

History of the Greensboro Fire Department: 1808 — 1990

1808-1984

Greensboro, North Carolina was chartered in 1808. The first fire protection for the town was authorized by the General Assembly in 1828. It was 1833, however, before an agreement could be reached concerning the type of protection and how it was to be enforced. Each household was ordered to have two ladders on its premise, one kept on the roof that would allow access from the ground to the eaves. Rubbish and nuisances were banned from the back yards. William R. D. Lindsay and Police Officer Logan were appointed to enforce the new law which carried a \$5 fine if the household had failed to comply.

In January 1849 Greensboro suffered its first fire of major consequence. This fire nearly destroyed the entire business community of the town. J. B. Lossing, an author and historian recorded that the fire began in "a large frame dwelling a short distance from the courthouse. There being no fire engine in the city, the flames spread rapidly and at one time menaced the safety of the whole town. A keg of powder was used without effect to demolish a tailor shop standing in the way of the conflagration towards a large tavern. The flames passed on until confronted by one of those broad chimneys on the outside of the house, so universally prevalent in the South, when it was subdued, after four buildings were destroyed."

Not surprisingly, soon after this event Greensboro officials bought a hand brake or pumping engine and put in two cisterns which provided their new fire engine with a water supply. The first fire company that manned this new engine was a totally volunteer organization composed mostly of prominent citizens of the community.

In 1871 an attempt was made to further improve the town's firefighting capabilities with the addition of a hook and ladder company. The department was unsuccessful. In 1872 fire destroyed a large portion of the town once again. This fire leveled the County Courthouse, W. C. Porter's Drug Store, Farmer's Bank, Southern Hotel and two rows of framed law offices.

The second major fire resulted in the organization of a second volunteer fire company. This second company was equipped with a "chemical apparatus, a double chemical engine equipped with two thirty-five gallon chemical tanks." The original fire company was in charge of this new equipment. These improvements were initially met with considerable enthusiasm but interest soon waned and in 1884 there were only five men in the chemical engine company. This five man company was not only expected to fight fires but also had to hand pull their new engine on mostly unpaved streets.

It was at about this time that Harper J. Elam, a young entrepreneur, moved to Greensboro from Charlotte where he had experience with a well organized fire company. Mr. Elam quickly determined that the young Greensboro was virtually defenseless. He convinced the citizens that the situation was inviting a third disastrous fire. Interest resumed and Greensboro formed a new volunteer organization that was to endure until the fire department went to a paid effort in 1926.

Dr. Ed Lindsay was elected president of this new volunteer

organization and Judge David Schenck was made its secretary. Under their leadership, the company had a large and strong membership. The men were extremely committed to protecting their community. However, they still lacked adequate tools and money.

At this same time, a group of prohibitionists were very strong in Greensboro. The city elections were drawing close. The prohibitionists had made a strong bid for the support of the firefighters by promising that if their "dry" platform allowed a majority in the City Council, they would purchase the group a steam fire engine. The campaign was a very heated one. When the votes were in and counted, it was found that the "wets" had won. Upon taking charge of the government, the "wets" proceeded to steal a plank from the "dry's" platform. A steam fire engine was purchased at once. This engine, known as the "General Greene," was put into service in 1886.

Judge David Schenck was appointed chairman of a committee in 1888 to build a house for the "General Greene." A station adjoining the old City Hall was erected at 108 West Gaston Street, now West Friendly Avenue. Once the new station opened, horses were purchased.

Fire protection grew as rapidly as the city and in 1890 the first hook and ladder company, housed at 209 South Davie Street was formed. This ladder truck was pulled by hand and had a tiller for guidance. One year later, the Eagle Hose Company No. 7 was located adjacent to Hook and Ladder Company No. 1. The Southside Hose Company No. 4 was organized in 1894 and was situated at the corner of Bragg and Asheboro Streets. The West End Hose Company No. 5 was organized in 1897, and occupied a building near the corner of Spring and Mendenhall Streets. These buildings, though now abandoned, still stand. The last of the volunteer companies formed was the Excelsior Hose Company No. 2. It was composed entirely of black citizens and was located at the corner of Gaston and Elm Streets. A second more powerful steam engine, built by T. S. LaFrance Company, was purchased in 1904.

Fire Departments have been traditionally and understandably proud of their equipment. Before the turn of the century fire departments were equally as proud of their teams of horses. The town of Greensboro was no exception. One horse in particular seems to have stood the test of time and is still remembered. "Prince" was the most photographed and talked about horse of the times. It was reported in the Raleigh Post in 1901 that the horse was given liquor after each fire call. The money was con-

tributed by men who hung around the station. It was stated that he drank the very best rye that was available ... one pint at a time!

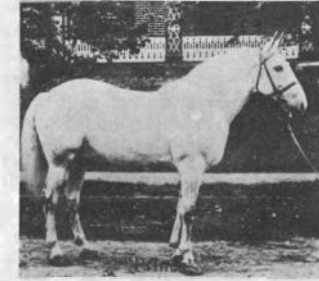
On July 13, 1899, Greensboro saw its last major fire of the 19th Century when flames broke out in the Benbow House Hotel. Estimated at a cost of \$40,000 when it was built in 1871, the hotel had been opened with ceremonies presided over by the Governor of New York and former North Carolina Governor Zeb Vance.

When the fire was first spotted, someone on a nearby locomotive blew its whistle loudly to signal that firefighters were needed. Volunteers from a hose company arrived first and seemed prepared for quick control of the situation. By this time, some of the local citizens had begun to gather at the scene. When they saw the "General Greene" rushing down the street some of the men "rared back with their thumbs in the button holes of their vests" and commented proudly about the modern machine. Murphy's Law seemed to be most prevalent that day, for no sooner had the firefighters prepared the engine, when a vital part, the airdome, blew out and left the machine totally useless. The boosters of the crowd soon began fretting that the entire town, including the County Courthouse, might burn. But C. W. Lee, a train dispatcher, came to the rescue by using a piece of leather and a length of timber to repair the airdome. The engine was back in service. Because of Lee, the town was saved, but the multi-story hotel was ruined, and its loss doubtlessly changed the future appearance of downtown Greensboro.

Motored vehicles gradually began replacing horse drawn vehicles in 1913. Growing pains caused the city government to extend its boundaries in 1924. Fire protection services were also affected. The city council authorized the sum of approximately \$300,000 to be spent on fire department improvements. These improvements included the building and equipping of Station 7 at the corner of Church Street and Bessemer Avenue, Station 8 on West Lee Street, the renovation of Station 4 and 5, and also provided for the construction of "Central Station" at 318 North Greene Street.

The formal opening of Greensboro's new "Central Fire Station" took place on May 15, 1926. The citizens of Greensboro turned out in masses to inspect the magnificent new home for the four central fire companies. When the final details had been completed and the doors thrown open to the public, Greensboro felt assured that no city could surpass this station. An elaborate alarm and recording system built by Gamewell Systems of Newton Falls, Massachusetts, was one of the major features of the new station. With the implementation of this new system, the ringing of the old bell in the city hall as a fire alarm passed into history.

About this same time, plans were in the making for an "all paid" department. This became a reality on June 1, 1926. The department was composed of eight companies which encom-



passed 47 men, with Frank D. Shaw as the chief until his death on July 13, 1946. It was also during this time that a young 20 year old, Calvin W. "Moon" Wyrick joined the department. The first year speaks well for the new paid department. For in that year, a reduction of \$200,000 in fire losses won first place for cities of our size in the United States.

