

Volunteer Fire Department: Past and Present

In looking at the Eagle Lake Volunteer Fire Department — past and present — one thing is perfectly clear: the men of the department believe in a high standard of service to the community.

Historically speaking, there is very little written of the early fire department, but Fire Chief L. J. "Sonny" Spanhel remembers much of what has happened since he joined the department at the age of 18, in 1942.

At that time, the department had the two American LaFrance fire trucks (1916 and 1924 models), and a 1939 Ford pumper truck. Today the 1924 model American LaFrance has been rebuilt as a showpiece, and along with the newer equipment purchased, the department has added the services of a rescue vehicle and life saving equipment, compliments of \$30,000 donated by the community last year.

In the early 1900's, the early volunteer fire department was headed by a Chief Carey, and old maps of the time show a fire station along Post Office street, west of its present location. Spanhel also recalls a station house on the property behind the present tavern, called the Back Door.

Back in 1942, Spanhel recalls, men were needed for the department, because the adults in the community were stationed around the world in the effort to win World War II. At that time, he recalls, you had to have your parent's permission if you were under 18.

For more than a decade and a half now, Spanhel has led the department as chief, one of only a few men who have held the job. Other chiefs include George Keith, William M. Thomas, Sr., A. L. Dipple and Henry Kretschmar. Since he has been chief, Sonny recalls the fire that

destroyed the movie theater next to the bank as one of the worst blazes in the community. No one was injured, but the building was gutted, and had to be rebuilt.

When asked what would be some of the most important points that people could be taught, to help prevent fires, Spanhel replied that it would be hard to say: "About 75 to 80 percent of the fires are caused by human mistake," he said, carelessness. The rest are some other problem beyond anyone's immediate control.

So, with quality people to make up a quality department like Eagle Lake has, there has to be quality equipment. Although it is engineered today to perform the same jobs as a century ago, this more complicated to operate.

That's why firemen spend at least two nights a month in training and practice. On many first and second Monday nights of the month, the street in front of the fire station is blocked and the fire hoses are broken out.

The station is used on the third Monday of each month for the meeting of the ladies auxiliary, and on the fourth Monday, the department members meet for business.

That station on Post Office Street was built in 1970 from revenue sharing funds — the tax money you pay that is returned to the community from Washington.

In the immediate future, the department plans a 20 by 50 foot expansion of the building to provide storage for the showpiece American LaFrance engine, as well as more room for the men to work. Last week, city council voted to build it with about \$10,000 of the revenue sharing funds that will be available this year.

The firemen have been raising funds as they need them, but the city budgets

some money each year for future equipment replacement and additions, as the department looks to the future.

THE VOLUNTEERS
The men who make up the department today, and the dates they joined, include:

James R. Allen, September 30, 1980; David Baird, February 28, 1977; Michael Barron, February 23, 1981; Bill Blair, January 28, 1980; John Brasher, March 28, 1983; Monroe Briscoe, April 23, 1986; Pete Canaris, January 15, 1973;

Joel Garcia, December 7, 1981; Darrell Gertson, October 25, 1976; Gary Glaister, January 1, 1974; Bryan Johnson, April 28, 1980; Gene Jones, September 25, 1972; Mickey Kochwelp, February 27, 1987; Terry LeNorman, October 27, 1980;

Bobby Marsalia, February 28, 1986; Buddy Mascheck, September 25, 1972; Ronnie Miller, September 30, 1983; Clark Powers, December 11, 1978; Johnny Prazak, December 13, 1985; Lonnie Smith, February 25, 1983; T. J. Smith, July 3, 1987; Sonny Spanhel, September 28, 1942;

Melvin J. Stanek, July 24, 1967; Chuck Stephens, January 25, 1971; Edward Sunderman, December 23, 1968; Floyd Toliver, November 1, 1981; Thurston Webb, October 25, 1976; Wilfred Wick, May 25, 1984; and Leslie Wilkerson, August 25, 1980.

Retired firemen include Gordon Birdwell, Johnny Burns, Henry Dostal, Roland Harbers, Adolph Hollas, Henry Kretschmar, Leo Kretschmar, Louis J. Muzny, Albert Pustejovsky, and L. S. Tate. Widows of active retired firemen are Mrs. Christina Kretschmar and Mrs. Anita Loessin.



History of the Eagle Lake Volunteer Fire Department lives in the form of this 1924 model American LaFrance fire truck. The truck was rebuilt last year so it will be preserved as a showpiece of the hard work and dedication the volunteers here have put into the department.

