

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and Surrounding Communities
in the San Jacinto Mountains

WINTER 2012

UNIQUE PERSONALITY CREATED IDYLLWILD'S FIRE DEPARTMENT

By Marcia Torrey-Jay

He stood only 5' 9" tall but his contemporaries describe Bill Price, Idyllwild's first fire chief, as a bigger than life personality.

Recruited during his employment as a Forest Service worker at old Keen Camp by a committee headed by Town Crier Publisher Ernie Maxwell, Price became the first fire chief in 1947, heading a nascent fire district created a year before in 1946. In the beginning that department consisted of Bill, a handful of volunteers, and a WWII surplus crash rig, obtained from March Air Force Base that was parked in Price's driveway. That 1946 Ford fire truck is still owned by the Idyllwild Fire Protection District and gets trotted out annually for the Hill's Fourth of July parade.

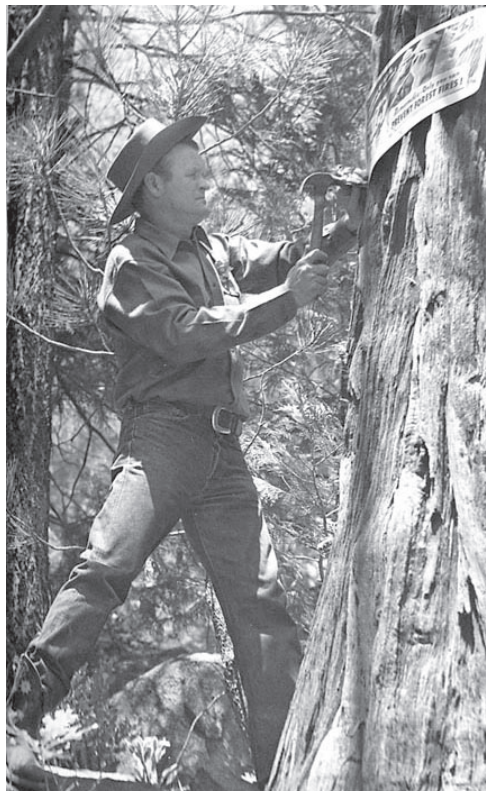
While his new job as fire chief didn't come with a uniform, Price had a self-styled outfit that he wore nearly every day consisting of forest green wool-worsted pants, a tan, military-pressed shirt, a Stetson hat and cowboy boots. "I remember those sharp creases in his shirt that went right through the pocket," said Bill (Billy) Price Jr. who now lives in Pine Grove, CA.

Bill Jr. explained that his father had a way of charming the ladies and that his first order of business



was to use that skill to turn all the elderly ladies on the hill into de facto fire wardens, reporting to him any dangerous activity by friends or neighbors like having a cookout grill on a wooden deck or failing to rake up the leaves or clear the brush. "They all thought they were his girl friend," said Bill Jr.

The next recruits to Price's fire prevention efforts were the local children. Price and his German shepherd, Nimo, went to the elementary school on a regular basis to teach the kids how to practice fire safety. "The kids loved the dog and the stories, so they learned the lessons," said Bill Jr.



Price in uniform nails up a fire prevention poster.

The first fire station opened on property that was a gift from Idyllwild resident Jerry Johnson, on Hwy. 243, across from what is now Arriba's Mexican restaurant, not long after Price became chief. It quickly became the center of activity and information in town. "If you wanted to know what was going on in town, you went to the fire station, said Bill Jr., whose dad made him polish the fire engines as a boy. "There were no house numbers in those days, but dad knew everybody in town and where they lived," he added, which was pretty important if you wanted to respond quickly to a fire emergency.