In the next several years, the greatest single catastrophe ever to confront the Greensboro Fire Department was to take place. On a Thursday evening, April 2, 1936, a tornado descended upon the city from the southwest. It made its initial stab near the quarters of Engine Company No. 8 on West Lee Street. Sweeping with all the known fury of Mother Nature in her most destructive mood, the funnel seared along West Lee Street in an easterly direction cutting a path of death and destruction never before witnessed by our city. From a moment after 7:15 p.m. on through the night and well into the following day, all available firefighters labored to fight fires in the demolished buildings. They also rescued victims who were trapped under the debris. When the skies cleared, Greensboro had lost 13 citizens, 144 were injured and 289 buildings were damaged. Fifty-six of these were destroyed.

Until January 1, 1941, firefighters worked four days in a row and were off one day. They were allowed to go home for meals and on occasion, a volunteer would relieve a paid man in the evening so he could go home to his family. In January of 1941, 28 men were hired to start a two platoon system. One platoon of men would work ten hours from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. while the other shift would work from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. These two platoons would switch working hours every six days. Eventually these two platoons evolved to "A" and "B" shifts which worked 24 hours on duty and 24 hours off duty.

On the evening of August 21, 1946, the citizens of Greensboro learned that Captain Calvin W. Wyrick had been appointed Fire Chief. City Manager Henry A. Yancey, said upon his appointment of Chief Wyrick, "Captain Wyrick brings to this job not only youth and vigor, but 20 years of experience and is eminently qualified for the position. He might be fittingly termed the boy veteran. He will be in complete charge with no strings upon him and will have every opportunity to use his knowledge and ability for the department and the city."

In 1946 an incident occurred in Greensboro which brought the city national attention when accounts of the story appeared in Reader's Digest magazine. In July of that year a painter was at work on a 360 foot radio tower at WBIG when an accident plunged him through a maze of crossbars and lodged him 310 feet above the ground. An alarm was sounded and Captain Roma C. Fortune and Firefighter Charles H. Henderson were dispatched to the scene. In spite of the great height and difficulty in lowering the injured painter, these two firefighters made a successful rescue that day. Their heroic action earned them the Coronet Award. Roma Fortune was later hired as fire chief for the city of Burlington.

In January of 1949, the City of Greensboro and the Fire Department served as hosts to over 400 city officials and firefighters from cities and towns throughout three states for a demonstration of five new apparatus. These new trucks and the plans for two new fire stations were the result of a 1947 bond issue which gave the department \$300,000 for improvements. The two new stations that this



Southside Hose Company, year unknown.



Unidentified fire. Old courthouse bell tower in background.



Steamer Hose Company #1, 1907.

money allowed the department to build were Station #3 on Yanceyville Street and Station #6 on Westover Terrace. Once these stations were completed it gave Greensboro a total of seven stations, ten companies and ninety-eight personnel.

The Fire Prevention Bureau of the department became a formal division on August 16, 1950, when Captain Fred V. Trulove was put in command of four full time inspectors. During their first year, the Fire Prevention Bureau cited and corrected 2,282 violations!

1950 brought another major change for the department. Captain E. E. McDowell was named the first Training Officer of the Greensboro Fire Department. He received this new assignment after completing a three month course of study at the New York City Fire College. This was also the time a member of the department was sent out of state to school. He brought back advanced techniques of firefighting and implemented the first formal officer training course ever conducted. In his first year of service the department totaled 25,244 hours of training. On June 21, 1954, then Assistant Chief McDowell died of a heart attack while playing softball, at the age of 35. The successor to his position was George C. Wuchae. Robert L. Powell, Jr. was promoted to captain as Wuchae's assistant.

In 1951 two-way radios were installed in all vehicles of the department. The Assistant Chief received a car to replace the pick up truck he had used to respond to calls.

In 1952 experimentation with 1½ inch hose to replace 2½ inch hose as handlines began. Recording of all station activities in log books began on February 22nd. The 65th Convention of the North Carolina State Firemen's Association was held in Greensboro with over 1,500 firefighters from 242 cities in attendance. Chief "Moon" Wyrick was elected as the new president of the association and the department unveiled its new \$8,000 power unit.

Two major fires in 1953 caused the city to suffer its first annual fire loss of over a half million dollars. The Kinney Shoe Store at 230 South Elm Street caught fire on March 5th, and experienced a loss of \$142,000. On July 18th, an explosion at Graino Mill caused a severe fire which needed eight companies to bring it under control. Final losses at the mill came to over \$90,000.

More changes came in 1954. On January 20th, a former Assistant Chief, Paul B. Shaw, brother of Frank Shaw, was the first recipient of the Greensboro Supplementary Retirement Fund. The first captain's examination was given for those members of the department with ten years of service. The first ten week training program was begun for newly organized auxiliary firefighters with fourteen becoming certified on October 26th. The Greensboro Life Saving and Rescue Squad, a volunteer organization, held a national convention in Greensboro.

In May 1956, two major fires accounted for over \$350,000 in losses. The first of these occurred on May 14th, when the Starmount Country Club's clubhouse was virtually destroyed by a 3:00 a.m. fire. Five days later the Greensboro Motor Company truck garage burst into flames when a repairman ignited gasoline inside the garage with an acetylene torch. Although several vehicles were destroyed by the fire, no one was injured and an \$11,000 fire engine belonging to the Pinecroft — Sedgfield Fire Department was saved.

In October of 1956 the new \$200,000 Training and Maintenance Center was opened at 1512 North Church Street to a probationary class of eighteen recruits under the direction of Training Officer R. L. Powell, Jr. The lone mechanic, Assistant Chief H. G. Ballinger, was given two assistants and the Fire Prevention Bureau grew from the four original inspectors to eight plus a secretary.

The addition of the new recruit class allowed a reduction in weekly work hours from 84 to 72 and increased the department to 120 men manning ten companies and twenty-five pieces of apparatus.

The City of Greensboro completed a major annexation in 1957 of twenty-eight square miles. The city was now 49.5 square miles and had a population of over 119,000. With the addition of these new properties, the fire department made plans for three new stations. One of these new stations was for the relocation of Station #7 to Wendover and Gatewood Avenues. The other two stations were to

be Station #10 on High Point Road and Station #9 on Friendly Avenue. In 1958 Stations 7, 9 and 10 opened for business. All of the stations were built at a cost of approximately \$80,000 each and in 1960 the city added Station #11 on South Elm Street.

On Sunday morning, June 28, 1959, one of the largest and most dangerous fires of the decade was started by a twelve year old boy playing with matches in the lumber yards of New Home Building Supply on South Mendenhall Street. A hot summer day, the temperature would eventually reach 96 degrees. One hundred and fifty firefighters and fifty volunteers battled the blaze all day. Doctors set up an aid station near the scene of the fire and treated over forty firefighters for heat prostration or smoke inhalation. Eighteen of those had to be taken to the hospital before the fire was brought under control around 5:00 p.m.

In 1961, the fire department was reorganized and expanded once again. With this expansion came the relocation of Engine #4 to 401 Gorrell Street and the integration of the Greensboro Fire Department with the hiring of twenty-eight black personnel to man this new station. Newly formed Truck Company #4 was also housed there. The city was divided into three districts. Battalion I included all of the city west of Elm Street, and Battalion II all of the city east of Elm Street. The Fire District was answered by the units at Central Station. At this time the department was comprised of 193 men, 2 secretaries and 37 vehicles at ten stations.

In 1964, Station #5 was relocated to Friendly Avenue and Truck #5 was added to the compliment of emergency vehicles. In 1965, the city gained a new fire insurance rating of Class 3. Fire Communications was consolidated with the Police Department's into the city's new Communication Operations. The firefighters work week was shortened in 1967 from 72 to 66 hours and a new



Firefighters training on Old Central Station drill tower.

job classification was formed. The new classification carried a rank of "Firefighter II."

Nearly everyone who was in Greensboro in the 60's remembers McClure's Steak House at 900 Summit Avenue. Many remember Halloween night 1968, when fire destroyed it and three other nearby businesses; Straughn's Book Store, Bridges Furniture Store and the Glidden Paint Center. Five and a half years later on February 12, 1974, fire again claimed property on the same block. It nearly destroyed Maxwell Furniture and caused smoke and heat damage to McClure's and Vestal's Florist.

