

Yrac Remembered

05/29/08 81 W, 1 I - + 10 - 13

The pending planned closing of Western Wake Station 2 on July 1 (egad) is also an opportunity to remember the Yrac Fire Department, which originally constructed and occupied the facility from 1966 to 1998. They then merged with Fairgrounds Fire Department, which itself was a reborn version of the Western Boulevard Fire Department, which disbanded after city annexations. Let's begin our Yrac tribute with an open thread for personal memories. Post 'em if you got 'em. I'll add historical bits as we go.



First time I saw the Yrac station was around 1968. My father and I were on an 'out and about' trip and as we passed by the '62 Chevy/ALF was outside and a member was inside waxing his car. We stopped by and it turned out him and my dad knew each other. While we were there they got a call for a woods fire at the old Kildaire Farms (yes, there WAS a Kildaire Farm). They rolled all three trucks they had at the time- the ALF, the deuce-and-a-half tanker, and another tanker that I think was on a late 40's-early 50s Ford chassis, with a rectangular tank (they sold that truck later to Kildaire Farms- I remember seeing the tank sitting on blocks in the mid 70s).

By the time I became a member in 1979, Mickey Denning was chief and Howard Finch was assistant chief. The fleet included the yellow truck pictured above, the '62 ALF, the '71 Chevy brush truck, and a tanker that I am pretty sure was on a '69-'72 Chevy chassis (later sold to a department in Hoke County). They had a sizable district then, but it was getting smaller.

DJ ([Email](#)) - 05/29/08 - 10:00

What's the origin of Yrac?

The origin of the name is easy, it's Cary spelled backwards.

The origin of the fire district dates to 1958, when the Cary rural fire district was renamed as the Yrac rural fire district. That's when the first rural fire insurance districts were forming in Wake County. Since a Cary fire district already existed for the town proper, the rural district was renamed to something similar. This happened all over Wake County, such as the Apex fire district in town, and the Hipex fire district out of town.

The origin of the fire department is a longer story, starting in 1922 with the town's first fire department. The volunteer firemen operated a Ford/ALF Model T chemical car purchased by the town. This method of operation was used in several Wake County towns, with volunteers starting up with town-funded equipment.

In 1954, the town's volunteer firefighters incorporated as the Cary Rural Fire Department, Inc. Two years later, Boyd Wilson Morris became the first paid Cary firefighter. The town continued to provide funding, as did the volunteers, through highly successful Fireman's Days and other fund-raisers. The CRFD also received money from the county. The department was soon equipped with a pair of stations, and a rescue truck

and two tankers, in addition to their two pumpers.

By the end of the decade, the town was increasingly interested in greater control of the fire department. In 1960, Mayor Waldo Rood suggested the town establish its own department, which would be a volunteer group directed by a paid chief. Said chief would be both fire and police chief. The town board adopted a resolution supporting the Mayor, but both firefighters and townspeople disagreed with the proposal. So the issue was sent to committee.

One point was rural protection. More than two-thirds of their calls were to the rural area, and the town was paying over 85% of the cost. And when firefighters were out on a rural call, there were few left in town for municipal calls. So the Mayor's proposal included a recommended restriction on the town fire department volunteers, don't answer calls out of town except as mutual aid to other towns, and don't volunteer with other departments.

(The CRFD had been providing fire protection to a rural area as wide as Morrisville to Method. That was shrinking, though, with MFD forming, and soon Western Boulevard, and later Raleigh covering the west side of Raleigh.)

On September 15, 1960, the town's fire department split into two entities. CFD, newly created, serving the town, and CRFD serving unincorporated areas. Pete Murdoch was appointed Chief of both departments, with Paul Matthews as Asst. Chief of CFD, and Willie Crumpler as Asst. Chief of CRFD.

This split department didn't last. The Cary Rural Fire Department was reorganized on December 1, 1961. Or maybe it resumed operation, just changing the address of the corporation. The elected officers and directors were Clyde Keisler (President), Ed Sturdivant (Vice President), M. P. Harris (Secretary), J. M. Maxwell (Treasurer), and Haywood Atkins, R. S. Linville, and W. T. Cooper (Directors).

The first Chief was Jackie Hunter, and the department operated out of Cary Fire Station 2 on Cedar Street. They soon commenced operation out of a rented garage (\$50 per month) behind Cricket's Service Station at the corner of Cedar and Ward streets. The lot is presently occupied by an auto parts store.

They had two vehicles; an International tanker (1,500/300) and a Ford F-8 truck. Plus, a mess of equipment, including hose, nozzles, a couple of ladders, a portable pump, and two coats and four helmets. The rest of their tangible personal property, now used by CFD, had been given to the town. A lot and its contents had also been given to the town, likely Station 2 on Cedar Street.

In 1962, CRFD changed their name to Yrac Rural Fire Department, Inc. They held their first annual community meeting at Cary Senior High School in May 1962. They also sponsored the 10th Annual Cary Fireman's Day, wholly handling organization of the event that included participation of CFD. They also received all of the funds raised at the event. In future years, fundraising benefited both CFD and YRFD, with proceeds split between the two.

Within a year, YRFD had 24 volunteers, a new Chevy/American LaFrance pumper, and an additional 1,000-gallon tanker. Residents in the district were requested to pay membership fees, along the lines of \$10 per home. Business establishments received pro-rated fees. Paid members were not charged for fire calls. Non-members were charged a \$50.00 minimum. Fires were reported by calling HO-7-9200 or VA-8-3443.

YRFD answered 29 calls its first year.

