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AFD "newsletter"

FROM THE CHIEF'S DESK

Hello everyone! I hope you enjoy this first edition of the AFD newsletter. We may not have all the kinks worked out yet, but we wanted to get this publication started and let each of you help us develop this into something that is useful, helpful, and enjoyable. I have asked Gary Hamner and Chris Hale to serve as the editors & coordinators of this "newsletter". (We don't have an official name for it yet.) I appreciate their willingness to take on this responsibility.

My hope is that we can

use this publication to share stories, news, and celebrations that occur within our fire department family.

Our initial plan is to print this newsletter each quarter. We may move to a monthly format, once we see how the process unfolds.

I have asked our AFD retirees to participate in this newsletter. They are an important part of our fire department family and I hope there will be an article each time. I have also asked Chris Hale to write an article each time. We will be asking others to present an article from time to time. I hope each of you will let us know when you hear some family

news that can be shared by this method.

My plan is to mail this to the homes of all current and retired employees and spouses.

To all the spouses, I have a special request. Please feel free to send information to us for inclusion in this newsletter. One of the main reasons we are mailing this to the homes, is to make sure we get your help with the information flow. We want each of you to know you are part of this family as well.

Thanks for all you do and I hope you enjoy this edition! **KEN DOZIER**

Striving to Stay Connected...

We want AFD families to stay in touch with us, and with each other. So, please let us hear from you. Join us in naming our newsletter. Send your newsletter name suggestions by December 15, 2008. We will announce the winner in our next issue.

Send your stories, pictures, or questions to us at:

abifire@abilenetx.com

Gary Hamner, Co-Editor
Gary.Hamner@abilenetx.com

Chris Hale, Co-Editor
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A Quarterly Publication

AFD Log Entry - September 7, 1934 1634 Campus Courts- ACC Cleaners
 Probable Cause: Firing boiler-defective flue
 Extinguished with: No.1 Booster, No. 4 Chemical
 Equipment used: 12 ft ladder, chemical nozzle, axe, 40 gallons chemical,
 100 ft Chemical Hose, chemical nozzle. Blocks Traveled: 70 Notes: recharge chemical

Contributed by Alan Plumlee, Assistant Chief, Support Services

MILESTONES

2008 Retirements

Firefighter Buddy Sessums, 27 years of service

Lieutenant Mark Whitton 33 years of service

Firefighter Dale Hall, 21 years of service

Lieutenant Gary Cheek 24 years of service

AFD Remembers...

Waymon Carroll "Red" Tyson passed away September 28th. Red served as an AFD firefighter more than 18 years and retired at the rank of Senior Firefighter in 1983. He is survived by his wife Susie, two sons, two grandchildren, and three sisters.

AFD Promotions

Lieutenant John Brunett
Lieutenant Jeremy Williams

Service Awards

In November, Norma Petrencik receives her 15-year service award.

Graduations

Captain Tony Morris, Valedictorian, and Lieutenant Jeff Renfro graduated from the 47th Abilene Police Department Training Academy.

FF Heather Parish graduated with honors from TSTC with a degree in Vocational Nursing. For her academic work at TSTC she received the Award of Excellence for Outstanding Performance in Nursing.

Our Family is Growing!

May 18th, Hondo & Leah Henderson announced that the birth of Jaxson Ethridge. He came into the world at 8 lbs. 9 oz. and 20" long.

May 29th, the Jason King Family welcomed Whitney. She weighed 6 lbs. 9 oz. and was 19" long.

June 13th Kenny Follis and his wife became the proud parents of Emma. She weighed 8 lbs. 2 oz.

Aug. 12, 2008 Jay and Keri Sanders welcomed Chandler Renee. She weighed 7 lbs. 1 oz., and was 18 inches long.

Local 1044 Volunteers

Members of Abilene Fire Fighters Association Local 1044 headed south to help their fellow brothers during the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Kevin Johnson, Jim Frazier, Jess Madison, Steve Brasel, Brandon Brown, Wesley Bryan and Buddy (The Cook) Sessums all answered the call by heading south to the areas most affected by the hurricane and help their fellow firefighters that had lost their own homes. The group was able to help with tree removal and roof tarping to keep further damage from occurring from the elements while permanent repairs were waited on. They worked long hours going into the homes of the local members and removing all of the flood soaked items including all of their belongings, carpets, and sheetrock. After long days of cleanup they would return to the La Marque union hall for rest and food. The group was assisting local members living in Galveston, Port Arthur, Pasadena, Spring, and Bridge City.

