

# Yes, Winter Park Needs New Fire Truck

by Jay Booth

Fire Chief Sid Ballou has gained his whole fire-fighting experience in Winter Park. He joined the department almost twelve years ago, one of nine rookies who were designated by their seniors, not A, B, or C group, but "F-Troop."

They came in at a time when there were no standard training requirements, and the department was forced to devise a six-weeks training course for them. That situation has changed, along with many others, in the building of the first-rate professional team of firefighters who now man modern, well-equipped stations in Winter Park.

Chief Ballou welcomes the present public interest which accompanies the public scrutiny of the budget. Police and fire protection are generally taken for granted. People simply assume that these two essential services are functioning well and efficiently. Perhaps that is as it should be, but that assumption rests on the day to day efforts of well-trained, highly-motivated professionals. Adequate staffing, adequate equipment, and public awareness make all the difference in the morale of the officers who are expected to combat threats to public safety.

Training for all firefighters has to meet high standards. The state requires 240 hours basic firemanship taught by state-approved training centers. In addition, the

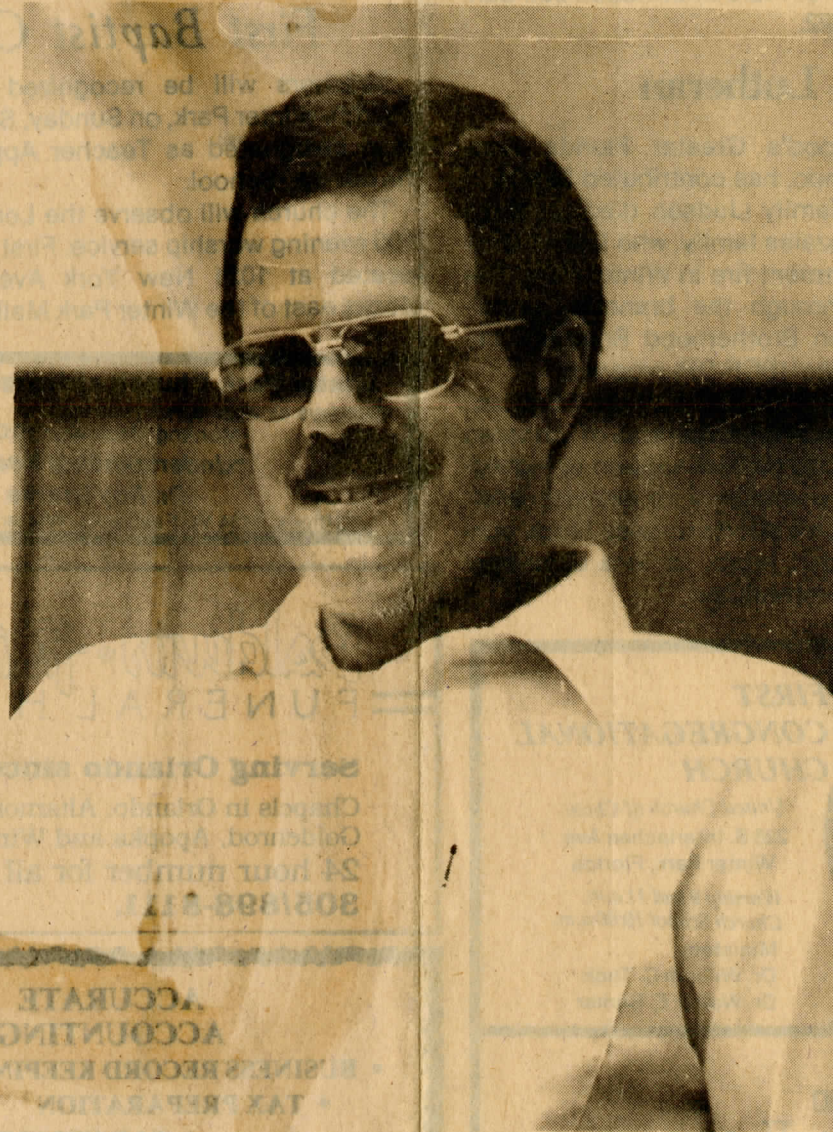
department has its own continuing education program in which each firefighter averages some fifty hours training each month.

In these sessions, they review such areas as basic firemanship and advanced rescue techniques in order to assist paramedics. They memorize all the streets and all the locations of hydrants in the city; they study all the buildings that have fire-protection systems, and the nature of those systems.

Fire prevention is an undertaking which calls on still other skills. In addition to regular fire-inspection procedures, the Winter Park department has a busy out-reach program which calls for teaching in the public schools. During Fire-Prevention Week, they make a concerted effort to visit all the schools in Winter Park. At other times in the year, they visit upon request, and they also conduct fire-house tours for interested groups.

"The Fire Chief nowadays has to be a business administrator as well as a fire-fighter," Ballou advises. He has to wrestle with policy and personnel decisions, along with the budget, and all the machinery involved in the business of insuring the public safety. Ballou doesn't drive a red car, and he doesn't have a siren. He prefers to keep a low profile and get on with the job.

On questions raised by the ongoing budget review, the contin-



Fire Chief Sidney Ballou

ued maintenance of Sub-Station 3, and the need for a new fire truck, Ballou has very definite answers.

"Yes," he says, we need Sub-Station 3." No one has ever kept records of the coincidence of fires on the west side of town and trains on the tracks in Winter Park, but the tracks are blocked for more than one hour every day. Sub-Station 3 represents a significant advantage to all the business as well as residential development on the west side. The probable addition of a 160 bed nursing home on Monroe makes it even more crucial to have a guaranteed immediate response capability in the area.

"The fire department," Ballou reminds us, "is an extension of fire insurance." The Winter Park department is rated 4 (on a rising scale from 10 to 1) by the insurance rating service.

"Yes," he says, "we need a new fire truck." The 1961 Pirsch custom-built reserve pumper which is to be replaced has, according to Ballou, never had an adequate braking system, or frame, and now has problems with the power steering. It was, prior to his joining the department, hit by a train. The nearest distributor for replacement parts is in Texas. The truck is unsafe,

and its use cannot be justified except in cases of dire emergency.

The new machine which is being considered is a rescue-pumper, a vehicle which does everything the pumper does and has the capability to transport. It is to be built on a Ford chassis with an Allison transmission, both of which can be serviced locally. The only bid received for the new truck came from Emergency One, Inc. in the amount of \$59,980. That would bring the cost of the truck, which the chassis to \$82,418. This figure compares favorably with that spent by other area fire departments for new vehicles.

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