Perhaps one of the more dangerous fires in Greensboro's history broke out in the early hours of May 20, 1967. Flames consumed the central portion of the Worth Chemical Company

warehouse at 503 South Spring Street when several dangerous chemicals exploded. When the fire was extinguished, firefighters faced the dilemma of the warehouse's red label area where drums of explosive material was stored. Adding to the problem was the fact that a chemical known as sodium hydrosulfite was stored within the fire area and next to flammable liquids. The hydrosulfite kept reacting with water and prevented extinguishment. A solution was found. The explosives were removed by a large crane and hauled away on dump trucks.

On July 1, 1969, Chief C. W. Wyrick retired from the department with 47 years of service. He was chief for twenty-two of those years. His successor was G. C. "Buck" Wuchae. Chief Wuchae brought a new look to the Greensboro Fire Department. This new look included closed cabs on firefighting apparatus, no neck ties in the summer time, and "in-station" or work uniforms for the personnel. Also on February 10, 1970, the three platoon system we currently enjoy became a reality, which reduced work hours from 66 to 56 hours per week.

Tragedy struck both the City of Greensboro and the Greensboro Fire Department on December 31, 1969. Firefighter II Jesse C. Gray became the first "in direct line of duty" fatality ever suffered by the department when he "stepped from his position on the rear of the pumper (Engine Company #2) and the truck was backed up causing him to be thrown under the rear wheels." On February 20, 1970, a memorial was dedicated to Gray when Station #8 on South Chapman Street was opened.

The 37th call of October 14, 1970, brought Greensboro the most spectacular night blaze ever remembered. All it took to spark the event was a cigarette negligently left on a bale of cotton at the Greensboro Bonded Warehouse. All off-duty and on-duty firefighters eventually responded to the blaze at which twenty-four explosions took place in the first hour. Firefighters could not halt the rapidly spreading flames. The brick and wood structure at 216 North Cedar Street was a \$1,700,000 loss.

In 1973, the department was restructured to three battalions with the completion of Station 12 on Pisgah Church Road and Station 14 on Summit Avenue.

On February 5, 1976, the departmental organization was again restructured after the completion of Station 15 in 1975 to accommodate Battalion Commanders and District Chief assignments. The department at this time was comprised of 13 stations and 20 fire companies. Stations 5, 7, and 8 were also named battalion headquarters and this was done to balance protective coverage of rapidly growing outlying areas and provide the best use of manpower.

Greensboro's firefighters have answered calls over the years that have had consequences that were far more sobering than the loss of property. Such was the case on August 13, 1973, when seconds after 1:50 a.m., flames suddenly engulfed an attractive brick house at 3204 Dreiser Place. An explosion was heard by neighbors and the fire department was called. Fifteen firefighters battled the stubborn blaze for an hour. A search of the debris revealed what was feared; all three occupants of the home were dead. The three apparently died of smoke and heat and although the cause was never determined, the blaze was considered accidental.

A fire in the O'Henry Hotel on January 15, 1976, probably helped change the face of Greensboro more than any other major blaze since the burning of the Benbow House Hotel in 1899. Firefighters battled severe smoke conditions and cold in order to extinguish a blaze that was confined to Room 501 and the outer hallway. An elderly transient worker who was staying in the room died during the fire, but over 30 persons were rescued from the structure. The manager of the hotel was arrested on a disorderly conduct charge after he argued with police officers on the scene. After he was released on bond, he left town and did not return. The O'Henry, which had been declining for years, never returned as a functioning part of the downtown. By the end of the decade, it was torn down. The space it occupied became a part of the premises of the new Southern Life Insurance complex.

In 1977, more change came to the Greensboro Fire Department. Vast improvements in the quality of service for the citizens of the

Gate City were planned. On July 1st, R. L. Powell, Jr. became the fourth Chief of the Fire Department since it became totally paid in 1926. Chief Powell, who had designed the training program for the department, stated he would continue present programs and begin plans for the pre-planning of major target hazards, an invalid identification program, improvements in fire coverage, and implementation of Quick Response Vehicles.

In November of the same year, the department received the first Class 2 fire insurance rating ever received by a city in North Carolina. Greensboro was one of only a handful in the United States with an equal rating.

In July of 1979, Station #16 was opened. With the addition of this station, 95% of the city is within a four minute response time of the fire department. In 1980, Central Station was closed along with Station #3 and the two companies were consolidated at the newly constructed Station One on North Church Street. Also in the past few years, we all have evolved from the term fireman to the term firefighter with the addition of women to our ranks.

Fire department leadership acknowledged that the best defensive factors against the ravages of fire were fire prevention, fire education and an efficient fire suppression force. The department had long been recognized as having a well trained fire suppression force and a proficient fire inspection unit. Fire education program development grew quickly in 1978-79. By 1980, Greensboro Fire Department Community Service Programs had grown to thirteen and were being delivered to every quadrant of the city.

Compassion and courage have been valued qualities among Greensboro firefighters since the department's inception. Never in our history were these qualities put to the test more than on March 2, 1981.

While combating a fire in an abandoned church at 3732 Spring Garden Street, Firefighter II Glenn R. Johnson was electrocuted when the aerial ladder he was on hit a high voltage wire that was believed to have been disconnected by the power company. Immediately, the ladder was lowered to the ground. Johnson's heart had stopped beating. Firefighters Charlie A. Jones and R. Michael Henley were among the first to reach Johnson and they began resuscitation efforts. Through the use of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, Henley and Jones were able to sustain the life of Glenn Johnson until more advanced care could be provided and within weeks, Johnson was back doing the job he so loves to perform.

It was said that the test pilots of the 1950s and 60s had an undefined quality called "The Right Stuff." This quality enabled them to push the laws of gravity and human physical endurance to the limit. For all intents and purposes, this quality has never been scientifically understood. We in our department have a synonym for "The Right Stuff" — "Firefighter."

1985 — 1990

On the night of April 13, 1985, the city experienced the largest conflagration of this century and possibly the city's history. It was a mild night with temperatures in the low 60s and a clear sky. The area involved, located in the 300 block of South Davie Street, was being extensively renovated through a highly publicized development project called Greensborough Court. Most of the buildings in the area were part of an old textile district built in the late 19th century originally occupied by Dixie Belle Textile Company. The Greensborough Court Project was intended to transform the area into a large downtown residential, retail and office complex.

Police officers and fire inspectors had long known that the buildings were frequented by vagrants who used the old abandoned structures as gathering places and at times slept there. Officials on several occasions had ordered these people from the properties but it was a recurring problem.

On this particular night, Mrs. Elsie Troxler and friends were returning home from a party around 10:45 p.m. and observed white smoke and flames coming from one of the buildings. They were unable to find a phone nearby and drove to the bus station at 312 West Friendly Avenue where an employee, Mrs. Betty Strader reported the fire on Davie Street to Communications at 10:54 p.m.

Fire companies were dispatched and on the scene within two minutes. Engine 4 arrived first and reported heavy black smoke coming from the second floor of the old Dixie Belle Building. Shortly after, Engine 4 also reported smoke coming from the building next door.

The detailed fire investigation report submitted after the fire by Captain Harold Hall revealed that the fire had begun quite some time before the arrival of fire units and had spread into a second building, where flames and smoke were visible to the first fire units and where firefighting operations were begun. The original fire building had entered a smoldering state and was near backdraft conditions.

Within seven minutes of the arrival of the first unit, Battalion Chief D. D. Shumate called for a second alarm. One minute later crews operating in the interior, under the direction of Captain Ed Sawyer, observed extreme fire conditions in multiple floors and indicators of a pending backdraft. These crews withdrew from the interior as the fire rapidly advanced and Chief Shumate, the Incident Commander, began defensive operations. At 11:17 p.m. he advised the fire now had involved three or four buildings and called for additional resources.