(See Price, page 3)

IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Board of Directors

President: Carolyn Levitski
Vice President: Joan McCullough
Secretary: Adele Voell
Treasurer: Bob Smith
Directors: Nancy Borchers
Laura Caster
George Groty
Charlotte Groty
Carolyn Hall
Shirl Reid
Jeanette Schultejan
Linda Turner

*Board meetings are held monthly
on the 2nd Friday at 4 p.m.*

Special Advisors

Harry Bubb, Kay Cenicerros, Janice Lyle,
Walter Parks, Kent Steele, Lynn Voorheis

Current Volunteer Staff

Membership: Adele Voell,
Rebecca Frazier, Shirl Reid

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Shirl Reid (*Assistant Curator*), Bob Smith

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Charlotte Groty

Hospitality: Linda & Larry Turner

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Webmaster: John Drake

Accounting: George Groty

Oral Histories: Corrinne Brown, Lynnda Hart

Museum Maintenance: Richard Levitski

Arti-Facts

Co-Editors: Adele & Bob Smith

Layout & Design: Halie Johnson

NEW *ARTI-FACTS* STAFFER

Halie Johnson, who began handling our layout and design with the Autumn 2011 edition, is production manager at the Idyllwild Town Crier. Raised in Idyllwild, after graduating from Mills College in 2006 with an English degree, she has worked at newspapers, first as a page designer and copy editor for the Santa Maria Times, then as editor of



two weeklies in San Diego County, and most recently as online content manager/editor for five San Diego County hyper-local news websites.

She returned to Idyllwild last February to work at the Town Crier. Since then, she has relaunched the newspaper's website and redesigned several of its special publications. She is a visual arts and computer nerd who also loves to write. As a Hill native and history lover, she says, "I'm honored to do a small part in helping the Historical Society continue its fantastic work." 📖



FINANCIALLY SPEAKING

During 2011, as in every previous year, IAHS operated in the black. Income totaled \$28,045 against expenses of \$19,473.

We were very pleased to see 40 of our members voluntarily increase their level of dues, enough to cover a 25% increase in costs due to utilities and insurance bills associated with our expanded facilities. Another big plus was the rousing success of the Home Tour.

After paying off the last \$3,612 worth of construction expense, we ended the year with a bank balance of \$34,372. By policy, \$25,000 of this is kept in reserve to meet unexpected needs.

The added surplus will allow us to meet a long-deferred need to replace the museum roof. 📖

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OOPS! In our autumn issue we inadvertently omitted David Pekrol's name from the listing of home tour volunteers. David kept the museum open as docent that day, and we thank him for it.



Price at age 31 during his desert years.

**PRICE ...** *(continued from page 1)*

Known as a great storyteller, Price centered many of his tales on the ten years he and his wife Edna wandered the Mojave Desert, first with a Model T and later with a team of burros they got in trade for the automobile. Always an independent character, “Burro” Bill Price had learned even greater self-reliance, tolerance, humor and confidence trekking the desert for ten years. “He was the most self-confident person I’ve ever known,” said Price Jr., whose birth was responsible for bringing the Price’s desert saga to a close in Baker, CA in 1941.

Bud Hunt, himself Idyllwild’s fire chief from 1972 to 1985, was a volunteer fire fighter in Price’s day. Hunt said that the department had two-hour training sessions on a regular basis. “On cold nights we’d get Bill going with his stories. You could hear a pin drop,” Hunt said. He explained that Bill got so caught up in his own stories that two hours would pass. “We never had to go out in the cold on those nights,” he chuckled.

But most of the training sessions were serious and included not just fire prevention and firefighting, but also first-responder medical aid. Both Bill and

Edna Price had backgrounds in nursing. She was the professional nurse and kept her license renewed because she was the primary health care provider in Idyllwild for a long time. Old timers remember bringing their children to her for various illnesses and for checkups and vaccines.

Price’s tenure was not without controversy, according to Bill Jr. “At one point the (fire district) commissioners told Bill he would have to work regular hours.” That didn’t go down well with Price since he considered himself on duty 24 hours a day. “He could be seen patrolling in his fire rig at midnight on many days,” Bill Jr. explained. Price told the commission he would be happy to comply and would come in at 8 and leave at 5, but he would not be available the rest of the time. The commissioners folded. Price continued to do it his way.

A runaway from his home in Arkansas at 14, Price had already been a newspaperman, logger and forest worker when he met his wife-to-be, Edna, according to an article in the March 8, 1947, issue of the Town Crier. She was a professional nurse who was raised in Virginia, had joined the Public Health Service, and was transferred to Arkansas. They met in Little Rock. It was love at first sight. The couple was married three months later.