The members that went to assist those in need received donations from the Ladies Auxiliary which donated \$300 for items needed for the trip. Steve Brasel purchased several chainsaws, pole saws and generators and left them down there for others to use, who came after our guys left. Local citizens from Abilene assisted with donations of bug spray, gas cans, bleach, 30 + cases of water and a big generator. A little girl donated a can of money that was her piggy bank. Many citizens in the Galveston area noticed our brothers wearing their Abilene Firefighter Association T-shirts and expressed their appreciation.

"...I was rescued by the firemen from Abilene Texas...I was amazed at the compassion these men showed me...They worked diligently until the job was finished before they started their long journey back to your fair city...I am eternally grateful to the firemen of the Abilene Fire Department for their assistance and dedication...It is with heartfelt appreciation that I say thank you, thank you, thank you..."

A thankful Hurricane Ike survivor from Spring, Texas

**FF JESS MADISON
TACTICAL OPERATIONS**

AFD Assists State Operations Center

On Monday, September 8th, at 1430 hrs, the Abilene Fire Department's Mobile Communications Trailer was requested for response to Hurricane Ike by the State Operations Center. Less than 24 hours after notification, a team consisting of Lt. Goettsch (AFD), Sgt. Cokonougher (APD), and dispatchers Amanda Cokonougher and Donna (DJ) Stamper arrived at the Port of San Antonio (formerly Kelly AFB) and began coordinating efforts with nine other communications teams from the Metroplex, Texas DPS, and Tom Green, Comal, and Parker Counties.

The hurricane struck the Texas Coast around 0100 hrs on the 13th and at first light, strike teams consisting of communications, National Guard, TXDOT, and DPS responded to Galveston, Beaumont, and Lufkin. The Abilene team responded to Lufkin, often depending on TXDOT or power line crews to clear the road ahead. The team spent several days testing radio systems but never set-up as an actual dispatch center, returning to Abilene Monday, the 15th.

**LT. GREG GOETTSCH
SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION**

AFD Log Entry - December 30, 1934

Telephone Alarm: 418 Merchant, Mrs. J.D. Perry, owner Occupant: Maggie Foster Servant's Quarters and garage
Extinguished with: garden hose
Blocks Traveled: 28
Notes: No. 4 filled in at No. 1 Station as No. 3 was out for gas.

**Contributed by Alan Plumlee,
Assistant Chief, Support Services**



Left to Right: FF Jess Madison, FF Brandon Brown, FF Wesley Bryan, Lt. Steve Brasel and AC Jim Frazier take a much needed break.

Windfall Elimination Provision

Before I researched this topic, I had always felt that firefighters are “penalized” by the Social Security Administration simply because we have our own pension program. The fact is, we *can* expect to receive a reduced amount of social security pension payments and benefits when we become eligible. However, as unfair as that may seem, if we really think about what social security was originally intended for, and understand why this windfall elimination provision affects us we may at least see the justification of this law.

If you work for an employer who does not withhold social security taxes from your salary, such as us, the pension you receive on that work may reduce your social security benefits.

The Windfall Elimination Provision affects how the amount of your retirement or disability benefit is calculated if you receive a pension from work where social security taxes were not taken out of your pay. A modified formula is used to calculate your benefit amount, resulting in a lower social security benefit than you otherwise would receive. Social security benefits are intended to

replace only a percentage of a worker’s pre-retirement earnings. The way the social security benefit amounts are figured, lower-paid workers get a higher return than highly paid workers. For example, lower-paid workers get an average of 55% of their pre-retirement earnings and the average replacement rate for highly paid workers is about 25%.

Before 1983, people who worked mainly in a job not covered by social security had their social security benefits calculated as if they were long-term, low-wage workers. We had the advantage of receiving a social security benefit representing a higher percentage of earnings, plus a firefighter pension from a job where we did not pay social security Taxes. Congress passed the Windfall Elimination Provision to remove that advantage.

For more info on this provision go to www.socialsecurity.gov and type, “windfall elimination provision” in the search box.

FF GARY HAMNER
SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

AHHH... RETIREMENT!

Now you can sleep late every morning and fish or play golf three or four times a week. Get up every morning and go to the café and drink coffee with your buddies. You can plant that garden you always wanted. Or travel. Or do nothing.

Sounds great! It may be your idea of retirement. It might have been mine. I can’t remember. After almost five years of retired life, my infernal, internal alarm clock still goes off between 4:30 and 5:30 every morning. I get out of bed, turn on the coffee maker, and the dog and I go get the newspaper. At some point during the trip to and from the newspaper drop point, the dog takes care of business. So begins another day.