The most fearful moment of the night was at 11:27 p.m. when a violent backdraft occurred in the original fire building. The explosion blew both the front and rear walls out into the streets and completely covered the area in smoke and dust. Bricks and other material were lying all around. Medical assistance was immediately requested in fear that personnel were injured or lost. It was determined within a few minutes that several firefighters had received injuries but were reentering the battle to fight the fire now openly involving several buildings and sending flames hundreds of feet into the air.

At 11:33 p.m., while additional alarms were being deployed on the scene the fire blew over the heads of the firefighters and entered a large building across the street. This fire advanced at an unbelievable rate through the structure where all four floors were open and framed for partition walls as a part of the renovation.

Before the fire was announced under control at 2:36 a.m., seven buildings had become involved extending to both sides of Davie Street and consuming most of the 300 block. The fire had threatened to extend to Elm Street, but units positioned on that side and a shift in the wind direction stopped the fire's advance. At this time much fire remained but was effectively contained in all sectors.

As the operation had escalated, Battalion Commander C. N. Haigler had been called and assumed command of overall firefighting operations. Fire Chief R. L. Powell responded and coordinated an overall Command Post near the scene. Ninety-six firefighters had

been committed to the scene, mutual aid assistance had been provided from county units to fight the fire as well as provide city coverage for units at the fire scene. At the height of the fire, the water application rate exceeded 8,000 gallons per minute.

Investigation of the fire was hampered by the sheer size of the area involved and residual heat along with smoldering fires in the buildings remains. Firefighters were kept on the scene for eleven days to pour water on the remains and extinguish spot fires.

On April 19th investigators found the remains of the only victim of the fire in the debris of the original fire building. The victim was positively identified from old chest x-rays to be 35 year old Rozell Bryant. Captain Hall's report stated the victim's location indicated he was asleep on a mattress kept there for that purpose. He was a smoker and had been drinking alcohol. The probable cause of fire was determined to be from a carelessly discarded cigarette igniting burlap bags of cloth strips stored in one of the buildings. Fire spread is attributed to delayed detection, large amounts of combustibles stored in the buildings and a large fire door left open between the first two buildings involved.

This fire received national attention and was reported in an article authored by Assistant Chief B. C. Cox and published in *Firehouse Magazine*.

Soon after the Davie Street Fire, Chief Powell, convinced of the need for a fire ground management system, authorized the Training Division to implement standard operating procedures for an Incident Command System. An extensive six month training program began in March with full field implementation on October 1, 1986.

On January 1, 1986 the city of Greensboro set aside funds for a matching annuity for firefighters with the city's contribution amounting to 3% of the firefighter's salary. Employees began making contributions in December. The city contribution for firefighters was raised to 5% in January of 1989.

July 11, 1986 marked the passing of an individual whose influence on the department is still commented on today, nearly 22 years after his retirement. Fire Chief Calvin Weatherly "Moon" Wyrick led this organization longer than any other Fire Chief in our history. He served in that office for 22 years.

Chief Wyrick was appointed as a paid firefighter when this organization became fully career on September 1, 1926. The previous five years had been spent as a volunteer. He was appointed by the city council as fire chief on August 21, 1946 and retired from the position on July 1, 1969. He was honored for his progressive leadership by the council in a resolution for his "devoted and distinguished service to the City of Greensboro."

His fire service accomplishments were many. He held several offices in the International Association of Fire Chiefs and was elected President of that organization in September of 1967. He also served as President of the Southeastern Fire Chiefs Association and North Carolina Firemen's Association. He was a member of the International Fire Service Training Association and was an Executive Board Member of the Oklahoma State University Training Manuals Association. This last group developed the "Red Books" that became so universal to fire service training.

Chief Wyrick's personal accomplishments may have surpassed his professional. He served as Director and President of the Polio Society for over 20 years. He was a Director and President for the Cerebral Palsy School. He was a member or officer of nearly every fraternal or civic organization in the city and chaired nearly every fund drive held. In 1960 he was the Honorary Chairman of the Greater Greensboro Open Golf Tournament. These are amazing accomplishments for a man who completed only an elementary school education.

In 1986 City Manager Bill Carstarphen set into action events that would dramatically affect the management and operations of the department. He began a series of meetings for the entire city organization resulting in the publication of a "Mission Statement" for the city; placing in writing the values of the or-

ganization and objectives to ensure the quality of services to the citizens and of the work environment for employees.

An employee survey was initiated to assess current operations against the values and objectives of the "Mission Statement". Each department established their own committees to work with management to evaluate the survey results and lay out specific strategies for improving overall operations. The Fire Department Committee worked for eight months and a plan was presented to employees in June of 1987. It is believed that the impact of this plan will be felt for years in the department. Many of the changes in our department described in this history are a direct result of the Mission Statement effort.

Several calls reporting a fire at A-1 Rentals, 510 N. Elm Street, were received by the Greensboro Emergency Communications Center on the morning of February 15, 1987. One of these callers was Frank Perdue, an employee of Hanes Lineberry Funeral Services, located across the street from the A-1 building. Mr. Perdue stated he saw a vapor in the rear of the Party Makers section of the building. He immediately called the report in and then went outside. He saw heavy smoke coming from a second floor window.

Mr. Taft Turner also reported the fire from a phone booth as he was going home from work at Piedmont Parking. Mr. Taft reported smoke coming from the top of the building and seeing flames in some second floor windows.

The first fire units were dispatched at 8:12 a.m. Battalion Chief D. D. Shumate reported they were met by heavy smoke and fire showing in several second floor windows. An offensive attack was begun.

Captain D. B. Nelson and Captain Ralph Sutton reported the downstairs storage areas were clear when their crews began their attack. They advanced a 1½" handline. The crews moved up a metal stairway to the second floor. When they reached the doorway at the top of the stairs they encountered extreme heat.

Truck 4 and Squad 2 personnel had entered the front of the building with a 3" handline and were trying to get to the involved area. Truck 5 was sent to the roof to ventilate but conditions there were deteriorating rapidly with the fire beginning to vent itself. Truck 5 was ordered from the roof just in time to avoid possible disaster. Due to extreme fire conditions on the second floor and heat build up on the first floor, Chief Shumate ordered units to assume defensive positions and called for additional alarms.

As personnel were leaving the building a flashover occurred in the area that Truck 4 and Squad 2 were vacating. Firefighter Rick Gentry was blown out of the front door while Captain Lonnie "Chuck" Smith and Firefighter Richard O'Brien were trapped inside.

Captain Smith recalls his crew operating on the second floor with a hose line. He had begun to send his personnel out of the area as their air pak alarms went off. Firefighters Souther and Gentry had already headed out. His own pak alarm went off indicating low air supply. He and Firefighter O'Brien started to leave the area and had reached the stairway following the hose line out. Captain Smith had been unable to copy any communications on his portable radio and thought the channel selector may have been in the wrong position. He removed his left glove to better check his radio when a large fireball came from below and engulfed them on the stairway.

Somehow, Captain Smith was able to maintain self control although he admits being frightened. In an interview with this writer he recalled thinking, "How can I get out? I'm out of air. Will I be able to make it all the way across this building and find another way out?"

The fireball had passed over them and continued up the stairway to the next floor. The pair crawled back up the step to the nozzle and attempted to communicate by radio with anyone outside. Although he found the radio positioned correctly, the transmissions were not making it to the outside.

Due to the lack of air supply Captain Smith decided to attempt going back down the steps to the first floor. They observed several

spot fires around them, the aftermath of the passing fireball. They were able to work their way back across the first floor and out the front door. As fellow firefighters desperately prepared for a rescue attempt, facing a greatly intensified fire, the two suddenly appeared.

