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Volunteer Fire Company
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Fire Fighter's Journal

By L. Fliedner—Fire Fighter / EMT

I was just finishing up some medical tests at the local hospital when I heard a radio say, "they're doing decon at Gen-tex". My mind kicked into high gear, my pager was out in the truck, why didn't I take it in, where's my crew? Where's my gear? Our Aunt works there, is she ok? I called my Chief and he advised me to finish what I was doing, my tests were more important. I told him I was done, he requested me to come to the scene and answered my questions, my crew was already there, my gear was in his truck, and I needed to make it a point to find our Aunt.

When I finally got close to the area I was greeted by our Aunt and she said she was ok. I made my way up to the staging area getting cleared to enter the area by the accountability officer. I found my crew and everybody played big brother making sure I was ok and if I needed anything, that's what family does.

Once the game plan was laid out, I got first round in the decon tent. We finished getting into our gear while the temperature climbed. We didn't even get relief as we began assisting the exposed firefighters and civilians with the decontamination process of washing down with lots of cold water, because we were fully protected by structural fire fighting gear and Self Contained Breathing Apparatus. My first round ended when my quarter service alarm sounded from my SCBA. Another firefighter relieved me and I was able to take off some of my gear to begin cooling down. As I was resting and thinking my day was over, two more individuals arrived to go through the now vacant decon shower. I volunteered and suited up, again. Once I was out of the tent the real adventure started.

I was extremely tired, very thirsty and starting to over heat. I got a little sick and my engineer walked me down to rehab. The team there took my vitals and made me rest. After a few more checks of my blood pressure I was cleared to leave rehab but was put out of service for the rest of the day.

The rest of the events were routine, clean up, final medical screens, and a debriefing to make sure everyone was aware of the potential physical symptoms from this particular chemical situation.

I started the day worried about my own health, and was in the same situation by the middle of the call and by the end of the call I was ok. Why? You ask because I have the greatest family. Everyone watches out for each other and the officers in charge did a great job of keeping us safe, while we helped get the real victims out of harms way.

The Many Changes In EMS

By V. De Pietro—EMT / Paramedic / Firefighter

I started my EMS career in 1989 as an EMT, with a local paid BLS (Basic Life Support) service in Scranton. Back then there were only a few paid services and even less ALS (Advanced Life Support) services to speak of. Back then the out lying areas (like our community and other rural areas) did without ALS services. It was up to the local volunteers to do everything they possibly could do to help the critically sick or injured. Now, today the volunteers are still a big part of the EMS community, but their numbers are slowly dwindling, leaving only a few dedicated people to "run" or respond to an increasingly number of calls for help!

Today there are more ALS services or MICU's (Mobile Intensive Care Units) to help with the critical patients, but the volunteer areas (once again, like our community, and others) still need volunteers to respond.

Back then (1989) there were only two or three ALS units to service all of Lackawanna County. Two of them were based in the city of Scranton and the other based in Carbondale. Today, we have at least four paid services that run multiple ALS units daily to cover the increased number of calls for help. There are many volunteer organizations that have gone to a "paid" day shift crew, just to keep up with the calls and to insure that their community will have ambulance when one is needed by one of their citizens.

I know that EMS and Firefighting is not for everyone, but if you would like a challenge, and would like to challenge yourself, to do something to help your community we would like to see you at our next meeting.

We meet at the Greenfield Township Municipal building every Tuesday night at 6:30 p.m. We need help in all areas from the monthly breakfast, administrative help, fund raiser committee, to EMT's and firefighters. **What?** You don't have any training, that's not a problem we will provide and pay for most training. You may think your too young or to old? Not at all, all ages welcome from 14 to 104. So step up and challenge yourself, it will be worth the effort.

Fire Hall Breakfasts

The last Sunday of every month from 8:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, except Easter and Xmas. for which dates are established separately. Everyone is welcome. Start a tradition! Bring the whole family!

So, What's The Big Deal?

