



# Straight Tip

PRINCE GEORGE'S  
COUNTY FIRE  
DEPARTMENT  
NEWSLETTER

Station 489 552-1214

Volume VII

No. 1 January 1978

## West Lanham squad's gals top-notch



West Lanham Hills Volunteer Rescue Squad officers are shown (l-r): Debbie Pardue, captain; J.P. Medani, sergeant; Marlene James, sergeant; Gloria Balducci, chief, and Sue Lucas, sergeant.

Photo by Langford Anderson

The West Lanham Hills Volunteer Rescue Squad, one of the newest organizations of the Fire Department, has already made a name for itself as an innovative and unique organization. Formed three years ago as an offshoot of that community's fire company, its original 12 members have grown to 28 — more than half of whom are women.

Although the squad is under the same board of directors as the fire

company, it is independent in all other respects, allowing its members to concentrate on ambulance work if that is what they prefer.

Ambulance 489 operates out of West Lanham's number two station on Good Luck Road. It regularly runs about 100 calls each month. A second ambulance placed in the company's Route 450 station last March has been averaging 200 calls each month.

Since January 1, Gloria Balducci has

been chief of the squad. A petite, 30-year-old brunette who looks five years younger, Gloria joined the squad soon after its inception.

She became a sergeant in 1976; captain six months later. A part-time secretary for the Prince George's County Fire Department's Emergency Medical Services Division, Gloria is a cardiac rescue technician and plans to become an emergency medical technician instructor this year. Last year she received the Chief's Award from her company for her contribution to the squad.

Despite her tiny physique, Gloria does the work of a much larger person when necessary. "Women can lift patients just as well as men," she says proudly. "They handle any responsibility that comes along with ease; jumping in and doing their jobs at heart attack cases and automobile accidents as they were taught."

She adds that the career and volunteer fire fighters at the company's stations are quick to offer their help when the squad is short-handed.

Gloria conducts weekly drills for squad members, all of whom must have both cardiopulmonary resuscitation and emergency medical technician certification. She has invited physicians, nurses, Maryland State Police troopers and Prince George's County Police officers to speak to

(Continued on page 2)

## Fire Fighter learns much about the department's hot seat

A fire fighter doesn't often get a chance to be involved in the decision-making process from the perspective of the deputy fire chief for operations, but John Taltavull, 29, got first-hand exposure during a two-day visit with DFC M.H. (Jim) Estep in early December, and he came away with a greater understanding of the inner machinery of the Fire Department.

The idea for the visit came about a month earlier during a discussion between Chief Estep and members of Clinton's station crew. "They were

kidding one another about the difficulty of top-level decision-making," says Captain Jack Jarboe, executive assistant to the DFCO. "John apparently told Chief Estep that he could handle the job and was really surprised when offered the chance to be in the driver's seat."

It was shortly after 8 A.M. on December 7 that Chief Estep stopped by Company 25 to pick up Taltavull. They drove to Company 28 in Lanham, where they met Captain Edward Chaney and Lieutenant Donald

Eierman, the department's Metro liaison officers.

The next stop was Metro's headquarters in the District. "They had computerized message systems that show if there is a break in or fire somewhere," says Taltavull.

After a complete tour ride on the Metro rapid-rail system, John accompanied Chief Estep to the Fire Services Building in Brentwood. "We joined a meeting of fire inspectors conducted by Bureau Chief Rafael

(Continued on page 4)

Gloria Balducci (home) 552-9555

Station 489 - 552-1214

## Career profile

# Walt Lanier



Walt Lanier

Photo by Langford Anderson

On the last day of 1977, the department's new Bureau of Fire Suppression became an official entity. The man named as its bureau chief is Walt Lanier, who has more than 23 years of combined volunteer and career service behind him.

Walt first became involved in the department in 1954, when he joined Tuxedo-Cheverly's volunteer fire company as a 15-year-old junior member.

He worked his way up through the ranks; held the offices of president and

chairman of the board of directors.

In 1964, Walt received the Carl A. Young Award when he was named Fireman-of-the-Year. A year earlier he received a Certificate of Appreciation from the county commissioners for the outstanding job he did as fire ground commander at the scene of a train wreck in Cheverly. "We had to stay on top of the situation for four days," says Walt. "The problem was to remove a large amount of ethylene oxide, which must be stored at below-freezing temperatures to keep it stable."