Firefighters Gentry and O'Brien were examined on the scene and miraculously found to have only minor injuries and returned to duty. Captain Smith was not so lucky. He had suffered burns to the back of his neck and ears with severe burn injuries to his left hand as he was caught in the flashover. He was taken to the hospital for treatment and had to undergo considerable outpatient treatment and therapy for the burns to his hand before he could return to duty.

Firefighter Rick Ingram was also treated at the hospital that day for debris in his left eye.

The fire did considerable damage to the front portion of the building which housed Party Makers and Eastern Costume Company. Some of the costumes destroyed or damaged in the fire included one of a kind costumes created for MGM Studio.

The investigation, conducted by Captain M. L. Borders, was hampered by winter weather, including sleet, and unsafe structural conditions. The final report however, concluded that the fire started in paper storage around and possibly against the gas furnaces. Loss estimates were placed at approximately \$450,000.

In a letter to the editor published in the Greensboro News and Record on March 7, 1987, Frank Perdue praised the department for the superb job they did on this fire. He said, "I have never seen a more precision team of experts work so uniformly together. I was very proud of each and every one of them. . . We are very fortunate to have this team in our community."

Fire Chief R. L. Powell formally announced his retirement intentions during the summer of 1987. Chief Powell had begun his service with the department on September 15, 1946. He left on September 30, 1987, after 41 years of service with the city. Chief Powell's impact upon the department throughout his career is lasting and measurable. His efforts in the area of fire service training have left his thumb print on this department as well as the state. Many innovations were begun under his administration, including public fire education and the squad concept for medical assistance response.

A historic day for emergency responders in the City of Greensboro was July 31, 1987, when an Enhanced 911 emergency telephone service went into operation. By dialing 9-1-1 on their telephone, a citizen anywhere in Guilford County could immediately reach an emergency call taker who could route the caller to whatever emergency service agency was required. This system also allows the dispatcher to identify what address the call is coming from in the event the caller is unable to communicate.

In August of 1987, Walter Frank Jones was named by City Manager Bill Carstarphen as Fire Chief Designate. He assumed full responsibility as Fire Chief on October 1, 1987. Chief Jones had joined the department on August 1, 1956. He was promoted to Captain on November 1, 1967 and Battalion Chief on February 1, 1979.

On August 16, 1980, Chief Jones was promoted again and assumed responsibility for the departmental training program as Fire Training Supervisor. Chief Jones' influence in training led the department through updating equipment and training for flammable liquids and hazardous materials response. The recruit training program was expanded to 16 weeks to include hazardous materials, public fire education and stress management. The first training of personnel from other fire departments began under his supervision.

His final assignment before being appointed Fire Chief was Battalion Commander of Battalion 2.

Captain Larry Cockman was named N.C. State Firefighter of The Year at the August, 1987 meeting of the N. C. State Firemen's Association. A Greensboro firefighter had received this award only once before, in 1975, when R. L. Powell was named.

The largest flammable liquids fire ever experienced by the department received national attention in an article written by Bradley C. Cox and Paul D. Brooks, published in *Fire Chief Magazine*. Excerpts from the article serve to describe the event.



Davie Street conflagration, April 13, 1985.

October 30, 1987 was a day like any other day in Greensboro, North Carolina. Charles Singer, a train engineer for the Norfolk-Southern Railway was at the controls of a 57 car freight train passing through Greensboro. The train was moving slowly along a dangerous section of track next to a large bulk petroleum depot known locally as the tank farm. Each of the three locomotives of his train carried 2,000 gallons of diesel fuel.

Anthony Crawford, a tractor-trailer driver for Bralley-Willet Tank Lines of Greensboro, had just taken on a cargo of 8,000 gallons of unleaded gasoline shortly after noon at a loading facility near the Norfolk-Southern railroad tracks. Half an hour later, Crawford pulled his rig out onto a crossing at Chimney Rock Road, where he was held up by blocked traffic at the intersection of West Market Street. He was forced to stop with his tanker straddling the tracks. Several vehicles pulled up behind him. He had no place to go.

A few minutes before 1:00 p.m., the lead locomotive of the Southern Railway freight train smashed into the gasoline tanker, splitting it in two. Gasoline was thrown back over the locomotives and the scene exploded into what witnesses termed a huge fireball. Almost instantly, a thick plume of smoke rose over the scene and created a pall that could be seen for miles.

At 12:55 p.m. the first alarm was sounded by the Greensboro Fire Department. Engine 19 was dispatched, and proceeded toward the scene of the collision.

Fire officials had been aware the Chimney Rock Road crossing presented many potential hazards. Much of the area around the petroleum depot had recently been annexed into the city. During the time that annexation was pending, the department had made preparations to provide protection in case of a flammable petroleum emergency.

Each engine company had been equipped with at least one 95 gpm Akron in-line foam eductor, 25 gallons of 3%-6% foam and either a National Foam JS-10 foam nozzle or an Elkhart foam tube. At the center of the department's foam arsenal was Engine 100, a new National Foam 1250 gpm foam pumper purchased only a few months before. This dual purpose pumper was equipped with a fully automatic Servo Command foam proportioning system and a split 1000 gallon tank for 750 gallons of foam concentrate and 250 gallons of water. Due to the foresight of the Greensboro Fire Department, this engine was on-line and fully loaded with 750 gallons of foam.

Within seconds after the dispatch of Engine 19 by the Communications Center, Fire Battalion Chief J. W. Teeters, in Car 1, immediately instructed Communications to dispatch a full first alarm and to include Engine 100.

Upon his arrival at the scene, Battalion Chief Teeters' initial report confirmed heavy fire involving the remnants of the gasoline tanker and three locomotives at the intersection of the tracks and Chimney Rock Road. The driver of the tanker and three of the train's four man crew were found. The fourth, Paul Cruise, was not. It was feared he was still inside one of the locomotives.

Within three minutes of his arrival, Teeters had a second alarm dispatched along with EMS and Police. Battalion Commander R. K. Flowers also responded with the second alarm.

Assistant Chief Flowers, in Car 4, had the Mobile Command Post respond to a parking lot adjacent to the scene. There he established a support command post from which various agencies collaborated throughout the evening and well into the next day.

About 15 minutes into the operation, Teeters felt comfortable with line placements and flow rates, but he was becoming concerned with runoff in several directions from the incident. This area is the breaking point between the watersheds of Greensboro and the nearby City of High Point. He requested mutual aid response from Guilford College Fire Department for diking and confinement of gasoline and diesel fuel runoff.

The Guilford College Fire Department is a combination department that had served this particular area for years prior to the city's annexation. Their efforts were both professional and decisive.

At approximately 1:53 p.m., nearly an hour after the incident occurred, the signal "under control" was transmitted. The flames had actually been knocked down in approximately 25 minutes, but Teeters wanted to be certain the incident was totally under control

before giving the signal.

Much of the original 14,000 gallons of fuel involved — 8,000 gallons of gasoline from the tanker and 2,000 gallons of fuel loaded on board each locomotive — was still pooled on the ground. In all, a total of 1,100 gallons of foam concentrate was used.

After fire control was achieved, two searches were conducted inside the locomotives for the missing railroad crew member. Both attempts proved fruitless. Eventually, a search of the perimeter around the locomotives was also conducted and there, under a blanket of foam between the three locomotives and the burned shell of the tanker's cab, the body of Paul Cruise was found. The 39 year old conductor had apparently attempted to jump clear of the train after the collision, but was overcome by intense flames and smoke.

On November 6, 1987, Charles Singer also died as a result of the burns he received in the fiery crash, which covered over 70% of his body.

This incident could have resulted in even greater damage and loss of life if it had not been for the program of prior planning and equipment procurement by the Greensboro Fire Department. According to Chief Frank Jones, "Our foresight in preparing for disasters like this one paid off. If we hadn't had the truck (foam engine) and other foam equipment, we couldn't have handled this incident."

