

Aurora Volunteer Fire Department

Newsletter Volume II

October 17, 2004

The summer of 2004 never seemed to happen. After a wet spring, the summer flew by; wet and much cooler than normal. The Aurora Volunteer Fire Department was kept busy with monthly meetings, drills, chicken barbeques, Aurorafest and, of course, responding to emergency calls. In honor of summer, an article on water rescue is included. Also in this issue, learn about Carl Whiffen, our highlighted member, and about the role of the fire police.

The schedule for the 2005 newsletters will be January, April, August and November. Enjoy this last issue for 2004. Have a safe, happy holiday season. Remember: support your local fire department.

Congratulations to Department members George Farenthold, Sarah Homick and Dick Bradley.

On July 24, 2004, George married Lisa Ryerson at the United Ministry Church in Aurora.

On July 28, 2004, Sarah and Kevin Homick welcomed their son Maximillian Albert Homick. Max was 8 lbs. 8 oz. He has already attended several continuing medical education lectures with his mother.

On September 16, 2004, Dick and Alice Bradley welcomed their grandson Brysen Elijah Kishpaugh. Brysen's parents are Leah and Mike Kishpaugh, both former members of the Aurora Volunteer Fire Department. The Kishpaughs now live in Kinston, North Carolina.

Thank you to all who attended our first annual open house on October 4th. An enthusiastic crowd was treated to chili dogs, cider and doughnuts, videos, knot tying, tours of the trucks and the opportunity to purchase 911 reflective signs for their houses.

The highlight of the evening was the "Jaws of Life" demonstration. EMTs and fire personnel simulated a rescue of fellow members Ann Balloni and Jim Bailey who were trapped in a car. Assistant chief Mark Bailey set up the scenario for the captive spectators and gave a step by step description as members worked to extricate and treat the patients.

Thank you to Sarah Homick for donating her car for the demonstration.

Top ten list of safety tips for Fire Prevention Month

1. Remember to change the batteries in your smoke detectors. A good time to do this is when Daylight Savings Time ends — October 31st (Halloween).
2. Have a safe and fun Halloween. While trick-or-treating, children should have a flashlight and wear light-reflective clothing. Any type of mask should not impede a child's vision or breathing. Small children should be accompanied by an adult. Be very careful crossing the street. Parents should check all candy after trick-or-treating. Throw away any candy not properly sealed, or that is age inappropriate for a child, i.e. hard candy for small children.
3. **Never** leave unattended candles burning, even for a few minutes. Make sure all matches and lighters are kept out of reach of children.
4. Have your furnace inspected and serviced by a professional. Purchase a carbon monoxide detector if you don't have one.
5. Teach your children **Stop, Drop and Roll** in the event of catching on fire.
6. Have a fire escape plan for your home and **practice** it.
7. Have your chimney inspected and cleaned if necessary.
8. Purchase the appropriate amount of fire extinguishers for your home and know how to use them.
9. Consider a fire safety ladder for a second story home.
10. Purchase reflective 911 house number signs for your home. The Aurora Volunteer Fire Department is currently selling these signs. See a member for details.

Know your Fire Department

Meet Carl Whiffen. Carl lives on Dublin Hill Road with his wife Maryann. They have three children, Carl, Jr., Terry, and Kim. Carl has been a member of the Aurora Volunteer Fire Department for a total of 23 years. He was a member for 13 years, decided to take a break, and rejoined in 1994.

While Carl was at work one day at Wells college, his emergency monitor went off. Carl found himself called out to battle a fire at an unexpected place - his own house. Unfortunately, the house was destroyed and they had to rebuild. For Carl, though, there was satisfaction in helping put the fire out and he was able to rescue his dog, who was hiding in the basement.



Carl started out as an interior firefighter, but when he rejoined, he realized he didn't have the same stamina he had before. He and fellow member George Yann decided to put their talents to use in another area of the department that needed personnel - *Fire Police*. Their job on the scene as George states, is to "assess the situation in a timely manner and make the area safe at the same time." We often see fire police officers directing traffic at an emergency scene, but their main objective is to provide adequate protection for the firefighters so they may do their job without interference from others; including drivers, residents, spectators and the news media.

Fire Police are vital members of every fire department. These active members must retain their training, education and be kept updated on the laws of NYS, which they are acting under as well as enforcing. It can be a frustrating job, as Carl says, because "the public doesn't understand the duties of the fire police and, when a situation happens, everyone wants to see and get as close as they can to the emergency." This can lead to problems for the fire police officer; it is illegal to park within 1000 feet of a fire scene.

Carl, George and our newest fire police officer, Dick Bradley, believe the public should be educated on the duties of the fire police officers, as they are the buffer between the public and the department personnel. For example, different lights have different connotations on an emergency scene. Red indicates a major emergency. Vehicles must yield the right of way to any emergency apparatus (fire, police or ambulance) with a red (or red and white) flashing light. Blue lights in New York State indicate volunteer fire service. If a blue light is flashing the driver is responding to an emergency and any courtesy extended to that driver (i.e. pulling over if it is safe to do so) is appreciated. Green light represents medical emergencies. Again, any courtesy extended is appreciated. Amber lights are caution lights and drivers are expected to slow down and move cautiously when approaching any vehicle with amber lights flashing.

Whether directing traffic or fighting fires, Carl has been a dedicated and progressive member of our department. If there's a need, Carl will fill the niche. Recently, the department was short on ambulance drivers, especially during the day. Once again, Carl stepped up to the plate, and he has driven the ambulance on countless calls. Carl is an excellent driver, with skills ranging from driving *very fast* to the scene or to the hospital, or driving *very smoothly* for the sake of the patient and the EMTs in the back.