ANOTHER VIEW: A fireman's wife writes —

I am proud to be the wife of a volunteer fireman, and I apologize not for thinking volunteer firemen stand at the front of the line of people I admire. I have seen my husband (and others in the department) work where canisters were exploding; come home

in an emotional state and ill, because he had to carry out the bodies of three children who perished in a fire. I have watched him bound out of a warm bed, into a freezing, rainy night at the squawk of a radio alarm, and I have watched a son go into the shaft of a

burning rice dryer because he was the "size" person needed. I also am proud that I have a son-in-law that has used his talent to design better fire fighting equipment for our department — and I could go on and on. The volunteer firemen are brothers, perhaps more

closely akin than blood brothers, who share a very precious common bond: The only purpose for being in the department is to help those who need their help, regardless of one's own personal danger, another's social status, or race. I know of no creed for volunteer firemen, but it would surely include:

I shall protect the lives and property of those who are exposed to fire and danger, seeking no recompense nor reward, and striving always to become better trained and equipped to "meet any emergency."

Youth learn leadership through scouts, Bluebirds

Boy Scouts of America Troop 334, began in Eagle Lake about July 1951. They are sponsored by the Eagle Lake Rotary Club for which they are very grateful.

Prior to 1951 Eagle Lake had two other troops — Troop 127 and Troop 313, which consolidated with Troop 334 or dissolved. At present, citizens who are on the membership roster are R.E. McInteer, Rotary Club president; Dr. Raymond Thomas, scout coordinator; Earl H. Rodgers, chairman; Mike Duarte, R.L. Schorlemmer, Dr. Jose M. Ugarte, Verlin

Argo, scoutmaster; Isidoro Ramirez, Ed Sunderman and Ed Wiese, assistant scoutmasters.

In the past ten years Troop 334 has had many important achievements — two Eagle Scouts, Gerald Hurd and Michael Schorlemmer. Daisy Mascheck became an Eagle Scout prior to 1970. To achieve this honored

position one must earn 21 merit badges. Other high points in scouting in Troop 334 have been three high adventure trips to Philmont in Cimarron, New Mexico. Those who attended Philmont have many fine memorable moments such as black bears visiting the camp, hailstorms with trees as the only protection, sore feet, and backaches from carrying 50 pounds of equipment.

Also, Troop 334 goes to summer camp each year for one week. They participate in many exciting aquatic sports, horseback riding, camping and working on merit badges while developing leadership abilities. Twice a year they visit Sea Arama for a weekend; they go to Austin to report to the State and have the experience of meeting the Governor of Texas.

The scouts participate in many community functions and show us the meaning of their motto: "Boys leading boys under supervision of adult leaders."

At present there are 18 boys scout members. The

high ranking Life Scout which is just short of an Eagle Scout is Jeff Argo. The remainder of the Scouts range from first class to tenderfoot scouts.

CUB SCOUTS

The Eagle Lake Cub Scouts are now one of the most active groups in the Brahma District, which consists of almost five counties. They have more children involved than ever and hope to continue to grow.

The highlight of the boys' year is the Annual Blue-Gold Banquet which is traditionally a covered dish meal in which family members participate. The boys receive their awards and supply the entertainment for the evening. This year's banquet was held February 25.

Cubmaster Larry Dulany said with growth comes the greater need for more adult volunteers to work aside the den leaders in den and pack projects and the brief weekly den meetings. Volunteers are not limited to parents of the scouts and it is certainly a worthwhile project.

Beta Sigma Phi

Two chapters here very active

Eagle Lake is very fortunate to have two chapters of Beta Sigma Phi, an international organization for women. It was created for young women in search of culture and social activity.

Though Beta Sigma Phi is not a service organization, its members experience the joy of helping others. The local chapters have several annual service projects, which enrich the lives of area residents. They are

always ready to assist when special needs are brought to their attention. Alpha Delta Phi was organized in 1968. Xi Psi Psi was formed in 1975. Members may progress from membership in Alpha Delta Phi to the exemplar chapter, Xi Psi Psi, after four years of active membership. Meetings are held twice monthly September

through May. A cultural program is presented at each meeting by members or guest speakers. Topics include the arts, health, nutrition, home furnishings, economics, current events, history, travel, financial planning or whatever may be of interest to members.

Annual service projects include: scholarships given by each sorority to graduating senior girls; selection of a Lady of the Year, honoring a woman who has given of her time and energy to improve the quality of life in Eagle Lake; ten women have been honored since 1973;

Sponsorship of an Art Show, exhibiting art of the Rice High School Art Department in downtown Eagle Lake; service to the residents of the Heritage House and the hospital; aid to needy families on special holidays. Both sororities participate in community wide activities such as parades, festivals, carnivals, auctions, etc.

Eagle Lake looks forward to the annual Beta Sigma Phi Western Dante in February. The colorful Beta Sigma Phi clowns have become a favorite feature at local community-wide activities such as parades and festivals.

Alpha Delta Phi officers for 1982-83 are: Mary Ann Woods, president; Vicki Powers, vice-president; Jaclyn Ashby, recording secretary; Debbie Christ, corresponding secretary; Lana Dulany, treasurer; and Gail Guthman, extension officer.