After occupying temporary quarters for some time, new Fire Stations 17 and 19 were opened. Station 17 opened its doors on November 9, 1987 at 4504 Lake Brandt Road. Station 19 was opened a few weeks later, at 6900 Downwind Road, on December 14, 1987.

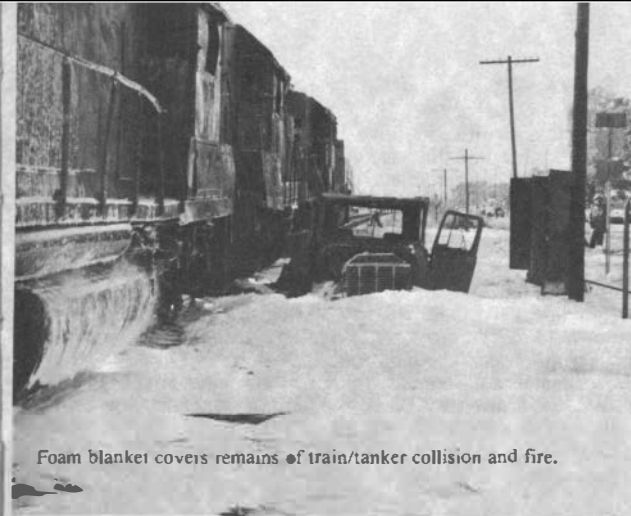
Chief Jones recognized early in his administration that a change in management style was necessary to implement many of the non-traditional initiatives required to manage a large organization in today's fire service. In February of 1988 a management retreat was organized, a first for the department, to address and define management changes. Results of this retreat were the Departmental Mission Statement and a Management Philosophy designed to define organizational values and guide management through a period of change and growth. The scope of the retreat process was extended to the Company Commander level to include personnel management and leadership.

The Greensboro Firefighters Association was formed during the summer over the central issue of Greensboro's method of administering requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act as it applied to firefighters. The FLSA issue had been a hot one even prior to the Mission Statement process. The association was rechartered on June 30, 1988 as Local 947 of the International Association of Firefighters. This was the third chartering of this local since the original on November 4, 1947. The current and previous Fire Chiefs had both served as Presidents of the Local.

The association is currently representing employees in two lawsuits over FLSA and a captain's promotional process. One of its most visible activities is an in-school drug education program called "Better Things To Do."

A direct result of the Mission Statement Process, in March of 1988 the Greensboro Fire Department, with guidance and participation of the Manager's Resource Management Division, established a committee to conduct a manpower allocation study. The mission of this committee was to review the mission of the Greensboro Fire Department, how resources were being allocated, determine what documentable impacts drive the organization, and make specific recommendations that would improve the efficient and effective delivery of services to the citizens of Greensboro. The central emphasis was placed upon the availability of personnel on the fire scene and any operations of any division or activity that impacted upon it.

The purpose of this committee and its resultant study report was not to simply make manpower requests. The committee evaluated the entire system and determined the effective or deficient impact of each part upon the availability of personnel on the emergency scene. The results of the committee's study were published in September of 1988 and included many recommendations, all of which are dependent upon each other to build a total system of organizational improvement in service delivery. Bill Carstaphen, the City Manager, stated in a staff review, "that this study was the most com-



Foam blanket covers remains of train/tanker collision and fire.

prehensive of its kind he had seen in his career in city management."

In the early morning of March 21, 1988 a large section of roadway was found collapsed, large enough for a car to fall into, near the intersection of West Smith and Hill Streets. An old water main had broken during the night and allowed six million gallons of water to drain from the city's water supply. The Fire Department was immediately notified and contingency planning was begun in the event a fire occurred before repairs could be made. Other water sources within the city were identified and a request for county tanker units to be available if needed was made. Repairs to the water main were moving quickly and it was hoped that no major event would occur. It seems inevitable that fate would choose this day for a major downtown fire.

Jan Scott works in Congressman Howard Coble's offices located in the Federal Courthouse Building, now known as the L. Richardson Preyer Federal Courthouse, at 324 West Market Street. Ms. Scott reported to Fire Investigator Bill Foust that she was standing at a window looking out to the street and saw smoke puffing outside. She opened the window and looked up to see the air conditioning unit in the window above blowing out smoke. As she watched she saw the unit start to come apart and fall to the ground. The window above was located in the offices of Judge Eugene Gordon. As she went to pull the fire alarm, it sounded off as someone else activated the alarm.

Fire units were dispatched at 1:07 p.m. and upon arrival observed heavy smoke and flames coming from the third floor windows on the southwest corner of the building. Battalion Chief D. C. Waller arrived on the scene and continued the interior attack begun by initial units on the scene. As additional resources were called, Battalion Commander C. E. Hilliard arrived and assumed overall command of the operation.

Hundreds of downtown workers on their lunch hour watched from sidewalks and other offices as firefighters moved quickly into the involved building. As he returned from his lunch Judge Gordon joined those watching from the street. He and two aides reported leaving for lunch around 12:30 p.m. and did not notice anything unusual. They were sure of locking the office area as they left.

Captain Lonnie "Chuck" Smith and his crew made the initial attack into the area of the Judge's chambers where the flame involvement was found. The main door to the area was found locked and had to be forced open to gain entry. Firefighter Jeff Souther found an open door in the back corridor and entered through it.

The fire was brought under control within the hour and Captain Foust began his investigation. The investigation was taken over by Federal officers and no report of cause was made available, but many sources suspect arson. The loss was estimated to be \$1,000,000.

Although the problems of a water shortage due to the main break earlier in the day caused considerable concern, no shortage to firefighting units was experienced due to quick action by city Water Department officials and effective planning by fire officials.

The Greensboro City Council passed a local ordinance on April 28, 1988, allowing fire inspectors to write citations for violations of the fire code. A \$25 fine is assessed along with each citation written.

In 1988, after extensive study and consideration, the department responded to considerable growth and change with its first major reorganization in 12 years. The reorganization was driven by both basic service delivery and management/control issues. Results of the reorganization included the implementation of a fourth battalion and improved utilization of manpower and apparatus. Two older pieces of apparatus were replaced by apparatus previously serving in an ancillary status.

Restructuring of departmental hierarchy effected a more functional approach to the management of the organization. This restructure is most readily seen in the establishment of four major divisions — Administrative Services, Emergency Services, Prevention Services, and Resource Management — to implement and manage department operations, programs, and services. The reorganization was also perceived by management as a positive and therapeutic response to communications issues.

As a result of the reorganization, 15 new positions were created within the department which will generate additional opportunities for future career advancement. It should be noted that management initiatives allowed the implementation of reorganization without the need for any additional personnel.

Many management initiatives were implemented which provided a more efficient utilization of resources and improved service delivery system. The first phase of installation for an Opticom traffic signal control system, giving priority pre-emption for fire emergency traffic was accomplished in June. A divisional responsibility for plans review and approval was created within Fire Prevention Services with the assignment of a bureau officer to this function.

In May of 1988 a police detective was assigned to the Fire Prevention Bureau to work with a pilot arson project. A certification program for Fire Equipment Operator was implemented in 1988 along with pay reclassification of those individuals who successfully met the certification and were assigned as Fire Equipment Operators.



Truck 5

After receiving many requests from both the public and employees, Chief Jones requested a study of apparatus colors. In the early 70s Greensboro responded to an industry wide move to change from red to a brighter color for fire apparatus. The department chose yellow and over a ten year period nearly the entire fleet changed over. The new study showed that benefits nationwide, of alternate colors, were negligible due to universal public acceptance and rec-

ognition of the color red for fire trucks. The new color scheme selected was a traditional red body with white top. Truck 5, due for a body renovation was the first apparatus repainted the new colors and effects on morale was immediate. The public expressed considerable support for the return to red through the media.