By F. M. Bales, CFPS—Fire Chief / EMT / Fire Inspector

As the crowds grew at Finch Hill Corners, more than 100 fire fighters fought a fire at the old Lackawanna County Poor Farm on a hot and steamy night in June. People from miles around came to watch as the fire tore through the historic landmark. Comments among the crowd ranged from “my grand father used to be a cook there”; to “when I was a kid, that’s were we would go parking”. In the days following the June 23rd fire, I have had many people ask what happened, why so many fire fighters, and of course “Do you know who did it?” Well the answers to these questions are very complex and in some cases still under investigation. However, let us look at what we do know.

A majestic historical building was virtually destroyed by a fast moving fire that was **intentionally** set. Yes, the fire was **ARSON**. The initial calls to the Lackawanna County 911 center reported a fire in the right corner of the building. A vehicle and some ATV’s were also observed, by the callers, leaving the scene. Within 1 ½ minutes of dispatch, units on scene reported that the building was fully involved and requested both a 2nd and 3rd alarm be dispatched to the scene. When all was said and done 100 emergency personal from 4 counties, 15 fire departments, and more than 38 units had spent nearly 5 hours working to extinguish the blaze. Several departments remained on scene until the early morning hours making sure the fire was completely extinguished and assisting the Pennsylvania State Police in the fire investigation.

The size of the building and its limited access presented many challenges to fire fighters, including the need to use ladder trucks to pour water onto the fire from above. Additionally the size of the building along with a lack of water made for a demanding water supply operation. Water Tankers shuttled load after load of water from two different locations in the township to supply the thousands of gallons of water per minute that was needed to control the fire. At the peak of operations, more than 2,500 gallons of water were being applied to the fire each minute. While the persons responsible for this fire have not been arrested, the investigation is still active and we expect to bring the guilty parties to justice in the very near future.

One comment I did hear that truly alarms me was; “**So what’s the big deal, they burned down an old building**”. Well, besides destroying someone’s property and a piece of our history, these criminal’s placed hundreds of fire fighters at risk. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), each year there are an average of 37,500 intentionally set build-

ing fires causing more than \$692 Billion in property loss. These fires not only cost the property owner loses, but they cause every one of us to suffer the costs of higher insurance costs. The NFPA further notes that percentage of arson fires is highest in large cities and small rural areas. Of greater importance than the amount of property damage are the injuries and deaths that are caused by these fires. More than 300 people die and 2,000 more are seriously injured by arson related fires in the United States each year.

The Poor Farm fire did much more than destroy a building, it placed lives at risk. It cost the taxpayers of Greenfield slightly more than \$1,000 to cover the cost of fuel used by fire equipment. In addition, most of all, **WHAT IF** there was another emergency in one of those other 15 communities. So next time someone says to you what is the big deal. **Tell them Arson Costs Everyone Money! Arson Kills!**

We Need Help

The following positions need caring, community minded people! YOU join - We train - No cost to YOU!

- **Firefighting -(5) Fire Fighters and/or Rescue Staff**
- **Non-Firefighting - (3) Fire apparatus Drivers w/CDL**
- **Non-Firefighting -(3) Ambulance Drivers no CDL**
- **Non-Firefighting -(3) Emergency Medical Technicians**
- **Administrative -(5) Fund Raising,Publicity,Marketing**

2005 Fund Drive Returns

Well folks, as reported in our June issue, we received a 24% return from our 1st request. 2nd request mailing and return figures are below. **You tell us. Is this a good indication of support for your fire company or not?**

2nd Request Mailing—1009

2nd request Donation Returns—98

% of Donation Returns—9.7%

Please support your fire Co. Thanks to the 31% who have.

You Make The Difference

By R. Whitelavich—Paramedic / Firefighter

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “public service” as the business of supplying a commodity or service to any or all community members. I define it as an **ADVENTURE!!!** It is a chance to meet and help your neighbors in their time of need. It is a chance to learn many valuable skills. It is a chance to make a difference in someone’s life when they need it the most. Can you make the difference? This is the question I want you to ask yourself now and when you are done reading this article.

