

## Six Forks Fire Department, 1971

08/27/10 1445 W, 2 I - + 9 - 5

For your Friday enjoyment, the following article and pictures appeared on the front page of *The Northside News* on June 16, 1971. The Six Forks Fire Department was profiled in that issue, and over a number of pages. We'll work on getting more pictures scanned, and more text transcribed. This was their fourth issue of that newspaper. Don't know the publisher, or how long they operated. A stylized version of the station photo appeared in my *Raleigh and Wake County Firefighting* books, and is the only such picture that Yours Truly has come across. Maybe there are others. Click to enlarge these pictures:



AT DAWN - The station awakens from the night before. There had been no call, but everything stood ready nevertheless. The call for help brings on a sudden transformation at the station.



READY TO ROLL - Ben Jeffreys, driver, Don Adams on the pump, and Fred Lynn on the back board of Engine number 1 for a call. They are "turned out" in full gear.

## **Volunteer Fire Department Renders Great Service**

It all began for the Six Forks Fire Department back in 1956. The first fire station was located where the present Wachovia Bank sits in North Hills. The single fire truck was kept in an addition to Bill Howell's store.

Next, the station moved across Six Forks Road to the area where the NCNB North Hills Branch stands. And in 1962, the station found its present location.

Now, the Six Forks Fire Station is sentinel for over \$14,000,000 in personal property. The 26 men of the fire department and their three trucks have an awesome responsibility. The area covered by the department runs from the west of N.C. number 50 all the way to the Old Wake Forest Road. They serve as far north as the Six Forks community.

Although the Six Forks Fire Department is an all-volunteer group, it is extremely professional. The firemen are dedicated men who know their business. Their equipment is also of high quality. The most recent acquisition, a 1970 American LaFrance pumper with a 500-gallon capacity. It is, appropriately enough, Engine number 1. Engine number 2 is a 1961 International pumper and number 3 is a 1500-gallon 1965 Chevrolet tanker.

The department has fought its share of the big fires. They were called to aid in the battles against blazes at the Angus Barn, the Raleigh Stockyards, the Six Forks Community Grocery, the Millbrook High School Field House, and the Capital City Auction Building. The men of the department have also seen their share of tragedy. They answered the call to a home in the Bayleaf Community where three people died in a blaze.

The bizarre has teased the firemen on several occasions. They vividly remember the night when an all-day rain had turned into snow and sleet. It was the kind of weather that made any kind of fire seem to be an insult to nature's efforts to wet the world. But it happened. At 3:00 a.m., the call came in. The dispatcher said that there was a tree fire, and the firemen at first couldn't believe it. Had ice and snow started burning? Hurrying to the scene, the men found a mammoth oak tree at least four feet in diameter, burning away in the snow and sleet. They proceeded to douse the flames, but that fire has entered the annals of the department.

Distance means nothing to the Six Forks volunteers. They have rushed to the scene as far away as Franklinton and Henderson. The volunteer departments in the north Wake County area have an agreement whereby each will help the other. The other departments in the understanding for mutual help are the Durham Highway department, Bayleaf, Wake New Hope, Falls of Neuse, and the Fairgrounds.

The above departments are all volunteer, and their support is the best buy around for the property owners in the districts served by the departments. The property taxes of the district pay the way for maintenance and equipment acquisition. Ten cents of each property tax dollar goes to the local fire department, and although the county offers adequate support for the fire department, buying a new pumper can be a task of major proportions. At Six Forks, the new American LaFrance pumper cost about \$24,000.

Costs for the citizen and the county are minimal when placed beside those of the individual fireman. The fireman receives no compensation. He is on call any time, day or night. He carries a portable monitor with him in his car and to his home. His wife may be assigned a base station monitor for the week. If an alarm sounds, she must call all of the firemen on her list whether they be at home or at work. She then calls other base monitors to make certain that the other women have alerted the firemen on their lists.