Legeros - 05/29/08 - 20:24

My beginnings in the fire service were at YRAC. I saw them at a working fire(back then it was code 2 condition red) one night (around 1991) and stopped to check out the commotion. I ended up knowing several of the guys and was eventually invited to stop by the station and "check it out". I thought the whole idea was pretty cool and signed up. Although I havent been around East Durham Rd in several years now I will never forget the sound of the tones dropping and the siren winding up! I also remember thinking that 299 was the best looking (and working) brush truck in the county.

firedriver - 05/29/08 - 21:56

YRAC was my first official affiliation in public safety back in May 1986. What a great way to spend my first summer home from college. I learned a lot of lessons about firefighting, especially real basics, because we trained hard every Thursday night. We had to as I think we only ran like 60 calls that year. Every week we either flowed water, laddered buildings, or trained on SCBA (old SurvivAir with the low-pressure

hose). I'll never forget my first ride in a jumpseat on 292 (the new one) or riding tailboard down Maynard Rd on 291 dodging bugs coming over the roof of the cab (it sucked being 6'5" tall). Before I moved East in 1994, it was clear that times were changing and that the YRAC we all had loved was indeed not going to be around forever.

Thanks to those back then that took the time to teach newbies like me the basics that have kept us safe through all these years – Sam Matthews, Craig Zglinski, Matt Kuyla, Tim Bannister, Steve and Phil Richards, Tim Murphy, and the rest that I'm forgetting.

I hate to see it end, but I'll be there to grab a brick or two one day when they eventually raise the building. I'll always have my original 660 helmet as a memento, too.

Olson - 05/29/08 - 23:28

YRAC was the first fire station I was a part of. I remember walking down the railroad tracks when I was young and seeing one of the guy's mowing the grass on that crazy hill. I told my buddy that one day I would be a fire fighter out there cutting the grass and washing the trucks. As soon as I was able to I joined YRAC, I was still in High School. My first ride on a apparatus was 299.(firedriver, I agree with you, It was the best Brush truck in the county!!) My stay was not long about a year, I joined the Army, but when I left the Army in 2003 I went right back up and got back on the department. Things are a lot different now but I still keep in contact with the guys who are no longer on YRAC and I still look up to them just like I did back in the day. It's a little weird but I can still walk into the station and remember the smell the same way I did when I was younger. It always brings back memories. The nick name... Yea, that's from the guys at YRAC and it stuck ever since.

Kermit - 05/29/08 - 23:37

Oh, how I remember the training on Thursdays. Olson's right, we ALWAYS did something- some sort of practical drill. And many times we were timed- how fast we could get the SCBA on out of the box (they were the old Scott IIA's at that time- we had a couple of the Survivairs), or how fast we could advance the 1 1/2 or 2 1/2 line from the time the pumper stopped. That is the kind of stuff you don't see much of any more.

During the time I was there (1978-1985) we only had one of the traditional classes that was about fire cause determination taught by Calvin Beck. Some of the names mentioned by Olson came after I left, but in Sam & Jim Matthews, Craig Zglinski, Phil Richards, Howard Finch, Stanley Loren (I don't know if I spelled that one right) and Mickey Denning (along with a couple of others who I can't remember their names) I was fortunate enough to benefit from a wealth of real firefighting knowledge that I have not seen rivaled anywhere since.

My first tailboard ride was down Chatham Street going to a garage fire on the original 291 (it was Yrac Unit 1 then). My first fire truck 'drive' with lights and sirens was the original 292 (Yrac Unit 3 back then). It was terribly cold natured and the lifters were awfully noisy, but once it was warmed up it was a pretty good truck.

And I still have my MSA Topguard helmet with leather front that says 'DRIVER' and 'YRAC' on it, right beside by YRAC FIRE DEPT. car tag (thanks, Mike!), and my NC registration tag that says YRAC 12.

DJ ([Email](#)) - 05/30/08 - 09:38

Yrac members in 1971: Chief Jack Hunter, Asst. Chief W. E. Edwards, Captain Jerry Adams, Captain Ronnie Stevens, Lt. Lane Beamer, Lt. John Owen, and firemen Haywood Atkins. R. L. Austin, R. A. Austin, Allen Bates, Russell Booth, Alex Cooper, Howard Finch, W. E. Godwin, Joe Hodges, Lindsay Hodges, A. D. Hunter Jr., J. L. Matthews, R. L. Matthews, S. P. Pendergraph, "Big" John Ruth, T. S. Secrest Jr., R. L. Stevens, James W. Tew, Buddy Tucker, Seawell Turner, and Dennis White.

Legeros - 05/30/08 - 18:59

Yrac members in 1961: Chief Jack Hunter, Asst. Chief J. H. Crumpler, Training Captain E. G. Williams, Pumper Captain J. A. Dewar, First Lt. Bill Edwards, Second Lt. R. L. Stevens, Tanker Captain C. J. Duke, Truck #1 (pumper) personnel: J. A. Dewar (Captain), J. P. Matthews, Frank Turnipseed, R. L. Stevens, Bill Edwards, James Atkins, Robert Austin, Russell Jacobs, Pete Hodges, Alvin Humphries, Jerrall Spencer, Earl Williams. Truck #2 (tanker), C. J. Duke (Captain), Haywood Atkins, Charles Pendergraft, Frank Miller, Jimmy Senter, Russell Booth. Traffic: Bill Edwards (Lt.), Frank Miller, Alvin Humphries, Frank Turnipseed, Pete Hodges. Plus six committees with members: Membership, Building & Grounds, Equipment, Sickness, Social, and Election.

Legeros - 05/30/08 - 19:20

I volunteered with YRAC during my last few years of college: 1982-1985. What great memories and a great bunch of guys. I remember driving the Chevy 297 tanker for the first time and getting it stuck in the mud on the passenger side while backing up on a dirt road (at least I didn't back it into a tree, Tim Bannister!!!)

Mark Clawson ([Email](#)) - 06/06/10 - 20:17

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