Two trains had collided head-on near Cheverly, overturning a special tank car containing the dangerous cryogenic chemical and a tanker next to it holding transformer oil.

"Every time the chemical and the oil came in contact, there was an explosion. The only thing we could do was cool the ethylene oxide from a safe distance with water," says Walt.

A career man since 1966, when the county began paying it fire fighters, Walt was promoted to captain in 1974. He served as Battalion 1 until his recent promotion.

Walt first plans to achieve uniformity among the seven battalions of his command. "My goal is to have the bureau go as the Fire Chief wants it to," he says.

Deputy Fire Chief for Operations M.H. (Jim) Estep believes that the new position will reduce his span of control to provide better liaison between the volunteer chiefs and the

career men of the suppression units. "With its addition, the number of persons reporting directly to me has been cut from 16 to 7," says the deputy fire chief.

Walt has been playing softball with Fire Department teams over 20 years. He planned the first Muscular Dystrophy Softball Tournament five years ago. This year's event was the third in a row to be sponsored by Local 1619, I.A.F.F. Thirty-two teams from the United States and Canada competed, and over \$8,000 was collected — twice that of 1976.

Each year, the Gary Provencal Memorial Trophy is presented at the tournament to the person who has contributed most to promote the spirit of camaraderie through sports, as did Provencal, who died suddenly in August 1973, at age 28. Two trophies were awarded this year: one to Sonny Conley, a D.C. fire fighter, and Walt Lanier.

Walt and Amber Lanier (she's from Rockville Center, New York, but has lived in Cheverly since the 1950's) have been married five years. They recently built a three-bedroom house on 12 acres of rolling farmland near Wakefield, Virginia, doing most of the work themselves. The Laniers regularly hunt with Walt's daughter Kathy, 10, and two sons, Walter, 15, and Mike, 11.

## Announcements

**Born.** Laura Jean Stoll, first child for Fire Fighter Steve (Company 26) and Madonna Stoll of Owings; at Columbia Hospital for Women early December 15. A blond, blue-eyed eight-pounder, Laura is also the first grandchild of Lieutenant Jack Stoll (Company 3) — Steve's father.

**Born.** Gayle Charlene Killen, who thrilled parents Donna and Larry shortly before noon on December 22, at Holy Cross Hospital. An eight-pound, brown-haired beauty, Gayle inspired her 9-year-old brother John to distribute lollipops to members of his fourth grade class at Riverdale Baptist School in Largo, and has even offered to help take care of her. Larry, a fire fighter/paramedic assigned to Medic 3 in Laurel, was on hand in the delivery room for Gayle's arrival.

**Born.** Rebecca Marrietta Banwarth, first child for Linda and Dave; at Prince George's General Hospital on the morning of December 23. Rebecca, a brown-haired seven-pounder, was encouraged into the world by her father, who attended childbirth education classes with Linda to prepare for the natural birth. Dave is assigned to the Bureau of Fire Prevention as a fire protection engineer.

**Born.** Katherine Amelia Barrow, a seven-pound, eight-ounce redhead; early January 10, at Baltimore Medical Center. She's the first child for Patricia and John Barrow of Columbia. Her father is assigned to Medic 3 as a fire fighter/paramedic.

## West Lanham (Continued from page 1)

squad members about specialized treatment, helicopter evacuation, drug abuse and vehicular accidents.

Shortly after the opening of nearby Doctor's Hospital of Prince George's two years ago, Gloria coordinated a training program for emergency room workers that significantly improved the flow of treatment heart attack patients receive.

Rescue Captain Debbie Pardue, 28, is particularly interested in a public relations campaign members are planning. "First we will tell citizens who we are and what we do. Later, we will take advantage of the company's six CPR instructors to teach as many citizens as possible how to assist victims of cardiac and respiratory arrest."

Sue Lucas, 36, is, as are Balducci and Pardue, one of five wives whose

(Continued on page 4)

## Volunteer profile

# Frannie Geary



Frannie Geary

Photo by Langford Anderson

One of the county's more astute history buffs is a 6-foot, 4-inch, 235-pound volunteer fire fighter called Frannie Geary. At 52, he's younger than most of the Fire Department's senior volunteer members who make it their job to trace their companies' — and towns' — origins.

Frannie's snow-white hair helps lend a scholarly bearing to a man who has developed uncanny research skills in

the 17 years he has been digging through libraries and newspaper morgues.