Imagine you are out for a walk. It is a beautiful morning. The sun is shining. The birds are singing, and then you hear someone cry out in pain! You look over and see your neighbor lying on the sidewalk. Your neighbor tells you that she was getting the paper and fell. She also tells you her hip hurts so bad she can’t get up. Can **YOU** make the difference in this person’s life?

Imagine you are in a restaurant and a young boy starts choking! The boy’s mother is frantic and is pleading for someone to help her son. This boy needs immediate intervention and then to be checked at the hospital!!! Can **YOU** make the difference in this boy’s life?

Imagine a cold and snowy night. All the roads are impassable. There is a knock at your door. It is your neighbor’s oldest son and he begs you to come and help because his mom is having trouble breathing! You know your neighbor has asthma. This woman needs immediate help with her medication and to get to the hospital to see a doctor!!! Can **YOU** make the difference in this woman’s life?

With the proper tools and training do you think **YOU** could make that difference? **WE DO! Greenfield Township Volunteer Fire Co. Ambulance** is looking for people that can make a difference. All you need to do is give us some of your time and we can show you the many ways **YOU** can make a difference. We can teach you how to make the difference in situations ranging from the wonderful event of child birth to the tragedies of cardiac arrest and car accidents. **ALL you need to do is CARE and want to HELP your community. IMAGINE** how you would feel knowing **YOU MADE THE DIFFERENCE!!!**

Now, **DO YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE?** If so, come see us at the fire hall on Tuesday nights @ 6:30 PM. We will get you started on your adventure!!!!

Hey Guys, I’m Home

By A. Rudalavage—Firefighter

On Wednesday June 8, 2005 Greenfield Township Volunteer Fire Company hosted over 150 area firefighters to listen to state Fire Commissioner Edward Mann and other state fire instructors, in coordination with the National Fallen Fire Fighters Foundation. The topic was, **COURAGE TO SURVIVE EVERYONE GOES HOME**. This was the second stop of 20 on the statewide tour. If successful here, the foundation will take this program nationwide. Pennsylvania is the first state to do this program. For 3 1/2 hours it focused on what is killing firefighters in Pennsylvania and the country. Pennsylvania ranked number one last year with 18 line of duty deaths. A different approach being taken is **TOUGH TALK**. Basically, end stupidity! Take positive, simple steps to be safe. The course focused on 16 life-saving initiatives to reduce firefighter fatalities by 25 percent in 5 years and 50 percent in 10 years. Commissioner Mann’s goal is to get that number to **ZERO**. Some of the 16 points were simple as getting a physical once a year or an exercise program in your department. Nearly half of firefighter deaths last year were caused by heart attack. Use of an accountability system lets the command officer know where his people are at all times. It is a state law to wear seat belts when driving or riding in a vehicle. We must also obey this law when in an emergency vehicle. Let’s put in a mandatory seat belt policy and enforce it. Simple save lives. About half of firefighter deaths nationally last year were in vehicle accidents.

The commissioner asked each fire department to create a group and establish a policy that can improve member safety. GTVFC response was a guideline for non-emergency calls. The commissioner’s office will check back in the next 60 to 90 days to make sure the company is working on its new policy.

This, of course, also made you stop and think: What if you did not come home today? What impact would that have on our families, friends, workers, and community? Think about that! What if this could have been avoided by something very simple? Some times a little common sense can go a long way. We are all volunteers at GTVFC, who leave our families at all hours of the day responding to all types of calls; They could be as simple as pumping a cellar at 2:00 AM; or a hazardous material call that takes up most of our busy day. The next time you see emergency personnel going to help others, let us hope they all make it there and back safely. No matter what the situation is, we are there for the people of Greenfield Township and nearby communities. Most important is when we return safely to our families and say, **HEY GUYS I’M HOME**.