

Aurora Volunteer Fire Department

Newsletter Volume IV

October 11, 2005

Here at last is our 2nd newsletter for 2005. We let the news accumulate, so we've got extra pages to fit it in. There are articles about Incident Command and the Fire Department Auxiliary, as well as updates on our hurricane relief contributions. Our featured member this issue is Jim Bailey

Congratulations to Ann Balloni and Bill Reynolds, who became certified as EMTs this spring. Some of you have already been treated by them.

Congratulations to Sarah Homick, who is our first EMT to be recertified in the New York State Pilot recertification program. The program uses ongoing continuing education to meet the 3-year recertification schedule for Emergency Medical Technicians. Some of the curricula include training which our department developed.

Welcome Back to Leah and Michael Kishpaugh (and Brysen). Leah has entered full swing into the Fire Department, while Michael has broken new ground as a member of the Auxiliary. Brysen's doing his part, of course.

What's a Smoke Drill?

Most of the training drills at the AVFD are designed to simulate real-world rescue situations, so that we can practice all of the aspects of firefighting — from Incident Command and communications, through to wearing air packs and rope handling — that we'll encounter on an actual scene.

In a structure fire, like a house fire, or the recent fire at the Mackenzie-Childs kiln room, smoke can fill the interior, limiting the rescuers' ability to see. Air bottles are necessary for breathing. The primary job for the firefighters that first go into a fire is to discover where the fire is ("extension") and to search for victims. We simulate those conditions in a drill by darkening a room or building, and using a machine to fill it with a non-toxic smoke. Rescuers don't turn-out gear and air packs and enter the room in pairs. Vision is so limited that the firefighters have to crawl around the perimeter of the room, with one leading and the other holding on to the leader's boot. As they move around, they probe the area around them with their arms, legs, and rescue tools, sweeping as far as they can into a space without losing track of the perimeter wall. It's essential that they not lose track where they are, so movement is as orderly as possible: if they are moving around a room clockwise, with the wall to their left, and they come to a door to a room, they then move into that room and move around it in the same way until they return to the doorway, whereupon they continue clockwise in the main area. When a team runs out of air and has to leave the building, they describe to the next team, as accurately as they can, where they've been and what they've discovered.

We try to use buildings we're unfamiliar with to conduct smoke drills, just the way it would happen in a real fire. Familiar objects like shelves and furniture can be completely confusing to encounter in a smoky room. Even when we conduct drills in our meeting room, we have to work to remain oriented.

One of the essential parts of a smoke drill is "accountability." That's just knowing which firefighter is where. Someone will be keeping track of everyone who goes into the building, so we can make sure everyone comes out.

2nd Annual AVFD Open House Friday, October 14 Starting at 5pm

October 9 - 15 is Fire Prevention Week and we're inviting the Aurora-Ledyard community to have some hands-on experience at the fire house.

There will be free food and drinks, including Cider and Doughnuts, with videos and handouts for the kids. Members will be giving tours of the fire house and equipment.

At 7pm, we're having a SMOKE RESCUE DEMO, and we're encouraging community members are welcome to participate!

This is a good chance to buy 911 house signs, recharge your fire extinguishers (buy new ones, too), get smoke detectors, and to see your neighbors.

Statistics

As of press time, the Fire Department has responded to 42 fire/rescue calls, including 6 water rescues, and 82 ambulance calls in 2005.

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.

Know Your Fire Department: Jim Bailey

by Tom Vawter

When asked for some words of praise for Jim Bailey, Fire Chief Frank Zimdahl said, “He was handsome when he was young.” That got an immediate response from Aurora’s female firefighters present, who all agreed that Jim is *still* handsome. The issue of Jim’s aesthetic qualities aside, every Aurora firefighter interviewed claimed Jim is, and has been for many years, one of the Aurora Volunteer Fire Department’s most important and respected members.

Jim is currently Assistant Chief, a position he’s been elected to repeatedly since 1970, except for a number of years in the mid-90s, when he served as chief. Jim may not think of himself as a leader, but his fellow firefighters respect his quiet, calm approach to both crisis on the fire ground and to training new firefighters, and they follow him naturally. From 1972 to 1995 he was both a firefighter and emergency medical technician. In both roles, Jim has played an important part in training his colleagues and encouraging their sense of accomplishment in the fire service. He’s also been one of AVFD’s main mechanics, overseeing the maintenance and repair of some of Aurora’s vehicles. (Keeping a 1952 Pirsch ladder truck or a 1968 American LaFrance pumper on the road is a real art.) Jim’s had to do more than his share of goading to urge some of the rest of us to do our part in keeping the equipment well-maintained and ready to respond in an emergency, and he’s eager to see some of Aurora’s “antique” vehicles replaced with fewer, newer ones.