Xi Psi Psi officers for 1982-83 were: Cherry Corman, president; Diana Brunner, vice-president; Kay Clippson, recording secretary; Jean Williams, corresponding secretary; and Ernie Sommerlatte, extension officer.

Theme for this year is "Golden Key to Friendship."



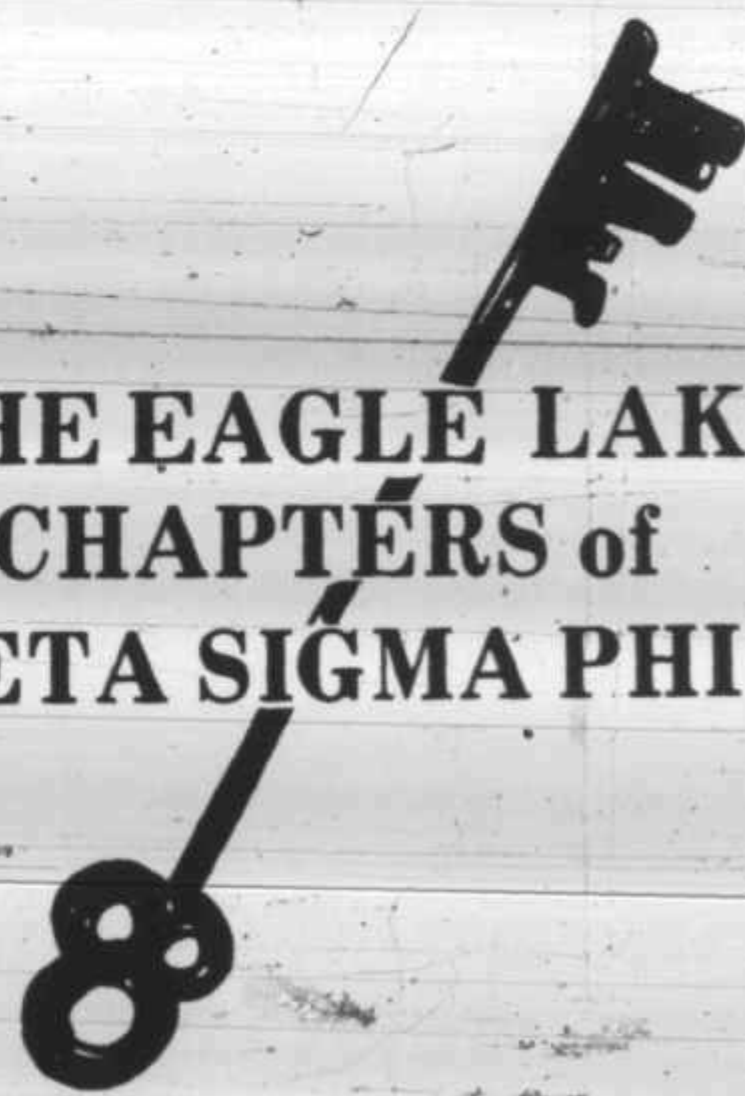
Xi Psi Psi members adopt grandmothers at Heritage House as one of their projects. In this photo, Lydia Stoddard, right, is visited by Linda Balas and Sandy Bendy, who are bringing her a bouquet of bluebonnets.

ALPHA DELTA PHI

Beta Sigma Phi

Two chapters here very active

THE EAGLE LAKE CHAPTERS of BETA SIGMA PHI



XI PSI PSI

Dr. Jose Ugarte and Family and The Staff of Ugarte Clinic

Wish to commend the Eagle Lake Volunteer Fire Department



for their dedicated service to the Citizens of this Community

Bluebird Wish

The following is reprinted from "The Blue Bird Wish", copyright 1970 by the Camp Fire Girls, Inc.

What Are Blue Birds?
Blue Birds are children who have fun and learn together. Once upon a time there were no Blue Birds.

Then one day a man and his wife named Dr. and Mrs. Luther Halsey Gulick thought they would do something about this. They had a family camp for their children and their friends. They all had so much fun that Dr. Gulick and his wife said they would have a special camp just for girls.

At that time, boys had many chances to do things that girls did not have. In 1910, the Gulicks found a beautiful lake in the state of Maine and started their camp.

At their camp the girls could swim, sing, dance, hike, cook and even ride in boats called canoes. They gave their camp a name — Camp Sebago-Wobelo.

The girls had so much fun and learned so much that Dr. Gulick said they should get together at home, too. And they did. They call themselves Blue Birds.

More and more girls wanted to be Blue Birds. Many boys did, too. Now any girl or boy who is six or seven or eight years old can be one. You can, too. A Blue Bird does many things.



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Eagle Lake

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Blue Birds

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