"In the old days," he says, "the Hyattsville volunteer fire company was made up of the core of the town's citizens. Even the mayor and members of the city council took part in it."

While preparing a series of brochures for fire service and American Legion conventions, Frannie searched through old newspapers and deeds at the Library of Congress and the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore.

Born on what is now called Rhode Island Avenue, Frannie has been a Hyattsville resident all his life. He graduated from Bladensburg High School in 1943, in plenty of time to serve with the U.S. Navy on a landing craft support ship in the Pacific. His 11 months at sea included the Battle of Okinawa.

Before he joined the Navy, Frannie signed up with the town's fire department. "The company had only 25 members in those days, but it grew to 80 during the 1960's," he recalls.

After the war, Frannie served his company well, holding the positions of superintendent of machinery, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, acting deputy chief and, during the past year, president.

A county real estate assessor until his retirement in 1975, Frannie says

that he knew every house in town. Part-time work as a letter carrier over the years gave him additional insight into the town's development.

In 1962 he organized a fire prevention campaign involving over 100,000 Girl Scouts. He received the Gerald Britton Award in 1963 for his training programs. He has received dozens of letters of appreciation from civic associations and state and local government leaders.

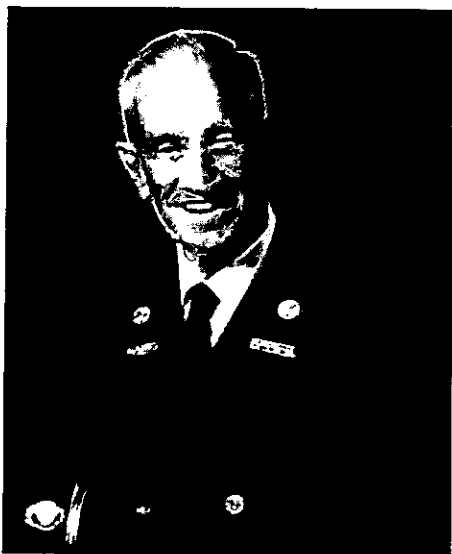
Frannie organized the Junior and Future Fire Department of Hyattsville in 1954. Designed for children ranging in age from 6 to 15, Frannie taught them the fundamentals of firefighting. "It was very helpful for the kids, because it applied basic fire prevention principles that they passed on to their parents," says Geary. "We had movies and dances for them, and they sold trash and delivered papers to buy their own uniforms. They learned what the volunteer service was all about."

Frannie will publish a detailed history of his fire company. He found interest in the project among local citizens greater since his 40-page "History of Hyattsville" came out last year.

Frannie and Margaret Geary have been married 25 years. She retired as a secretary for the University of Maryland's vice president of graduate studies.

## Floyd Heimer

### 1886-1978



Floyd Heimer

Floyd Heimer, 91, who worked on the Panama Canal in 1911 and was active in the county's volunteer fire service over 50 years, died January 1 at his home in New Port Richey, Florida. Born in Hoboken, New Jersey, Floyd graduated from Rutgers University in 1907.

Many leaders of both the volunteer and career segments of the department received their initial training from Floyd, who was a field instructor with the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute for more than 20 years.

When he retired from the Panama Canal Commission in 1951, Floyd began to actively take part in the Prince George's County Volunteer

Firemen's Association. He served as the organization's secretary 25 years, traveling around the state to attend meetings and conferences. In 1973, he was awarded "Secretary Emeritus" by the association's members for his significant contribution to the community.

Floyd also served 25 years as secretary of the Maryland State Firemen's Association.

He is survived by his wife, Josephine Heimer of New Port Richey. Memorial services were conducted at the University of Maryland Chapel in College Park on January 8. The remains are interred at New Port Richey.



When a gasoline tanker overturned on the exit ramp leading from Route I-95 to Powder Mill Road on December 28, fire fighters of the 6th Battalion applied light water foam to neutralize the explosion hazard. They later retrieved most of the gasoline from a nearby stream by using special floatation equipment.

Photo by Rick Fernandez

### Fire Fighters (Continued from page 1)

Nieves," says John. "They were discussing problems they had encountered in their work with staff members of the Urban Institute."

A short lunch break occurred during a meeting with EMS staffers.

December 8 was a Thursday, and John was asked to attend the weekly staff meeting at the County Administration Building early that morning. "The battalion captains and representatives from the bureaus under Chief Estopp's command listed their problems. I was impressed at the way he took on-the-spot corrective action."

