

Devastating Fire Brings Back Memories Of Past For Previous Owner

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The devastating fire in the 700 block of Sixth Street in Alton brought back several memories for a previous owner Fred Hentrich.

Fred Hentrich, the father of Riverbender.com CEO/Owner John Hentrich, said when his family owned the home it was in excellent condition, but it slipped after he no longer had it in his care.

“We worked a lot on the house when my boys, John and Mike, were kids,” he said. “We worked a lot of hours on that home and the one next to it. The home that burned was a duplex, and I converted it into four apartments. We did the same thing with the duplex next to it and made it into four apartments.”

Fred and John Hentrich acknowledged the quick and relentless work of the Alton Fire Department that saved the house next door. It appeared the house next door suffered only minor damage.

One memory about the home for Fred is how it had bees at one time that chased his two boys. John Hentrich said he never forgot about the bees at the home and that he remembered logging a lot of hours with his brother to mow and keep up with the house.

Fred Hentrich said the fire did cause him to reflect on many of the tenants over the years in the two homes on Sixth Street.

"We took good care of it and the yard when we had it," Fred Hentrich said. "I remember now the one that burned I purchased from Alton Savings and Loan for \$8,500. The bank had possession of it when I bought it."

John Hentrich said he remembers a lot of manual labor with the home that burned early Wednesday.

"I remember removing plaster when dad was converting it into four apartments from a duplex and how hard of work that was for us," he said. "I was in school at the time. I also remember the tall grass when he first bought it and trying to get through it a little at a time with a push mower. It was hard to get through. I mowed the grass there a lot during that time, but we kept it looking good when we had it."

John laughed and said: "I remember at that time wondering why I had to do this type of labor when my friends didn't have to do that type of thing. But it was my dad's business, and we had to help him."

Fred and his brother, Tom, had a home/apartment rental business for 40-45 years. Fred officially retired from the rental business about three months ago when he sold his last property.

“This was a second job to me,” he said of the rental business. “I enjoyed going into a house and could do about anything I wanted changing rooms, adding walls, bathrooms, etc. In my main job, I worked for the local phone company for 32 years. I started when it was Illinois Bell. During the last 25 years with the phone company, I was a manager of Central Office maintenance out of the Godfrey office. I always enjoyed the tenants and the rental business overall, but this incident does bring back a lot of memories.”