Jim joined the department in 1967, so he is currently one of the longest-standing active members. Jim’s wife, Faith, and both his sons, Mark and Scott, are active in local fire departments. Faith is a charter member of the Aurora Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary, Mark is Aurora’s other Assistant Chief and Scott is with the Poplar Ridge Volunteer Fire Department.

When asked what he liked best about his years in the AVFD, Jim unhesitatingly answered that he best liked working with other members of the department and sharing in the camaraderie that prevails at the fire scene or in our regular meetings or at chicken barbecues and other social events. When asked what he liked least, he said, “going to meetings of the Aurora Fire Protection District Commissioners.” He’s got nothing against the commissioners; it’s just the darned meetings. He added that the formation of the fire district was one of the best things that has happened to the department during his years of membership. Jim says the formation of the district gave the department more autonomy while relieving the residence of Aurora of some of the tax burden for supporting it without adding much to taxes in areas of the town outside Aurora.

Like many of us, Jim would like to see an increase in the number of new volunteers—a new generation coming along to serve the community. He’s gratified, however, with those newer, mostly younger members who have joined and who are taking on active roles. Not least among these is a new generation of Baileys—Mark and Scott—and a new generation of Joneses—Sarah Jones Homick and Kevin Jones. Generations of Zabriskies, Murphys and others have also followed each other into the department.

Jim’s son Mark said of working with his dad in the fire department that Jim was “a great fireman, a great inspiration, and the best dad.” Mark added that this past year, when he has served as Assistant Chief, working side by side with his dad, has been “a thrill and the realization of a dream.” Indeed, it’s Jim’s sense of continuity in the volunteer fire service and his dedication to encouraging others that brings Jim the highest praise from his chief and from his fellow firefighters. His colleagues all recognize that the department just wouldn’t work right without him.

All this and good lookin’ too!





Incident Command

At any emergency, large or small, one person must be in command. Without centralized leadership, chaos will ensue. In the fire department, this person is the Incident Commander (IC) and the IC is responsible for utilizing an Incident Command System (ICS).

The National Emergency Training Center gives the following list as the basic responsibilities of the IC at every incident: The IC

- Assesses the incident priorities
- Determines the incident's goals and objectives
- Develops or approves and implements the incident action plan
- Develops an incident command structure appropriate for the incident
- Assesses resource needs and releases needed resources
- Coordinates overall emergency activities
- Serves as the ultimate safety officer, responsible for preventing firefighter injuries and/or death
- Coordinates activities of outside agencies
- Authorizes information release to the media

Jim Bailey, assistant Fire Chief, describes the ICS as a ladder. At the top of the ladder is the IC. Going down the ladder in order of authority is the Fire Ground (incident) Officer, the Safety Officer, the Assistant Chief, the Captains, the Lieutenants, and all other personnel. To avoid confusion, each firefighter reports only to the person directly above him on the ladder. Communication flows up the Chain of Command and the Fire Ground Officer brings this information to the IC. Based on this information, the IC makes decisions.

The responsibilities of the IC are numerous. It is interesting to note that the IC does not have to be an officer. In the ICS, it is knowledge of a situation - or experience - not rank, which qualifies a person to command an incident. In our department, we are lucky to have many experienced firefighters who are prepared to assume the role of the IC. This is particularly important in a volunteer department like ours: particularly during the day, when people are at work, responding to emergencies is difficult, and we can't be sure who will be at the scene. Having a person experienced in the ICS at any call helps ensure that as the event develops, firefighters and equipment are best utilized.

A good example of this is a situation that occurred at the Mackenzie/Childs fire in 1993. According to Jim Bailey, Union Springs had been called for mutual aid in combatting the fire. Their pumper truck was backing up to a pond from which to draft water, when it slid into the pond. Rather than focus their attention on getting the truck out of the water, they realized that, even in its compromised position, it would still perform its primary function - providing water for the firefighters. Removing the truck from the pond could wait until the fire was out. Determining how to handle unexpected problems is an essential part of Incident Command.