Later John accompanied Fire Chief Frank Briguglio and Chief Estopp to a meeting with County Executive Winfield Kelly and citizens of old Bowie, who complained of vandals wrecking their stores. "One lady said that some kids put gasoline on the side of her shop and tried to light it." Once again, Taltavull saw problems swiftly dealt with.

"John was exposed to the decision-

making process as it is from day-to-day," says Jarboe. "He was asked to choose a course of action to take if a number of ladder trucks are out of service at the same time, or if he has to redistribute manpower during the holidays. I'd say that he was highly impressed with the amount of activity and the number of hours devoted to operational administrative functions."

"Chief Estopp really went out of his way to explain things to me, and I'm grateful for that," says Taltavull. "He is definitely a busy man, and I don't see how he has time to sleep."

On the night of December 7, Taltavull was awakened from a sound sleep by the ring of his telephone. "It was the staff operations officer, reporting to the 'deputy fire chief of-the-day' that there was a working fire in the Chillum area, with two fire fighters injured. He must have called me right after talking with Chief Estopp. I don't know what the chief did, but I went back to bed."

### West Lanham (Continued from page 2)

spouses are active members. Sue's husband Paul has been a volunteer fire fighter 12 years. An R.N. at a doctor's office, Sue managed to participate on 270 ambulance calls last year — third-highest for the company. Proud of the company's effectiveness and the great service it provides the community, Sue, a lieutenant, has experienced no problems with the all-female crew.

Sergeant J.P. (for Jean Pierre) Medani, 21, has been an emergency room technician at Prince George's General Hospital for two years. "We get a lot of cooperation from the fire fighters here. I like the work because the people that are on the ambulance really want to be there," he says.

Straight Tip is published by the Prince George's County Fire Department, 4318 Rhode Island Avenue, Brentwood, Md. 20722. It serves as a primary communications link between the Fire Chief and the many subdivisions of the department.

Any material that is submitted for publication must be received by this office on or about the 10th of each month. The editor reserves the right to use all such material as publishing needs and departmental policies dictate.

All unsigned material is written by Langford B. Anderson.

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# Paramedic

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 Baltimore, Maryland

In my EMS related travels, I have met many dedicated and enthusiastic professionals. I have learned something from each of these experiences and so my education continues. I've selected a friend,

Captain Mary Beth Michos, to speak out regarding women in EMS. She directs paramedic training for the Montgomery County (Maryland) system. I've met many good training officers and Captain Michos is one of them. I hope that you will enjoy her frank comments on a subject that has to be controversial with some of you.

The history of women in EMS varies as much as the issues revolving around the subject. In some areas of the country women have been involved in providing emergency care services since the inception of the departments offering the service. However, in the majority of jurisdictions, the circumstance of women seeking to

participate in EMS is a relatively recent occurrence that has created much discussion and controversy.

A question frequently asked is, Why do women want to get involved in this field? It shouldn't surprise anyone that women have the same motives as their male counterparts for seeking participation in EMS. The primary objective cited by both career and volunteer personnel is "to be of service to the community. . .to help others." Women interested in EMS as a career cite additional attractions such as job distinction, salary and fringe benefits, career advancement opportunities, intellectual stimulation and craftsman satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

