

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA, THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 1955

Volunteer Firemen Give Loyal Service

For more years than most folks can remember, Winter Park has had a fire department—and volunteer firemen.

Early pictures on file at the fire department office on East Lyman Avenue, show a hand-drawn hose reel with about 300 feet of hose, a nozzle, and an axe. That was about all the equipment the volunteer fire department had back in 1912, to put out a fire.

Somewhere around 1915 or 1916 the fire department became motorized with a Model T Ford, and a one-horse wagon as a trailer, to haul the hose and equipment.

Some of the city's old timers who are former members of the Volunteer Fire Department, speak of that period in Winter Park's history as the "good old days". The roster of the department lists the names of many of Winter Park's illustrious and substantial citizenry. These people played an important part in the economical, social and cultural growth of the city, yet had time to devote to the good neighbor practice of fire-fighting when anyone was unfortunate enough to have a fire.

Since the dawn of history, uncontrolled fire has been a disastrous destructive force. In the early days after a serious fire man moved to another cave or a few hundred yards away and constructed himself a new thatched hut; economic loss playing a very minor part in the situation. But as populations increased the tendency grew to congregate larger numbers within more or less confined areas for protection and sociability. Buildings were made larger and higher, requiring more material to construct. Man's time became more valuable as modes changed. Destruction by fire then became an economic loss to the community. As time goes by, mercantile buildings increase in value, the owners and operators have more capital invested in merchandise. Homes are more expensive. Modern furniture and home appliances take a higher toll of the wage earners stipend.

Winter Park a few years ago went to a full-paid, full-time fire department in order that the trucks and equipment would be properly maintained, and a few people would be on hand to drive the trucks at a moment's notice. A fire protection and a fire in-

spection program was inaugurated.

For a time it was felt the volunteer firemen were no longer needed, and the mayor and commissioners passed a resolution dissolving the volunteer organization, thanking them for their years of service and expressing appreciation for their many sacrifices of time, money, and personal safety in protecting the city, its people and property from the hazards of fire.

However, it was soon discovered this action was hasty. It was found that the paid men could carry on the normal functions of the department, handle small to medium fires, but were no match for the larger fires.

So our volunteer firemen are back on the job.

So you may know these volunteers who give so unselfishly of their time and effort to protect your property and your lives from the ravages of fire, they are listed, with a few briefs, identifying words:

B. B. Bennett, who is an ardent fisherman, and owns and operates his own repair shop on Orlando Avenue;

Bruce Churchill, office and stockroom man for Johnson Elec-

tric Company. Bruce would rather fight fire than eat when hungry;

Cecil Giles—who serves Winter Park as superintendent of machinery for the city garage. Cecil grows some of the best papayas found in Florida;

Rod Ihrig, one of the volunteers' newest members, who is one of the busiest men in Winter Park. He'll give you all the oranges you can eat at his Bamboo Grove on West Morse Boulevard, and he's one of the best workers at the Methodist Church;

Charles (Buddy) Kummer — a man everyone knows. He's co-owner of the Kummer Lumber and Supply Company, following in the footsteps of his father, who devoted many years as an officer in the old volunteer fire department;

Willie McLendon, who operates a filling station on North Park Avenue. Whether the volunteers are called or not, you'll find

Willie at every fire—and working!

Summer Nixon, the modern counterpart of the old "horse trader", or "drummer". If it is for sale—or trade—see Summer.

J. A. O'Steen, who in regular duty is custodian of the Winter Park High School, and one of the most ardent volunteers.

Richard (Dick) Wagner, whom you'll recognize as city clerk. Dick is quiet, unassuming — a grand person, who spends most of his "off time" from city hall with his family or working in his yard.

Harry Williams — he's across the counter at Bumby's Hardware Store. Harry is another chap who spends a lot of time with his flowers and yard.

Many of these men have given years as volunteer firemen, others are fairly new members. Some of them grew up in Winter Park—others came here by choice. All of them have this in common—a desire to help a neighbor who no longer can help himself.

At the moment, there are two vacancies in the volunteer roster. If you are free to respond to fires or other emergencies as they occur, see Chief Allen Erwin at the fire department.

The volunteers attend fire drills the third and fourth Thursdays from 7:15 to 9:15 p.m. and get in on the dinners that are given by the regular firemen.

They also have the use of the recreational facilities at the fire station—pool, ping pong and badminton tables are at their service. There is a pay pool and the members who attend the most drills and fires get the biggest cut out of the pool. The city carries insurance on the volunteers in case of injury, and all men under 35 at the time of becoming a member of the volunteer group may, after six months, join the State Firemen's Association and take membership in the death benefit fund which pays \$1,600 upon death.

If you're a volunteer fireman, you may get your hands and face dirty—you may even get very, very wet. But you'll have a lot of satisfaction in doing a grand job for the community, and, who knows—you may end up being a hero!



Firemen and guests who attended a local banquet held at the fire hall last week included, left to right and clockwise: Clark Maxwell, city manager; Fire Chief Allen Erwin, Rod Ihrig, Eddie Doyle, Tommy Elliott, B. B. Bennett, Art Hopcraft, Edwin Ballard, Quincy Smith, Jim O'Steen, Harry Williams, Cecil Giles, Red O'Steen, Willie McLendon, Summer Nixon, Buddy Kummer, and Bruce Churchill.

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