As with every fire fighting skill, there are classes available to train AVFD members in Incident Command. Educating our members about the Incident Command System helps improve its effectiveness.

The following is an excerpt of Alice Bradley's speech at the 35th anniversary party of the Aurora Fire Department Auxiliary given Tuesday, April 12, 2005 at the Triangle restaurant in King Ferry.

Traveling down memory lane

by Alice Bradley

Aurora is unique anytime there is a change. It's no different now than it was in 1970. One of our firemen joined the department in 1967 or '68 and his wife thought, why does Aurora not have an Auxiliary?

As the department grew, we wives put our heads together and approached the fire chief about the idea of an Auxiliary. He said sure. Some members of the department had concerns, however. They thought we would want to operate the radio, drive the trucks, etc. Also, each Summer Union Springs used to have, I am not sure what it was called, but they had fire apparatus games, lots of food, etc. They wanted to know if we wanted to do that as well. All we wanted to do was be a support to the fire department and the community.

Needless to say Tom Gunderson, the fire chief at the time, had his hands full. I guess with the responsibility of fire chief, you get all the flack. So with that said, we want to thank Tom Gunderson for giving us his support. Without him, we would not be where we are today.

Next came some tweeking of the Bylaws and Constitution. Marie Taylor, Cayuga County's first female firefighter, was asked to be the liaison between the Auxiliary and Fire Department. With all of that said and done, here we are.

In our beginnings, we sponsored a Girl Scout campership. We opened a White elephant shop in the building now occupied by Posies as our first fundraiser. Our first acquisition was several pieces of furniture from a family in Auburn who had sold their house. Our White Elephant Shop was open on Wednesday mornings for the ladies who did not work outside of the home and on Saturdays. The shop not only made money for us, but it outfitted some families who had a fire and other mishaps. We also donated \$1000 to the fire department for their annual Christmas party.

We had a great turnout for this event. Many firefighters came.

The Auxiliary has had a number of members over the years. Some of our life members have passed away; Hazel Boburka, Pearl Gunderson, Anna Yale. Others who have passed away: Barbara Bottett, Sybil Fitzsimmons, Dorothy Gray, Clara Jackson, Winnie Jones, Isabelle VanOrman. Since our April meeting Gloria Peter has passed away and Betty Townsend, who is one of our members, her mother has passed away. They will surely be missed.

We handed out several certificates: Tom Gunderson as the person who was are go between. Marie Taylor who was the liaison between us and the department. Life members for their past committment; Georgia Radcliff, Sylvia Myers and Cynthia Jones. Certificates were presented to past members; Yvonne Jordan, Leah Kishpaugh and Jennifer Driscoll. We presented certificates to ourselves for the number of years we have been involved. Linda Kabelac, Betty Townsend, Judy Bailey, Faye Marion, Sandra Hilliard, Faith Bailey, Alice Bradley. And introducing our newest member, Michael Kishpaugh.

Officers at this time: Alice Bradley, President
Faith Bailey, Vice President
Linda Kabelac, Secretary
Betty Townsend, Treasurer

We are open to anyone joining our auxiliary. You may contact any one of us.

Hurricane Katrina & 2 Fire Departments

The AVFD decided in our September meeting that we wanted to help victims of Hurricane Katrina. We thought that it would be most appropriate for us to send money to fire departments who were affected by the hurricane, because our members could imagine the difficulties a fire department would be having with an “incident” of that size. We decided to send money to volunteer departments of about our size, and we asked the Aurora community to add to our contribution.

The community responded quickly, and this month we sent \$1250 each to two volunteer departments, one in Louisiana and one in Mississippi, which had been seriously affected by the hurricane and its aftermath.

Finding which departments to send it to became a challenge. We wanted to make contact with the departments, so we could confirm that they could receive mail, and that they could use the money. Calling departments directly was chancey, because most volunteer departments don't have staff waiting by the phone, and phone service itself was so limited in the hurricane zone.

Eventually we found a strategy that worked to narrow down the candidates: we called departments that we were pretty sure were outside the affected areas and asked their advice about whom could benefit. This Network of Fire Departments worked, and people were happy to hear from another fire department. In all cases, departments who weren't badly affected had worked with departments who were, and could make recommendations about which departments were similar to ours.