At first they led a prosperous and secure life, with Edna as nurse and Bill as assistant to the

*(See Price, page 5)*



**THE COMPANY WE KEEP**  
**New and Renewing Members - October through December 2011**

**NEW MEMBERS**

**Benefactor**

Pine Cove Property Owners

Idyllwild

**Family**

Howard Sherman & Gregg Houston  
 Meg & Chris Wolf

North Hollywood  
 Burbank

**Contributor**

Linda Coda

San Francisco

**Individual**

Marcia Torrey-Jay

Idyllwild

**RENEWING MEMBERS**

**Founders Circle**

Charles & Charlotte Bird

San Diego

Ron Kelley

Rancho Mirage

Kathleen & Dennis Kieferdorf

El Cajon

David Kobosa & Frank Maurer

Los Angeles

Charles & Mildred Krueger

Desert Hot Springs

Dan & Mary Beth Lazzaro

San Diego

Bill & Ginny Millard

Rancho Mirage

Liz & Walt Mueller

San Diego

Marge Muir

Idyllwild

Robin & Sarah Oates

Idyllwild

Diane Olsen

Idyllwild

Brad & Karen Radis

Torrance

Gina & Larry Randall

La Mesa

Scott Solomon & Melinda Gardner

Calabasas

Carol & Will Summers

Laguna Niguel

R B & Janice Sutton

Riverside

Deidre Vail

Walnut

Mike Wimbrow

Trabuco Canyon

**Benefactor**

Janice Lyle

Idyllwild

Margaret McTague

Riverside

Loretta & Charles Van Orden

La Quinta

**Sponsor**

Byron & Robyn Beck

Santa Barbara

James Crawford

Idyllwild

Bill & Carolyn Lowman

Idyllwild

Bill Merkelson

Van Nuys

Linda & Manny Rider

Palm Desert

Rita Rothman

Studio City

Ann & Doug Walker

Palm Desert

**Contributor**

Nancy Beddingfield & Paul Leverenz

Idyllwild

Doug & Maureen Boren

Palm Desert

Ann Copeland

Palm Desert

Morrie Copeland & Dick Dorisse

Idyllwild

Norma Gibbs

Huntington Beach

Kathryn Goddard

Huntington Beach

Clark & Lana Hapeman

Riverside

Earl & Peggy Parker

Idyllwild

Adele & Ron Voell

Idyllwild

**Family**

Terry Bauman & Charlene Wagner

San Diego

Annette & Bill Cooper

Idyllwild

Ruthe Donlon & Robert McCullough

Idyllwild

Marte & Jack Ganoung

Costa Mesa

Donald & Louise Giger

Idyllwild

Eugene Hubbard

San Diego

Hans & Birgit Iliew

Valley Center

**Individual**

Marc Beherec

San Diego

Ted Belden

Hesperia

Jeannette Boller

Venice

Diann Coate

Idyllwild

Sydney Cosselman

Idyllwild

Barbara Desforges

San Clemente

Francoise Frigola

Idyllwild

Ken Harrison

Cardiff-by-the-Sea

Robert Hewitt

Temple City

Barbara Jones

Idyllwild

Laura Long

Valley Village

Sharen Metz

Idyllwild

Carlisle Volk

Phoenix AZ

Lynn Wagman

Rockville MD

Annette Wassell

Idyllwild

**Organization**

Idyllwild Garden Club

Idyllwild

## ANOTHER STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION HONORS IAHS

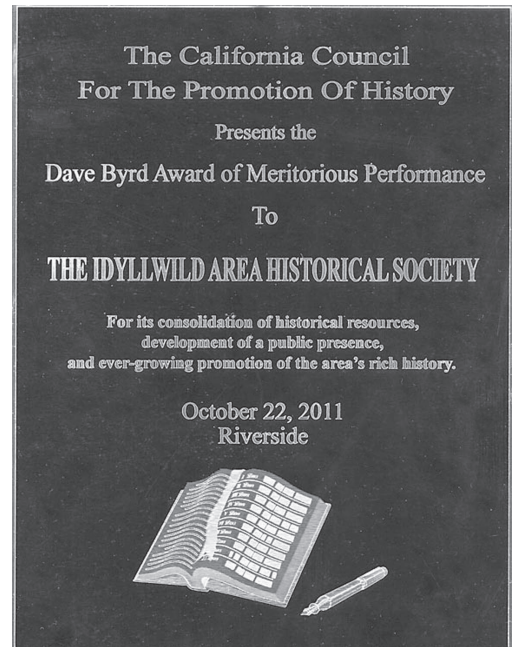
For the second year in a row, we've attracted recognition at the state level. This time it was the California Council for the Promotion of History that chose IAHS for its 2011 Dave Byrd Award of Meritorious Performance.