October 15, 1988 marked the date of the first Medals and Awards Ceremony for the department where outstanding performance for departmental members was honored. This first ceremony was held in the auditorium at the Fire Training Center. The department's newly formed Honor Guard opened the ceremony by presenting the colors. Deputy City Manager Jim Baugh served as Master of Ceremonies while Assistant Chief Bradley C. Cox provided remarks. The awards were presented by Chief Jones.

Skip Nix and Danny Lynch each received two Commendations; Gary Chandler, Curtis Gauden, Jeff Souther, Chris Hairr, Chris Bowman (2) and Ray Cooke (2) received the Medical Life Saving Award; Chris Hairr and Jeff Souther received the Life Saving Medal. Chief Frank Jones was nominated and selected by fellow employees as the Employee of the Year.

In 1988, the department was staffed by 346 personnel. The majority of those personnel manned 16 fire stations. Operating out of those stations were 18 engine companies, 5 aerial/ladder companies, and 1 aerial platform. Four Quick Response Vehicles, or Squads, provided basic life support and some companies operated other specialized equipment such as a foam engine, pumper-tanker combination, brush truck, mobile air unit, etc.

The year 1989 was another of change for the organization as it continued to respond to shifts in the fire service industry, community, and service demand. A Manpower Allocation Study was begun the previous year. This study included a three phase implementation of recommendations to begin during 1989. The first two phases were completed, including the closing of a fire station; redeployment of existing personnel and equipment; reduction of the number of squad personnel by six, line company commanders by three, and fire equipment operators by three.

Fifteen new personnel were approved and hired in July of 1989. These personnel completed their training process and were deployed in Emergency Services in November. The impact of new personnel along with redeployment of existing resources upon the availability of firefighters on the scene of an emergency was dramatic.

Prior to implementation of any of the study's recommendations, the average manpower response to a residential fire was nine personnel. After second phase implementation this number increased to twelve while actually reducing the number of first line apparatus and station maintenance issues. This resulted in direct improvements in service to the citizen and safety of the firefighter.

The closing of Fire Station Number 6, on September 15, 1989 was the first step in the consolidation of two stations in a new building at the Westover Terrace site. Captain Sid Wray, in the last radio transaction for Station 6 reported, "Engine 6 is 10-7. Gone but not forgotten." Engine 6 had served the community from the Westover Terrace site for 41 years. This move, in conjunction with a future station relocation, will improve service delivery to the central business district while improving operating efficiency and building maintenance. Chief Jones stated in the *Greensboro News and Record* that the department hopes to convince city officials of the need for a downtown station along with the relocation of Station No. 4 on Gorrell Street. The department's long range Capital Improvement Plan includes new stations in the northwest and southwest.

Federal involvement in local emergency operations has begun to have a significant impact. The greatest impact upon fire services has been due to the Superfund Amendment Reauthorization Act (SARA). Local Emergency Planning Committees were established in 1988 to coordinate local hazardous materials planning efforts and to ensure SARA compliance.

The Greensboro Fire Department had in place a response to hazardous materials incidents as early as 1981. In 1989 the department expanded its commitment and made major investments of time, personnel, and funds to meet SARA requirements. Extensive hazmat training classes were held in 1988 and 1989 for existing and

potential hazardous materials unit members. New equipment was purchased including suits, monitoring equipment, and tools.

The most significant move to expand hazmat response capability occurred on the same day as the closing of Station 6. The existing hazardous materials team members were transferred to Fire Station 16. Truck 19 was relocated to Station 16. These two companies became the new Hazardous Materials Team.

The second annual Medals and Awards Ceremony was held on October 8, 1989 in the Town Hall Auditorium. This year's program was unique in that nominations for all awards were accepted for any event that had occurred during the individual's career. This would be the only retroactive opportunity for recognition given by the selection committee.

The Master of Ceremonies for the program was Paul D. Brooks with an invocation by Carl M. Eller. Remarks were given by James F. Wright III, Assistant City Manager and the Keynote Speaker was the Honorable J. Howard Coble, United States Congressman. Medals and Awards were presented by Fire Chief



Station #6, "Gone But Not Forgotten."

Frank Jones and Assistant Chief Richard F. Johnson.

Forty-five Certificates of Appreciation and 46 Certificates of Commendation were awarded. Seventy Medical Life Saving Awards were presented for individuals being directly responsible for the initial use of CPR, Heimlich Maneuver or any medical acts involving the saving of a life. The Life Saving Medal, presented for being directly responsible for saving a life other than through medical means, was awarded to 25 individuals.

The Medal of Valor is the second highest award an individual may receive. This award is presented for an act of heroism which is clearly above and beyond the call of duty and exemplifies the highest degree of professionalism. Recipients of this award were O. D. Lynch and A. D. Nix for a trench rescue performed April 7, 1987 on the grounds of Wesley Long Community Hospital.

Captain David E. Spears was recognized as the Employee of the Year for total commitment to his profession as well as involvement with the community. The award exemplifies untiring and unselfish devotion to one's fellow man.

A Recruitment Team was formed in 1989 to actively pursue applicants for fire positions. This team, made up from suppression forces, educates targeted populations on the fire service and benefits of a career in the field.

The department continued its practice of contracting services with neighboring fire departments in both mandatory and voluntary agreements as a result of annexation. Management felt that contracting services was an efficient method of providing fire protection in new areas of the city while the fire department adjusts to new demands for such service. Departments under

contract in 1989 were Colfax Volunteer Fire Department, Fire District #14, Deep River Volunteer Fire Department, and Pinecroft-Sedgefield Volunteer Fire Department.

As the result of a study on service demand and in response to the recommendations of the Manpower Allocation Study, the four squads were relocated in November of 1989 to place them closer to their high demand areas while still providing adequate city wide coverage. This move reflected a change in traditional deployment concepts of fire apparatus that generally considered distance alone for resource placement.

The Opticom Traffic Signal Control System, giving priority pre-emption for fire emergency traffic was continued in the spring of 1989. A total of 33 intersections were now equipped with Opticom equipment. The emphasis for site selection was on those intersections identified as high hazard and the establishment of corridors on high traffic, high hazard roadways. Corridor installations begun this year were High Point Road and Battleground Avenue.

In continuation of a departmental philosophy to recognize specialized responsibilities and enhance career development opportunities, a salary supplement was introduced in January of 1989 for those individuals assigned as Medical/Rescue Technicians on the squads. Such an incentive was in line with the previous year's establishment of the Fire Equipment Operator position.

A schedule of user fees was adopted by City Council in July that generated additional revenue for some fire service activities. Those activities included plans review, prevention reinspections, hazardous materials response and fire reports.

An in service firefighter certification program was begun in 1989 that will result in Firefighter III Certification in accordance with NFPA 1001 and the North Carolina State Fire Commission. The program is run in cooperation with Guilford Technical Community College, which provides the instructors and the area Fire Service Training Coordinator, who monitors and verifies the program.

On May 6, 1989 a series of storms swept across the state from east to west spawning tornadoes that touched down in a number of cities doing a tremendous amount of damage. Winston-Salem and Raleigh were hit especially hard. Although no tornado was officially reported in Greensboro, severe winds and thunderstorms with heavy electrical activity lashed the city. During the day the department responded to 83 storm related events including ten reported residential fires and 49 calls for downed power lines.

Nature again attacked the city during the night and early morning of September 22, 1989. Hurricane Hugo made landfall at Charleston, S.C. around midnight. An extremely strong hurricane with winds recorded around 135 MPH when it struck land, Hugo moved through South Carolina eastward towards the Greenville/Spartanburg area. When the eye of the storm reached Interstate 77 it turned north and appeared to follow the highway corridor.

As the hurricane struck Charlotte tremendous property damage occurred including the toppling of a television transmission tower. Winds were recorded at 90 MPH. Hugo continued its north by northeast drive.

