

SLOW BURN

Writer DEAN BLAINE gets illuminated by an amazing LIGHT BULB that keeps on glowing the distance.



Wintzell's

KEYS TO THE CITY

MOBILE

Mayor **Michael C. Dow** shares his hometown favorites.

What makes your city unique?

Mobile is an historic port city with America's two largest river deltas and an extensive bay system. Our city has an abundance of natural resources, outdoor recreation (including sailing, fishing, hiking, golf, and beaches), and lots of seafood.

Favorite coffee shop? Spot of Tea Restaurant on Dauphin Street in downtown Mobile.

Favorite place to take a walk? Historic Oakleigh Garden District/Washington Square area.

Favorite place for a meeting? Ruth's Chris Steakhouse.

Favorite spot for lunch? Nan Seas Seafood Restaurant on Mobile Bay or Wintzell's on Dauphin Street.

Favorite place to celebrate an occasion? Mobile's riverfront.

Favorite activity? A relaxing drive with my wife around our historic neighborhoods or into north Mobile County.

Best spot to sit on a spring day? My front porch on Washington Square.

WILLIAM MCKINLEY was president when the record-setting light bulb of Livermore, California, first cast its dull, orange glow on the hose carts and horses in the city's local firehouse.

Within five years of the bulb's 1901 installation, the great San Francisco earthquake would topple the water tower. In 50 years, the first stoplight would be raised at First and L. And today, more than a century later, Livermore's famous light bulb would still be going strong.

The simple, four-watt bulb, made by the Shelby Electric Company, is recognized in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's "most durable light." Engineers believe the sturdy, hand-blown bulb with a carbon filament has endured due to a combination of low wattage and filament thickness.

But the folks that drop by to admire its glow

care less about carbon filaments and wattages than they do about viewing a marvel of American ingenuity. Visitors from as far away as South Africa and Sweden record comments in the guest book.

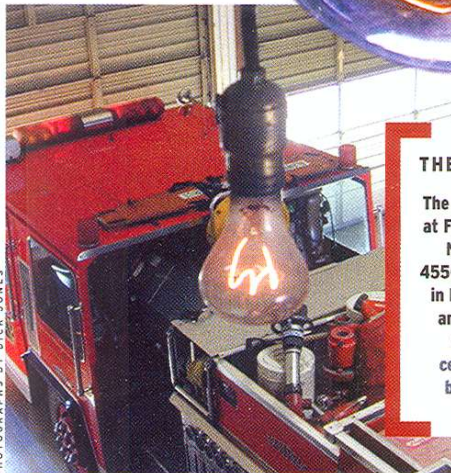
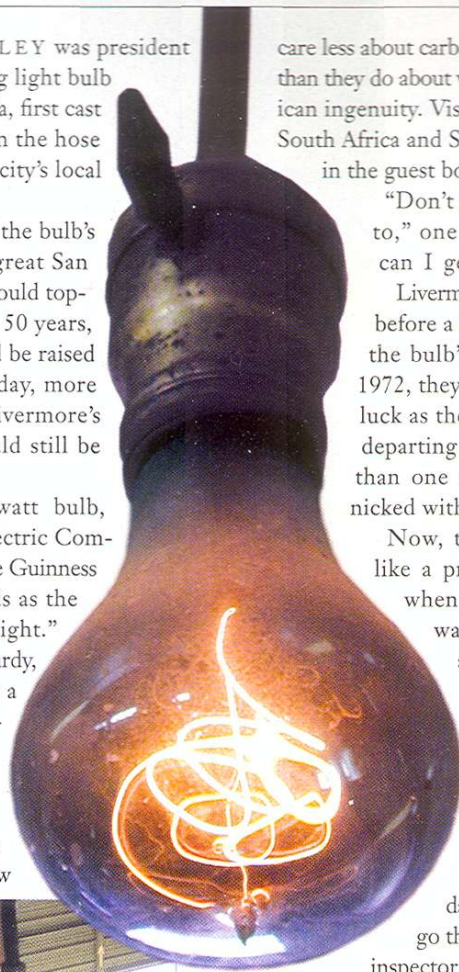
"Don't make 'em like they used to," one visitor muses. "Where can I get one?" jokes another.

Livermore firefighters admit that before a local reporter uncovered the bulb's remarkable history in 1972, they often batted it for good luck as they clung to the side of a departing fire truck. And on more than one occasion, the bulb was nicked with a football or Frisbee.

Now, the firefighters treat it like a precious stone. In 1976, when the bulb was moved, it was granted Code 3 status and transported, lights flashing and sirens wailing, to its present home in Fire Station No. 6.

And locals won't even entertain the notion that it might someday extinguish. "Don't even go there," says Tim Simpkins, inspector and investigator with the Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department. "I don't want to be on duty when and if it ever goes out."

It's pure coincidence, though, that a local slogan is "Live Longer in Livermore." High-school principal Herbert Lee coined the phrase in the 1920s in reference to the area's clean air and easy living. Who could have guessed that a sturdy light bulb might prove the creed true? ★



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DICK JONES

THE TICKET

The bulb glows at Fire Station No. 6 on 4550 East Ave. in Livermore and on the Web at centennialbulb.org.

DEAN BLAINE writes from Las Vegas, Nevada.