The Board of Directors asked Bob and Adele Smith to represent IAHS at CCPH's annual meeting in Riverside and formally receive the award plaque. IAHS was officially cited for "its consolidation of historical resources, development of a public presence, and ever-growing promotion of the area's rich history."

In his remarks during the presentation, CCPH board member Chuck Wilson said, "It is always a pleasure to recognize a historical organization which has its act together and is doing things right. IAHS has made remarkable progress in the past decade and is a fine example of an active historical group within a small community. They have been recognized for their care of their historical collections and now we recognize them for the work being done to share the history of the area



**Bob Smith accepts the plaque at right from CCPH board member Chuck Wilson.**



through active collection of historical materials and programs which highlight this history."

Since IAHS was founded in 2000, the Board of Directors has aspired to professional standards of operation and maintained a strong financial position for achieving its goals, thanks to our large and loyal membership.

This award follows IAHS's selection in 2010 to receive the annual Archive Appreciation Award of the California Society of Archivists. Our members can take pride in IAHS's accomplishments, validated once again by professional colleagues from throughout California. 🖋️

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### PRICE ... (continued from page 3)

wealthy industrialist Henry Timken. They traveled on a private railroad car and lived in a mansion on Coronado, CA. But life was just too easy and boring for a restless adventurer like Bill Price. So, they quit their cushy jobs and set out for a decade-long desert adventure, befriending Native Americans, prospectors, and a wide assortment of desert characters in three states — California, Nevada and Arizona.

Price remained chief of the all-volunteer

company until his death in 1960 from a critical illness discovered when he entered Riverside Community Hospital for what was expected to be a brief treatment. His wife, Edna, continued as Idyllwild's nurse until her accidental death in 1975 when her car skidded on ice into a cement wall while traveling to see a patient. 🖋️

*Marcia Torrey-Jay, a new IAHS member, brings 20 years of advertising agency experience and 10 years in journalism to researching and writing about Hill history.*

**A TALE OF A TICKET,**  
*wherein killed wood is reused, a perennial raffle loser wins,  
and a baby learns a new skill.*

It was a dark and stormy panic that sent board V.P. Joan McCullough to her knitting club. Summer was approaching, and no suitable prize for the annual IAHS raffle had yet appeared. Sharla Carpenter, one of our docents, came to the rescue, suggesting a wooden garden bench.

Thereupon Joan beseeched Jerry Holldber, general manager of the Pine Cove Water District, to recommend local woodworkers to do the deed. Lo and behold! Jerry graciously offered himself and his staff to transmute a heap of local pine killed by bark beetles into a bench. Hardly a week later, he, Jerry Johnson, and Jeremy Potter presented not merely one, but two elegant benches, one for the raffle and an unsolicited copy for the museum garden.

As the year wore on, Ruthe Donlon, Teresa Lease, Nancy Borchers, Laura Caster, Annamarie Padula, and all our museum docents joined Joan in hawking tickets to a willing public, not incidentally enriching IAHS by \$1,238.

At the appointed hour on December 9th, board members in turn shook, rolled, bounced, and otherwise agitated the huge jar of raffle tickets. They then propositioned Ethan Caster, 6-month-old son of board member Laura Caster, to pluck the winning ticket. Ethan instinctively reached in, extracted a ticket, and in a flash filched a quick taste test before revealing the winner's name: Adele Smith, local IAHS volunteer, who had been buying fistfuls of tickets year after futile year without reward. She was thrilled and immediately found the perfect spot for her new bench (and herself).

