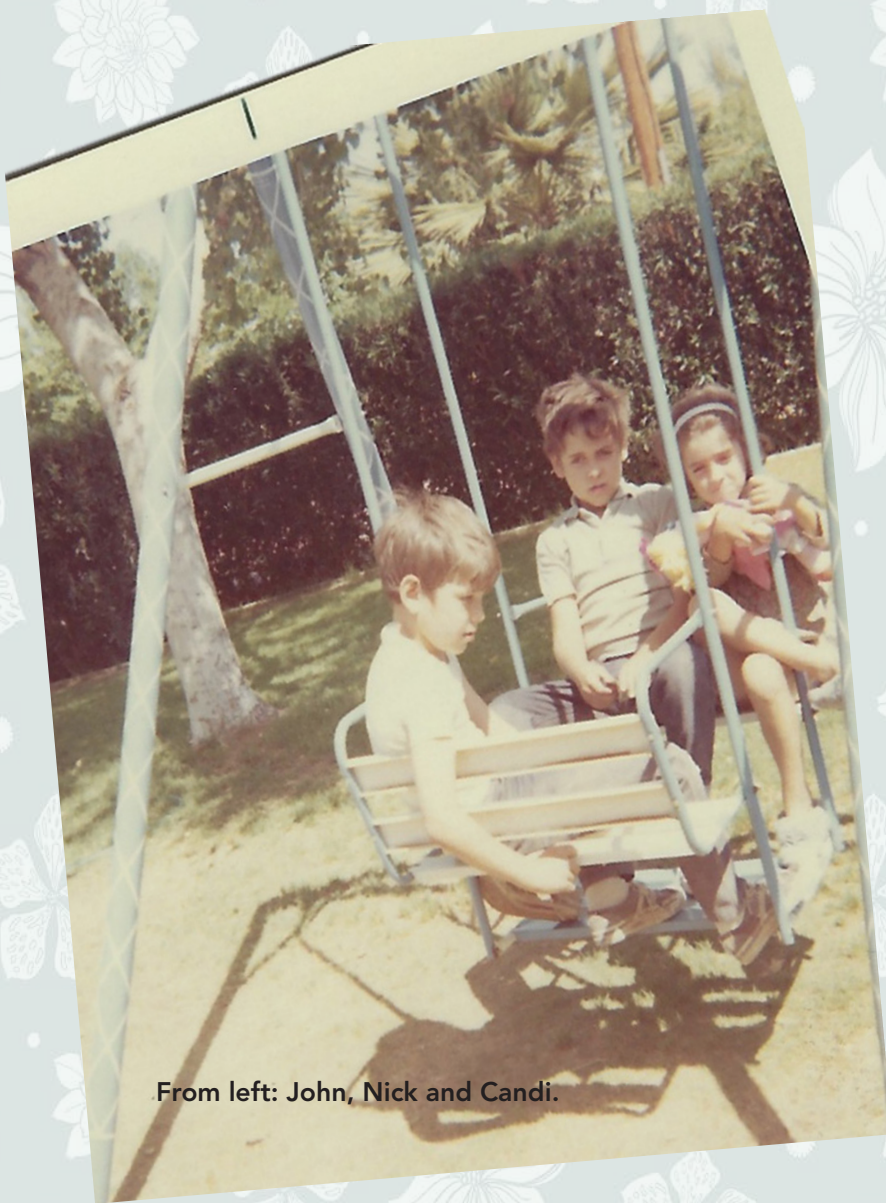
Alan with Nick (left) and John.



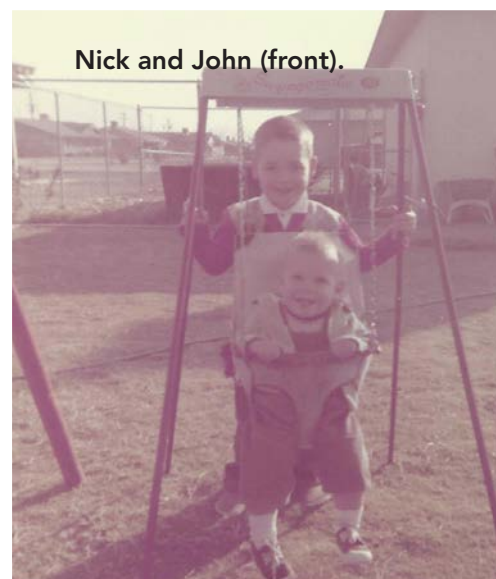
Rita, baby Nick and Bruno.



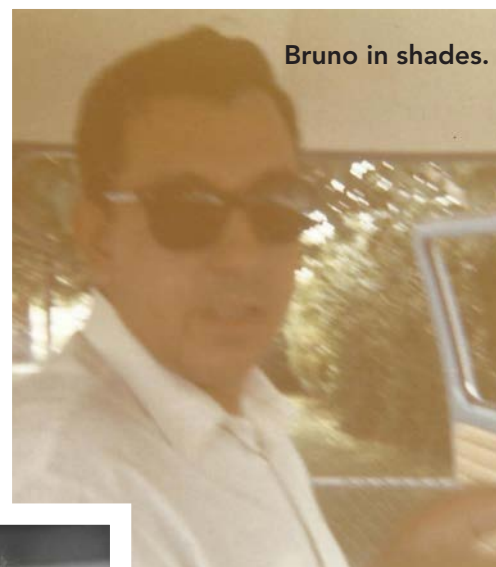
John Brunacini before the mustache.



