

# LPVFR Profile - John Haak

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In the previous issue of the Mountain Network News, our Loma Prieta Volunteer firefighter profile focused on one of the newest members of the department. This time, we'll spotlight one of the longest-standing members, John Haak ... on the occasion of his retirement from the department.

John moved to the Summit area in 1981, initially as caretaker for the Mountain Bible church before becoming pastor in 1982. John joined the fire department not long after, in 1985, as he explains: "My wife, Kim, and I took a CPR class offered by the volunteer fire people here in 1985. I realized then the importance of local people being able to help each other."

There's an old saying about being thrown into the deep end of the pool, and that's exactly what happened to John, as his very first call in 1985 was on the Lexington Fire, an experience he describes succinctly as, "15,000 acres, 55 structures lost, five days on the line." When asked about his most memorable calls, however, John simply says, "any of those where I get to help someone in the community I only know on a small level because helping them deepens the connection we all want to each other."

As one of the relatively few department members with a job on the Summit (thus making him available to respond to more calls), John quickly became a "hot commodity." His role continued to expand over time and he eventually became a department Captain, a position he continued to hold until his retirement. Along the way, John was named Santa Cruz County's Firefighter/EMS of the Year for 1989, the year of "the Quake."

John's wife, Kim, supported his commitment to the department right from the beginning. "She recognized the good fit as I did," says John. "That said, being on the volunteer fire team has taken my time and energy when there are needs at home being neglected or postponed. You have to find balance."

With his firefighting days behind him, John should now have a little more spare time for his hobbies, which include guitar (he's renowned for his performances at the annual fire department holiday party), international travel for community service projects, and anything baseball-related (a baseball analogy or anecdote is pretty much guaranteed in every one of John's sermons!).

Finally, as for John's future plans? "I retired from responding on the fire team in October

this year, getting ready for more grandchildren to enjoy. I already miss it, especially every time I hear the siren on the fire truck."