

## **Hilmo Alić - A fireman from Zavidovići**

We came to Zavidovići in 1960 from Rogatica. My uncle and father bought land next to the Municipality, and the land was called Hutner's garden. Hutner was a German man who died in 1943 in Gostović: he left a wife and a daughter who left for Germany after his death. They stayed in Germany for 25 years and came back to us to record and take pictures of the land, which my father allowed. He also offered them a piece of land for them to build a house on, but they refused his offer, because they had land in Germany as well as a job there, so they had no intention to coming back here.

After I came to Zavidovići, I started working on the railroad as a railroad worker. In April 1962, I enlisted in the army. After two years I came back to Zavidovići where I got a job as a guard in Krivaja. I worked there for 4 months before the boss of the firefighters, Rajko Lukić, offered me a job in the firefighting department. I agreed. In 1964 I took the expert exam for 1st and 2nd class firefighters. After that, I took an exam for an executive in the Republican station house in Sarajevo. I started working as a shift leader. After that they set me as a commander. I worked here till my retirement. In my career I did competitions because I was very capable. In the Inter-municipal competition in Travnik, I won 1st place. After that, in the Republic level competition in Brčko first place. After that, in the Federal level competition in Makarska (Yugoslavia) we won first place again. After that we went to Italy in Trento in an international competition where we won 2nd place. Before that we went to Czechoslovakia to prepare.

Firefighting is a humanitarian work, firefighters give all of themselves to save property and lives. In my long history as a firefighter I have had good and bad experiences. It was hardest for me when a house caught fire in Ridžali, and a man lost two kids in the fire. When I got the call, my leader Vlado Stanić (the boss) forbade us from going out because the Municipality did not finance the firefighting department, Krivaja did. Because of that we were forbidden from going in town to help. Even though it was against the law, it was our duty to put out fires. In the end I went out. When we arrived there the house was on fire, it was all in flames. The two kids had already burned to death, they were 9 and 7 years old. They took out their bodies. That was the hardest moment in my life. Because if only I had gone out first, I would have saved two lives and I would have repayed for my entire work life.

I had a lot of good moments, because I had a good team. I went around the entire Yugoslavia. The dearest moment was in Split with the team (there was 50 of us). From there we went to Žrnovnica, after that we went to Maribor. Maribor had 57 firefighting homes. Every MZ had a firefighting society and a

home. They were very developed. They told me every citizen of Maribor was a firefighter. Who isn't part of the firefighting society was a second order citizen. During the war I was a commander in so many war actions, a professional. I had the task to defend the city and population from shelling. I remember the shelling very well. I set up my team on 4 spots. In one case the warehouse of the factory was shelled. I ran out of my house. „Malyutka“ fell on top of the warehouse and set fire to the archives, all old papers. We went out to put out the fire. While we were doing that, new shells dropped from Kočarin, Križ i Dubravica. The warehouse had caught fire from all sides. The tactic was to concentrate on the paint shop to save the drive. And we succeeded. Another time when the warehouse of flammable liquid caught fire on Krivaja, from Ozren. The shells were dropping 20 or 30 meters away from us. We went out and put out the fire. The third time was when the prefabricated houses factory was on fire. There were two Croatian men in my team, Knežević Branko and Martinović Zoran. Shell fell and both of them were wounded severely, they were moved to Kristal to be saved and none of them died. That was hard in the war times. For all my accomplishments I got a recognition from the firefighting society of BiH, a Silver Badge.

I went into early retirement on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1998. In the meantime, I worked as a volunteer firefighter until 2005. Then I got sick and ended my career.