In one case, an officer in a paid municipal department was able to give us the phone number of one of his firefighters who volunteered in a small nearby department, which had been almost wiped out. That firefighter gave us the cell phone number for his volunteer department chief; all the other phone lines were down.

The St. Amant Volunteer Fire Department in Ascension Parish, LA, was in one of the first areas to receive survivors from New Orleans. They had spent all their budget on getting relief supplies, like drinking water, to evacuees. We spoke to Assistant Chief Tommy Lanoux, who hadn't been able to work his day job, — he has an auto repair shop —for weeks. He said his customers understood. They have about 40 volunteer members, and they'd been working pretty much non-stop.

The Fountainebleau Volunteer Fire Department in Jackson County was directly hit by Katrina. They lost one of their two stations and several trucks. They have been relying on 4 neighboring departments to respond to their fire and rescue calls. We spoke to Chief Michael Belton, who explained that they were down to only 7 of their 28 active members, because 22 of them had lost their homes.

Both of these departments can truly use the money. Thank you everyone who contributed.

Here's an excerpt from a letter that AVFD President Sarah Homick wrote to accompany the check:

[...]We are a close knit department and we work well together. We love what we do and enjoy helping people in their time of need.

Our members heard about the tragedies that struck your towns and decided we wanted to do something a little more personal than simply donating to the Red Cross. At our September business meeting, we decided to send money to two volunteer fire departments similar in size and circumstance as ours: one in Louisiana and one in Mississippi. We also decided to open these donations up to our local community and they responded.

We quickly learned that it is easier said than done to locate specific fire departments using only the internet and news reports of where Katrina did the most damage. When we tried to call departments in affected areas, we found that, “Due to the hurricane, phone service is out in the area you are trying to contact.” So, we called a fire department outside of the devastated area and asked for their assistance in finding departments in need. Working from the outside in, with some much needed input from colleagues down there, we were able to locate your department.

We truly hope that this money helps you in your time of need. You have our full support and prayers for the rebuilding of your communities.

Letter From the Chief

This seems to work pretty well; I asked for new members in the last newsletter and got two. Recently we had three more join, including junior members. Once again we've had three leave so we're really not getting the numbers up. They wanted to stay but due to circumstances were unable to. One problem we have is a lack of affordable housing. This is something I believe the community and the department should work together to fix. I know of one fire district in New York State that was having trouble with recruitment and solved it through members-only affordable housing.

Aurora does have young people in the community that appear to be staying and even returning that are the perfect age to join. I'm asking again for more people to join the department. I don't know what you expect, but we're not looking for perfect people. We just need people to join that are willing to give some time and help out a little. I'm not making this up when I say it's fun. As things change in town, the department remains a source of social activity. If you think it's not quite for you, join with a friend and start to make it your department.

Ask about coming to one of our drills, they're fun and interesting, and might make the decision to join easier.

Frank Zimdahl
Chief, Aurora Volunteer Fire Department

Fall Safety Tips

Remember to change the batteries in your smoke detectors. A good time to do this is when Daylight Savings Time ends.

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.

Never leave unattended candles burning, even for a few minutes. Make sure all matches and lighters are kept out of reach of children.

Have your furnace inspected and serviced by a professional. Purchase a carbon monoxide detector if you don't have one.

Have your chimney inspected and cleaned if necessary.

Have a fire escape plan for your home and **practice** it.

Purchase the appropriate amount of fire extinguishers for your home and know how to use them.

Purchase reflective 911 house number signs for your home.

Recent Drills:

High angle - we practiced climbing into and out of gorges with rope techniques. Members of the Cayuga County High Angle Team taught us the techniques and teamwork involved in getting patients out of hard-to-reach areas.

Water Rescue - using our rescue boat and a special inflatable craft ("Fortuna") we moved patients onto a backboard in the water and then took them safely to shore.

Hose, Pumper, and Tanker - The nuts and bolts of attacking a fire. Members worked in teams to direct high pressure streams of water at a target. Tanker and Pumper teams coordinated to ensure a reliable source of water.

Contributing to this newsletter were: Ann Balloni, Alice Bradley, Sarah Homick, Ethan MacCormick, Sara Miller, Tom Vawter 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..