From left: John, Nick and Candi.



Nick and John (front).



Bruno in shades.



Rita. Always beautiful. Bruno was smitten from the start.



Alan walking at Crystal Pier, Pacific Beach, San Diego. One of the Brunacini family's favorite vacation spots.



Big Al's birthday.



Rita's shirt explains Bruno's smile.



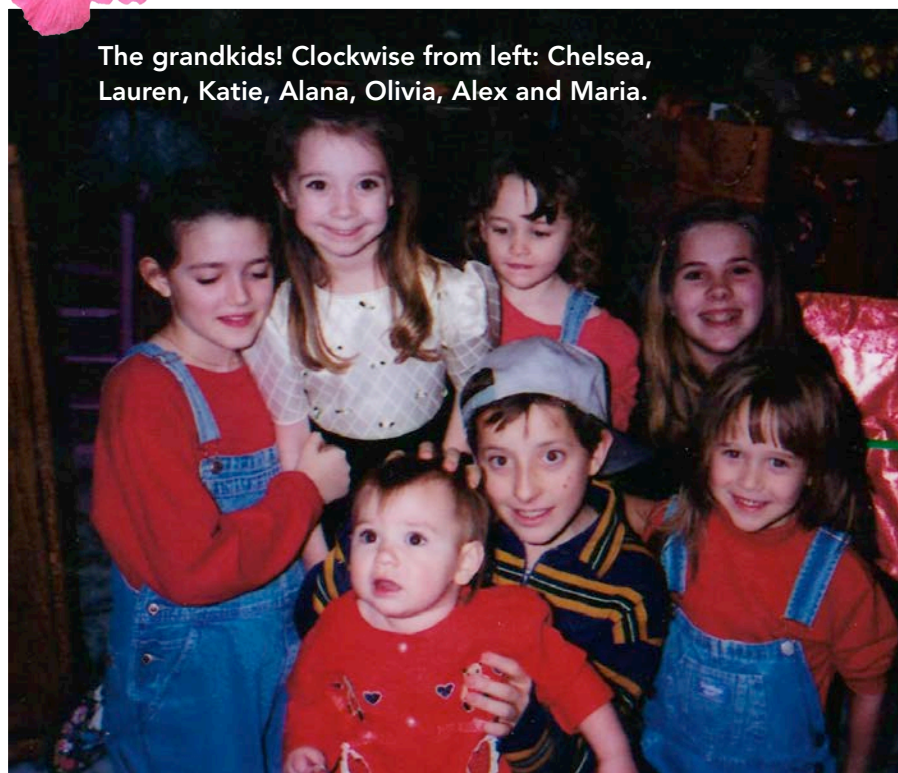
Bruno's fourth child (and only baby): Engine 1.

Alan's granddaughter, Maria.



Nick, John, Alex and Alan. Three generations of nice.





The grandkids! Clockwise from left: Chelsea, Lauren, Katie, Alana, Olivia, Alex and Maria.



Alan and Rita. Lovely & cool.



Grandkids, older and wiser. Clockwise from left: Olivia, Katie, Alex, Lauren, Maria and Chelsea.



Michele Brunacini with Alan's granddaughter Olivia.



From left: Nick and his wife, Michele; John and his wife, Holly; Rita and her sweetheart, Alan.



Candi, Nick, Bruno and John giving their Old Man a good time.





Lauren Brunacini in granddad's office. Alan's grandchildren were a major source of pride and amusement.



Rita and Bruno on top of a little red love machine.

The house that Bruno built: Orangewood Avenue homestead.



Alan and John.



John, Alan, Candi and Nick.



Nick with his daughter, Olivia, on Phoenix Ladder 11, aka The Raging Queen.



I'D BE A LOT OLDER NOW IF THAT GUY HAD BEEN AROUND 20 YEARS SOONER SIGH...

IS THERE AN "ALAN" HERE? SOMEONE NAMED "NEPA"? WOULD LIKE YOUR NEW EMAIL ADDRESS...

"NEPA"?

72 SHOPPING DAYS TILL CHRISTMAS GREAT THAT! I'M HERE TO HELP

OTACUOS HTAY EODS GAYO DAI?

PEARL GATE St 1
SERVING 2 MILLION SOULS WITH A 1/2 SECOND RESPONSE TIME

#1

HIS RULE WAS SIMPLY "BE NICE"

NO... AND YOU SAY HE WAS A... FIRE CHIEF? GET OUTA HERE...

He's HEEERE!

MRS. SMITH, IS THAT HIM?

Ohmm... I HAVE THE SAME EYES?

U KNOW WHO WANTS TO KNOW IF YOU BROUGHT THE 1952 MACK L

FIRE MUSEUM NOW HIRING!

THRONE ROOM REGISTER HERE 1ST TASK LEVEL ASSIGNMENTS ANDY GRIFFITH SHOWS EVERY DAY AT LUNCH TIME

FAMILY & FRIENDS NATURAL SCIENCE OF THE UNIVERSE EXPO

MYSTERY LIBRARY A VIDEO LOOP OF THE CRAZY QUESTIONS POOMY HE GETS WHEN VISITOR IN 578 YEARS!

Hardy "Toony" Pickering 2017