Retirement is one of the major benchmarks in people’s lives. Other major events in our lives include marriage, the birth of our children and the passing of loved ones. During the course of a 20+ year career as a firefighter, we began to realize that we had become a part of a much larger family. We developed a bond with other firefighters, and

celebrated with them as they married, had children, and in some cases, grandchildren during their careers.

Early in our careers as firefighters we probably didn’t spend much time thinking about the day our careers would end. At some point, the time came when we began to consider life after the Abilene Fire Department. It might have come gradually, or maybe you just woke up one morning and said, “it’s time”.

We could all probably write a book, or a short story about our experiences as members of the AFD. Some would be heroic, some would be humorous and some would be sad. I think that post-retirement stories would be just as informative.

When I was asked to write this article I had no idea what my subject would be. I decided to just make some observations on Life After AFD.

Life goes on, but at a faster speed. The days go by so quickly that it seems like there are only ten months in a year, instead of twelve.

Time is extremely valuable. I’ll be 61 in a couple of months, and I’ve come to realize that every minute I waste in anger is time I’ll never get

back.

My honey-do list never gets shorter. I’ve painted the exterior of the house, most of the interior walls, some more than once since I retired. I’ve painted the interior and exterior of my mother-in-law’s house. About the time I get caught up, somebody adds a couple more projects to the list. I love it!

My wife will be retiring from Taylor County in December. Starting in January, we will see our medical costs triple. Reality will set in. I can hardly wait.

Our oldest grandson is a senior at Texas Tech. How did he get so old so fast?

Spencer Taylor (retired Lt.) and I play golf fairly often from October until May. He plays golf with me because nobody else will put up with him. I play golf with him because I feel sorry for him. The last time we played he beat me. I may have to find another partner.

God has blessed our family and I have some great friends from my AFD days. What could be better?

Life is good! Enjoy your retirement!

CAPT. STEVE FULLERTON
RETIRED



Your Abilene Fire Department
250 Grape Street
Abilene, Texas 79601

FROM THE TAILBOARD

A note from the tailboard and the heart, Thanks For All You Do! You may hear that often or not often enough. In either case, I believe it cannot be said enough. I've been blessed with the extraordinary opportunity and honor to walk beside you for the past few years. Yet in this brief time I've gotten to know and appreciate you, not simply for what you do, but for who God has created you to be. I have watched many of you perform your duties tirelessly and skillfully serving people in the worst of situations. Undoubtedly, you have been blessed with heart, stamina, skill, compassion, and courage. Passion and dedication are a hallmark on both sides of the engine room. Some of you have transitioned from the floor to eights with passion and dedication and some have transitioned from eights to the floor climbing back on your engine or ladder with this same intensity and spirit. In both cases performing your duties with great attitudes and determination doing the best that can be done. Many have retired and rookies have entered. Each learning from one another what it

means to be a member of the Fire Department Family. I have watched you encourage each other through a kind word or well-intentioned joke to break the tension of the moment. I appreciate every moment the Almighty gives me to be here, sometimes around the table sharing a cup of coffee, sometimes at a scene, and sometimes and most regrettably in a heart wrenching situation. Most of the time I watch, I pray, respond when called to do whatever I can, providing support and encouragement. At times I hit the mark, and sometimes I miss it, yet you continue to encourage me and extend grace, and for that, I say thank you.

As this first newsletter goes out, from someone who doesn't don a set of bunkers or risk their life on behalf of others daily, Thank You! Thanks for the countless early morning calls you make, thanks for studying and being prepared each time the alarm sounds, thanks for opening your door to the neighborhood kid who is in awe of you and that big rig which roars out of the bay, thanks for your kind word to the elderly person who needs comfort and encouragement, and

for the risks you take to save property and lives each and every day. But most of all, I thank God for creating you to be who you are and for your willingness to use your gifts in service to others daily. If I can offer you any encouragement let it be this:

***Does not the potter
have the right to make
out of the same lump of clay
some pottery for noble purposes
and some for common use?
Romans 9:21***

When a day seems long remember God is using you as a vessel for a noble purpose. He is using the knowledge, skill, and care He has entrusted you to bring healing, care, and safety to those who are in desperate and not so desperate times. Fully know your presence and compassion bring a sense of security to those in need along with our entire community. You are truly being used for a noble purpose.

May the Lord Bless and Keep Each of You.

CHRIS HALE, CHAPLAIN