Stay tuned for the next exciting episode of "Raffle Tales" with a new prize for 2012. 🪵



**Adele Smith enjoys her newly-won bench with (l-r) Jerry Johnson, Joan McCullough and Jerry Holldber.**



**Ethan Caster savors the taste of victory  
(arrow points to ticket)**

## MUSEUM DOCENTS KEEP THE WELCOME MAT OUT

2011 saw the eighth anniversary of museum operation for IAHS. During the 123 days we were open to the public this year, our faithful corps of museum docents greeted 4,228 visitors and handled \$6,602 in sales and donation income. Their busiest day coincided with the annual Ice Cream Social on Labor Day weekend, when the guest register showed 113 visitors. Without their service, the museum simply could not function. So we want to recognize and profusely thank all who volunteered during 2011:

Joy Allgeier  
 Nancy Borchers  
 Maureen Boren  
 Susie Bowman  
 Corrinne Brown  
 Dan & Sharla Carpenter  
 Sara Clayton  
 Diann Coate  
 Morry Copeland  
 Ruthe Donlon  
 Dick Dorisse  
 Tuck Ernst  
 Dottie Goldfarb

Katy Grigsby  
 Charlotte & George Groty  
 Leann Gudmundson  
 Carolyn Hall  
 Barbara Jones  
 Ben & Nanci Killingsworth  
 Doris Lombard  
 Sherry McClain  
 Joan McCullough  
 Joyce Miller  
 Diane Olsen  
 Peggy Parker  
 David Pekrol

Ron Perry  
 Marlene Pierce  
 Gene Rice  
 Susan Righetti  
 Jeanette Schultejeann  
 Bob Smith  
 Larry & Linda Turner  
 Adele Voell  
 Nickie Watts  
 Elaine Weiler  
 Barbara Wilke  
 Helen Ziler

## ARCHIVE ACQUISITIONS

We continue to troll online auctions to acquire old postcards, photos, and souvenirs, even an occasional DVD of a feature film shot partially in Idyllwild. In addition, during the last quarter of 2011 our collection was enriched with artifacts from the following generous donors:

Naoma Greiner, Idyllwild  
 Lynnda Hart, Pine Cove  
 Karen Mathena, Garner Valley  
 David Welshane, Bullhead City AZ  
 Paul Schlenz, Hemet  
 Harry Bubb, Newport Beach  
 Louise Neeley, Palm Desert  
 Terry Bauman, San Diego  
 Nancy Fletcher, San Diego



**Our newest archive volunteer, Tuck Ernst, at work entering artifact donation data into the computer**

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

**Name(s)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Individual (\$15)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Contributor (\$35)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Benefactor (\$250)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Business (\$35)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Family (\$25)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sponsor (\$100)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Patron (\$500)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Corporate (\$750)**

*(Please make your tax-deductible dues check to IAHS & mail to PO Box 3320, Idyllwild, CA 92549)*

**If a gift membership, please enter donor's name and address:**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Winter Museum Schedule:  
Saturdays & Sundays, plus Monday, February 20  
11 am - 4 pm**

**For special tours and other business, call (951) 659-2717**

**E-mail: [info@idyllwildhistory.org](mailto:info@idyllwildhistory.org)**

**Website: [www.idyllwildhistory.org](http://www.idyllwildhistory.org)**

**Admission Free**

**Donations Welcome**

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**Date to remember:**

Wednesday, February 15 — ICRC Speaker Series

“Idyllwild: Past and Present” by Bob Smith

6:00 pm at Silver Pines Lodge (reception at 5:30)

Co-sponsored by IAHS

Bob will share a first look at an ongoing project by IAHS volunteers John Drake and Rebecca Frazier, who are photographing local sites from perspectives identical to those found in historic photos from the IAHS archive. The comparison will show changes both subtle and dramatic in the Idyllwild area over the years.

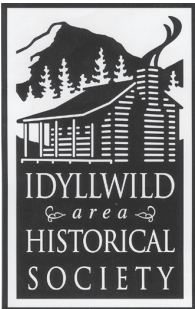
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**PHOTO CREDITS FOR THIS ISSUE:**

Idyllwild Fire Dept (pg 1 top); Idyllwild Area Historical Society archive (pg 1 bottom & 3 bottom); Idyllwild Town Crier (pg 2); Bill Price Jr. (pg 3 top); California Council for the Promotion of History (pg 5 left); Bob Smith (pg 5 right, 6 top, & 7); Jeff Wu (pg 6 bottom)

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