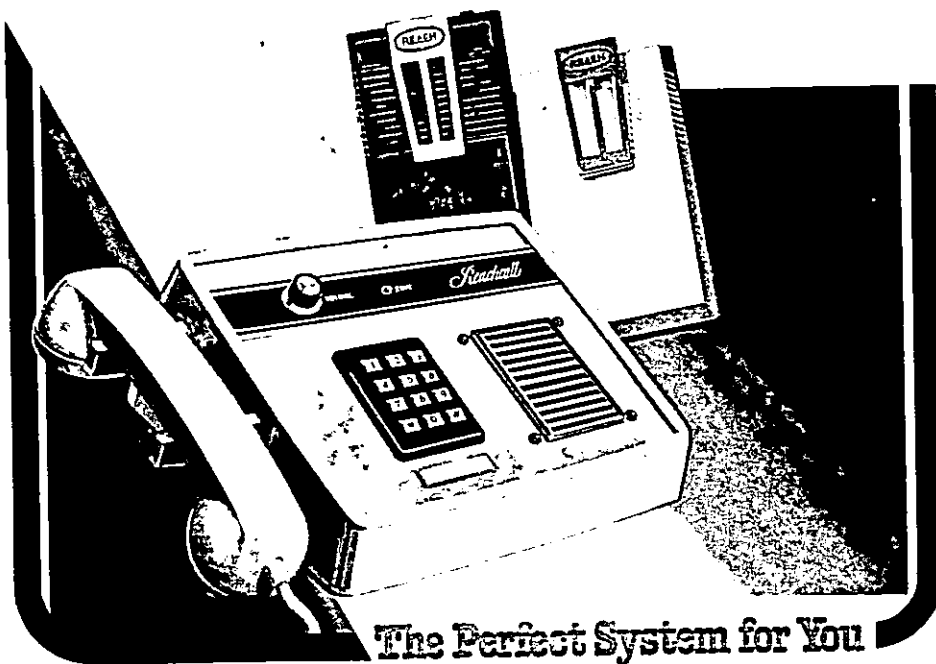
Women appear to have less interest in the social aspects associated with fire rescue services and despite a popular belief (especially among males), very few women join rescue departments to find a husband. People familiar with station activities and emergency work know that the environment does nothing to promote romance.

Although women's motives for getting involved in EMS are similar to those of men, the problems encountered by women are very different: the primary problem centers around the fact that historically the service has been male dominated. In many areas, the fire house or rescue squad has been considered to be a fraternity house—somewhere to go to escape the hustle and bustle of home. Naturally, when women first sought membership, pretexts other than this were fabricated to exclude them.

A common reason for rejection of female applicants was that the department didn't have separate sleeping or washroom facilities. This was soon circumvented by female applicants. After pressure was exerted by the press and civil liberties agencies, compromises were worked out; in some departments women were allowed to join but were not allowed to stay overnight in the station. In Montgomery County, Maryland, one rescue squad converted an office into the women's sleeping quarters while a neighboring rescue squad has both male and female members sleeping in a common bunkroom.

Another common excuse for exclusion of females was that the women did not have the physical strength or emotional stability to function in emergency situations. Since this was more a common belief rather than a proven fact, departments using this as criteria to exclude women had to validate that the women were deficient. Tests were developed to measure individual abilities to perform EMS related tasks. While some women

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applicants were eliminated through this process, it also weeded out men who weren't physically capable of performing the job. Once women were given the opportunity to function in emergency work, it was found that they were psychologically suited to the work. In fact, in certain situations, such as management of pediatric and geriatric patients, they were found more capable of coping with the patients.

There were still other less creditable reasons offered why women should not be allowed to participate in EMS. Some organizations professed that their bylaws did not allow female members; yet others used the excuse that the members' wives and girlfriends would complain and keep the current members from pulling duty if women were allowed in the rescue station. Again, outside influences prevailed and effected changes in bylaws and departmental policies to allow membership by women, and the problems anticipated from wives and girlfriends were resolved. Women members became "one of the guys."

The status of women in EMS has undergone an evolutionary change. In a matter of a few years, resistance to their joining EMS has changed to the extent that many departments are actually soliciting female membership. Volunteer

departments are now recognizing that housewives are an untapped natural resource for daytime coverage. Both career and volunteer departments are recognizing the fact that women are contributing members of their department and in many instances have introduced a new outlook to the management of patient care. Considering that women have always been actively involved in

every other aspect of medicine, it seems appropriate that they have finally become accepted members of the prehospital EMS team.

#### REFERENCES

1. Jelenko, Carl, III; Frey, Charles F. *Emergency Medical Services: An Overview*. Bowie, Maryland: Robert J. Brady Co., 1976.



Joe Dolphin, President  
Medevac, Incorporated  
Pasadena, California

When does the private ambulance business become the public ambulance service? Laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances have made all ambulance services, whether public or private, equal in many ways.

Currently, many governmental services face lawsuits because of sex and race discrimination. The private sector's turn is just around the corner.

If you plan to continue to do business with the government then you should plan an Affirmative Action Program for Equal Opportunity Employment. This

program must be structured to remove barriers to persons with current employment difficulties such as minority groups, women, and veterans, and where possible, the physically handicapped.

The first step is to recognize that without an Affirmative Action Program, you will not be able to contract your services in the future to governmental entities. The federal government has mandated equal opportunity and affirmative action by implementing laws and executive orders which require compliance. Many local governmental entities which are in non-compliance are under Justice Department orders to comply or

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