Although the eye of the storm missed our city, we did experience the effects of the strong winds circling in a counter-clockwise motion back into the storm's center.



Remains of Broome Road fire. September 21, 1989.

Sustained winds were measured in excess of 50 MPH. The height of activity occurred between 5:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. when the Fire Department responded to over 100 hurricane related calls.

The storm left the city as suddenly as it arrived. By late afternoon the skies were clear and the sun shone bright. Department personnel were exhausted and still recovering, however, from the largest fire of the year which occurred during the night as Hugo approached the city.

At 11:14 p.m. on September 21, 1989 fire units were dispatched to 500 Broome Road, LaRoche Industries, Inc. The fire was spotted from nearby Interstate 40/85 by passersby. LaRoche Industries manufactures fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, mostly for home and golf course use.

Captain J. T. Richie of Engine Company 11 reported that a large amount of fire was visible from some distance away as his company responded. He called for a second alarm before arriving on the scene based upon the amount of flames showing and his knowledge of the facility. Units began defensive operations immediately upon arrival as they found over half of the huge wood framed bag storage area fully involved with fire.

The building burned into the early morning, going to a third alarm, and was fanned by strong winds of approaching Hurricane Hugo. Units were kept on the scene well into the next day to control and extinguish spot and smoldering fires. The cause of the fire remains undetermined due to the extreme damage in the area of origin. The loss was estimated at nearly \$4,000,000.



Former Deputy City Manager Jim Baugh.

A sad moment for the department was when Deputy City Manager James Baugh left city employment to become city manager in Longview, Texas. Jim left in September, 1989 after 10 years of service to the city. Jim, a tall redheaded Texas native, was well known throughout the city for his effective management of the city's large operating departments including fire and police. He was instrumental in assisting the fire department through a period of transition and growth. He could be extremely tough but at the same time came to be respected for his fair, open and honest style. To mark his exit a new Emergency One pumper replacement assigned to Station 4 was named "Big Red."



"Big Red"

On September 5, 1989 the newest Greensboro Fire Station, Station 20, was opened at 8404 West Market Street. This station is unique in that employees were involved in the overall planning and many features are included as a result that greatly enhance its livability and functionality.

A fire destroyed much of the Jones Brothers Bakery Building, 101 E. Lee St., on December 12, 1989. The building, constructed in 1928, was listed as one of Greensboro's most historically significant buildings due to its architecture.

Employees of a fish market located adjacent to the old bakery thought they smelled smoke around 4:00 p.m. Shortly after 4:30 p.m. Mr. Wesley Motley was putting empty trash boxes on a truck at the rear of the building when he saw smoke coming from the bakery roof. He went inside the market to warn other employees. When they came back outside flames were visible. The employees left the building and Mr. Motley called the fire department.

When fire trucks arrived they saw flames and smoke over much of the roof of the old building. They were aware that the 77,000 square foot building had been condemned due to its poor structural condition. The bakery had closed its operations in 1974 and renovation work was beginning to convert the structure into apartments. The renovation work had started with repairs to the roof.

Fire forces began an exterior defensive operation. Assistant Chief Richard Johnson told reporters on the scene, "There are so many holes in the floor and the roof it's not safe to put people in there."

Two ladder trucks and six engines fought the blaze. One firefighter, Fred Burchfield, was injured when his foot got caught in the rung of an aerial ladder.

Captain R. G. Beeson, in his investigative report, stated the cause of the fire was undetermined as it was unsafe to enter the building to investigate and there were no witnesses to the fire's beginning.

This, the first full year of activity in the Company Fire Inspection Program was extremely successful. Twenty fire companies conducted 3,313 inspections of stores and offices and the number of fires in



Merner Hall, Bennett College, January 12, 1990

this property classification decreased 53%.

Michelle DuMay, a Bennett College student, returned to her dorm room in Merner Hall from morning classes around 1:00 p.m. on January 12, 1990. As she unlocked and opened the door to her room she saw smoke rolling out across the floor. Alarmed, she left the key in the open door and ran to get help. The Fire Department was dispatched at 1:17 p.m.

Captain J. E. McCarter and Engine Company 4 were first on the scene and saw light smoke coming from the dorm. F.E.O. S. J. Fowler and his crew mates advanced up the lightly smoked south stairway. Once he opened the door, they were met by intense heat and heavy black smoke. The relatively tight masonry building was holding the fire in while the open dorm room door allowed the fire to rapidly spread throughout much of the second floor hallways. The fire was difficult to extinguish due to poor visibility and heat conditions.

Acting Battalion Chief W. D. Johnson quickly called for a second alarm upon his arrival and began coordination of the interior operation. Battalion Commander D. D. Shumate arrived with the second alarm units and assumed overall command of the scene.

Units making headway on the second floor were still encountering heavy heat and smoke leading Chief Shumate and sector officers to believe the fire had extended to other areas of the building. Chief Shumate called for third alarm units and began giving attention to the large attic area. Truck Company 7's crew, assisted by other units, began ventilating the attic, and other crews advanced into the area to be confronted by a large volume of fire. Once this fire was attacked the incident quickly came under control.

Captain C. W. Whitworth, in his investigation report, attributed the cause to an overloaded electrical extension cord in the room of origin.

1990 was a year of planning and development. Many projects also realized completion this year. A large diameter hose program was implemented with Engines 4, 5, and 7 being loaded with four-inch supply line and 1 1/4 inch attack lines. A near complete change out of turnout gear was accomplished. A High Level Rescue Team was trained, equipped and placed in service at Station 5. A Minimum Company Standards program was begun with standard development-testing conducted in the spring. A Fire Hydrant Inspection Program was reinitiated. Job reclassifications expanded with Hazardous Materials Unit members receiving supplemental pay. A reclassification study of the entire department was requested and the city selected Administrative Support positions as a starting point. A Safety Officers position was requested and approved for Fiscal Year 1990/91. A complete replacement of the department's SCBA inventory was budgeted and approved.

New apparatus placed in service this year included a new Hazardous Materials Unit, a replacement pumper/tanker, and a replacement for Truck 5, a Sutphen Aerial/Platform. The aerial/platform, affectionately called "The Tower of Power" is the first Quint purchased by the department. It is a 100 foot aerial/platform with a 1500 GPM pump.

At the end of this year the Department was staffed by 361 personnel, most of whom manned 23 fire companies (17 engines, 4 aerial trucks, 1 elevated platform and 1 aerial/platform). In the department's most recent calendar year (1989) there were 8,952 emergency calls for service, 4,174 were medical responses, with 17,803 unit responses. There were 1,197 fires; 362 actual building fires; 12,014 inspections were conducted; 18,835 violations were corrected. The city had grown to 79.7 square miles populated by 197,000 people.

During this period, 1985-90. Greensboro assumed a new and dramatic skyline. New downtown construction skyrocketed while restoration or refurbishing of existing structures continued. Three new high rise office structures went up; the Renaissance Plaza at 19 stories; First Union Plaza at 20 stories; and the new Jefferson-Pilot Tower at 21 stories.

Thirteen apparatus were purchased to replace older existing units or for new deployments. One hundred and forty positions were reclassified in pay grade or received supplemental pay for special assignments.

This period may well be remembered as the most dynamic in the department's history. Changes in administration, changes in both city and department management styles, rapid growth and development coupled with value changes in society and demands of citizens presented constant challenges to all the personnel of the department. Adopted fire service industry advanced technology, new regulated requirements and a departure from traditional to non-traditional methods has been exciting and painful. All of the effects of a change process have been experienced by the organization.

On a fire the most critical and significant benchmarks, dispatch, arrival, all clear, under control, are time stamped to be recorded as relevant events in the call's outcome. This period will receive such a time stamp to be recorded as critical and significant in the pages of progress in our department's history.



FIRE CHIEF
W. Frank Jones