There was never any question in Carl's mind about joining the fire department and he has always been supported in his decision by Maryann. He's stated repeatedly that he just wants to help out. He has. Thank you Carl.

Aurora Water Rescue

By Frank Zimdahl

Aurora started its water rescue in the early 1960s with a used amphibious military vehicle. This vehicle was called the Duck. The correct spelling is “DUKW”. The letters in the name D.U.K.W. are each a designation for a specific identity component. “D” stands for 1942, “U” stands for utility (amphibian), “K” stands for front wheel drive, and “W” indicates two rear-driving axles. Cayuga county bought five of them for fifty dollars each. Ours was selected because it had a detachable boom winch on it. Getting it home from Pennsylvania proved to be quite an adventure. Tom Gunderson and Dick Shook had to work on the duck at the army base and steal parts from the other ducks when the guards weren’t looking to make theirs run. The next weekend, Tom, Dick, and Ron Jones returned to Pennsylvania to bring it home. The ride home proved to be just as adventurous, including hiding from the state police. It ran so poorly that they were passed three times in five miles by three Amish girls in a horse and buggy, much to their delight.

The duck had large wheels and could travel 50-60 miles per hour on level land and 8-9 miles per hour on water. The duck could drive straight from land into the water. It was 32 feet long and 8 feet wide, and could easily carry 15 people.

The duck was put into service on many calls and could do more than a regular boat because of its size and power. I’ve heard many stories of the “Great Duck”.

One story told to me was about the large piece of land coming loose and floating in the lake. Ours, Cayuga’s, and Union Springs’ ducks were used to push the land back into place. The duck was called to Corning during the floods of 1972. People recall driving down Market Street at second story level. They were told to stay between the street lights, which barely poked above the water.

At last the duck broke down in the early 1990’s and the repair costs were thought to be more than the department should spend. It was sold to a business man in the mid-west where it was repaired and is used for rides in and out of the Mississippi River.

The department went without water rescue for a few years. We were given a boat that was never put in service. That boat was sold and the proceeds were put towards our present boat. The present boat is a 22 foot Starcraft center console with a 225 horsepower outboard motor. It was purchased used from an individual in Mexico, New York, and had a 150 horsepower motor when we bought it. We painted it red at the firehouse, had it lettered “Aurora Water Rescue,” and put it in service.

I have to get this in here: there are a few sayings about boats that you should know. First, “The two best days you own a boat are the day you buy it and the day you sell it.” The other is, “A boat is just a hole in the water that you throw money into.” Most people that own boats know this, and still have boats all their lives. It’s just a given that if you own one, you’re going to have trouble with it.

One of our first calls with our new boat was in Lansing. We were called to help find someone that had fallen out of their canoe on an early winter evening. At the time, Lansing did not have a rescue boat. We pulled in with our shiny red boat. The TV cameras were there, filming all the emergency workers. We got our picture taken, launched, and things were going



well. We headed out into the lake, I'd say there were six of us in the boat, and we were feeling quite special in the large, shiny, red boat. That lasted about 20 minutes. The motor quit and we were drifting south in the darkness. Now, the other little fishing boats, that we had felt slightly better than, had to pull us back to shore. Luckily, the TV cameras did not take our picture then.

After that experience, we set out to get a new, and more dependable, motor. The department applied for and received a state grant for \$20,000. We bought an brand new 225 horsepower motor for \$11,000 and spent the rest of it on a dock, boat hoist, and ice/cold water rescue equipment. We now keep our boat in the lift at our dock behind St. Patrick's Church, on village property. We've built a 100-amp electric service to the lift and dock. We've had other calls from that location and have been having much better luck with the boat.

I think one of our best rescues with this boat may have been just one year ago during hurricane Isabelle. Two people thought that sailing during the hurricane would be great fun. I'm told it was great fun, and very fast, only very short. The Hobie Cat they were on flipped over the bow and the fun was over. Aurora Water Rescue was called and the two sailors were rescued and scolded. The sailboat was also pulled back to shore, but has never been back in the water. After that episode, one of the sailors was inspired enough to join our fire department, and is on the ice rescue team today.

Our ice rescue team is really something to see. Most of the department is trained in it. The ice rescue suits are vinyl and cover everything but your face. It is not designed to let you go under the water, but you can stay in the water in near freezing conditions for hours. We also have an inflatable boat that glides over the ice as well as the water. The ice rescue suits are used any time we need to be in cold water, not just ice water. With the suits and boat, we train with ropes and the shore support needed for a successful cold water rescue.

In closing, I want you to know that the Aurora Volunteer Fire Department is here to serve the community and others on land and water. We are doing our best to maintain a dependable, safe, boat to perform rescues on Cayuga Lake. Aurora is lucky to have a water rescue team. You'd think that every fire department on the lake would have one, but they do not. Our water rescue work is fun and exciting, and is just part of the experience we have at the fire department. We welcome new members to our fire department; I know that you will get more than you put in. Call me or e-mail me to learn why Aurora's fire service may be for you, too.

Find out more on DUKW: <http://www.buyaduck.com/dukws.html>

The Aurora Volunteer Fire Department now has a website! Check us out at <http://www.avfd.net>. We will have the newsletter posted on it as well as pictures from our scrapbook and upcoming events.

Statistics

As of press time, the Fire Department has responded to 3 water rescues, 41 fire calls and 102 ambulance calls in 2004.

Please remember that the people who respond to these calls are volunteers in your community. Help support your fire department in any way you can.

Contributing to this newsletter were: Ann Balloni, Dick Bradley, George Farenthold, Ethan MacCormick, Sara Miller and Frank Zimdahl

Anyone interested in receiving this newsletter should email us at secretary@avfd.net. All mail is sent bcc (blind carbon copied) so your address is kept private..