The alarm system is quite intricate. No call actually goes to the Six Forks Station. Instead, all calls go directly to the central dispatcher at Fire Station Number One downtown. As the call is taken, the dispatcher presses a button which sets off the alarm on Six Forks Road, and at the same time, the portable monitors and the base monitors manned at the firemen's homes.

Chief Hunter Averette stressed the point that it is best if the person calling in a fire will take his time and give complete information. The alarm is set off once the dispatcher knows the area of the fire. Additional details will in no way slow down the firemen's getting to the scene. They will receive the additional facts about the fire while on their way to the station or to the actual scene. Chief Averette says that talking a little more will get the firemen there all the quicker.

The firemen realize that the siren near Northclift is quite loud, but they said that whenever it pierced the air, someone is in serious trouble and needs help.

The siren goes off for one short blast every Tuesday night for an equipment test. And if you hear it at 7:00 p.m. the first Monday night of each month, it is a Civil Defense test. If you find the noise irritating, just let it pass, for the sound of security should outweigh any momentary

discomfort.

Chief Averette said that any call is as important as another, and that the department didn't know a rich man from a poor man when it comes to fighting a fire. He also said that people should not be embarrassed to report a fire, whether actual or suspected. He said that one should not feel that his problem is not important enough to call the fire department. If you even think you might have a bad situation, the chief says that you should call in.

The thoughts of Chief Averette reflect the philosophy of the volunteer firefighters of the Six Forks Volunteer Fire Department. They are men dedicated to service. Their reward is the knowledge that they can help their fellow citizens in times of trouble. They face dangers on every call, yet they know more of life at its crisis moments. The spirit of fellowship and companionship among the firemen themselves is another rarity in the life of a growing metropolitan area.

Working as a team for the betterment of their community, the men of the Six Forks Volunteer Fire Department reflect the true spirit of American democracy.

### Mike's Notes

- The department was originally named Six Forks Road Fire Department.
- The Six Forks community was located where Six Forks, Strickland, Baileywick, and Lead Mine roads once joined, at the present intersection of Six Forks and Strickland roads.
- The department had two sirens for alerting members. A small electric siren operated at the station, while the 7.5 HP whopper was located in the Northclift subdivision, near the present intersection of Six Forks Road and Northclift Drive.
- The department's first pumper was a 1956 Ford/American that subsequently served the Falls Fire Department.
- The 1961 International pumper was subsequently disposed to the North Carolina Zoo, and was the first apparatus to serve at that location.
- The address of the above fire station was 5305 Six Forks Road.
- The department relocated three years after this article, to 1431 Lynn Road. They built a three-bay building that was expanded a number of times, and presently serves as both Bay Leaf Fire Station 3 and Six Forks EMS Station 1.
- The members of SFFD formed Six Forks Rescue Squad in 1976. They were the only rescue squad at the time not affiliated with a municipality.
- The department merged with Bay Leaf Fire Department in 2002. Their apparatus was not re-lettered, and one truck still reads SFFD.

---

Mike, first thanks for posting this story and all the other photos and stories. Your work is greatly appreciated.

I don't know if you realized it but you recently posted a picture of BLp121 under "Various" with SFFD proudly displayed [<http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/2010-08-25-various/slides/2010-08-21-blfd-sta3-1-mjl.html>]

Thanks Again.

**[PJF]** - 08/27/10 - 11:43

What a trip back in time. So many of us spent our youth at Six Forks FD and it will be a time that is never forgotten. Thanks for this posting.

**AB** - 08/27/10 - 13:09

"Like!" I do remember riding by there on the way to North Hills with momma to go shopping. Those were the days... no child seats, no seatbelts. "Community" had a much different meaning then (as compared to now). There are some good men pictured in this photo.

**A.C. Rich** - 08/27/10 - 23:33

Name: (real name  
preferred)

E-mail: (optional)

Remember personal info?

Yes

No