

### **In early Broomfield firefighting Bucket brigades found inadequate**

'Flames, believed to have been started by a kerosene stove, leveled two adjoining restaurants in Broomfield last night and for a time menaced the whole town," wrote the Rocky Mountain News in March, 1933.

"The two buildings burned were the Bungalow Lunch...and Howg Lunch... Although the townspeople formed a bucket brigade, attempts to check the flames were futile."

Firemen from Lafayette and Louisville finally extinguished this early Broomfield blaze.

Residents found that relying on bucket brigades and neighboring fire departments was not an effective way of protecting their life and property, and in 1945, volunteers organized the West Adams County Fire Department.

At first, the department was only in the Eastlake area, but farmers around Broomfield decided they wanted fire protection and voted to pay the assessment which would allow them into the district.

The name remained West Adams County despite Broomfield's location in Jefferson and Boulder Counties.

In February, 1957, the Broomfield Builder recorded another fire. "The volunteer fire department was called out at 2 a.m. to put out a fire in Warren W. Oswald's home, 126 Beryl Way. The fire that apparently started in a chair filled the house with smoke (which caused most of the damage.)"

"The volunteer firemen extinguished the fire in record time." It was perhaps the first fire in the "new" part of Broomfield.

Later that year, the present Broomfield fire station was built, and the fire truck, which had been housed in Arnold Brown's service station (now Jim Paris) for two years, was moved to the new facility. All personnel continued to be volunteer until 1957.

In the early days of the fire department, the station was permanent living quarters for a volunteer and his family. The first volunteer to live at the station was Bill Brophy. (Brophy is now a Director with the Police Department.)

Burt Brewer, now a lieutenant, joined the department as a volunteer in 1954, and recalls many of the city's fires. The biggest fire they've ever had to fight, he contends, was

the 1973 arson fire at Irvin Industries.

The fire was started in three different locations, and had to be fought in 18 degrees below zero weather. There was also a lot of fuel in the building which compounded the problems the fire crews were already experiencing with freezing fire lines.

Brewer also recalls the arson fire where flammable material was lowered into the Komac paint store in the shopping center and the fire at Emerald School that was a result of someone throwing firecrackers through a window, catching the curtains on fire.

According to Brewer, the department doesn't get too many structure fires in Broomfield. "When we do, it's a good one," he notes.

The department added a rescue unit to their equipment in 1964, and today approximately 75 percent of the calls are for first aid.

According to Brewer, the equipment is comparable to the paramedic's equipment on the TV show "Emergency," except they are not in contact with a hospital and, therefore, do not have a defibrillator. All firemen are required to have an Advanced First Aid Card, and almost all personnel are E.M.T.'s (Emergency Medical Technicians.)

Brewer dreads industrial fires and heart attacks more than any other type call. With an industrial fire, there is always a chance of stored chemicals or flammable liquids.

"You don't know what you have burning," he notes. It is the vomiting which accompanies heart attacks that bothers him. Brewer emphasizes that his job isn't all physical labor, but notes there is a lot of stress. He was a volunteer for 18 years, but says, "it is a lot different sitting here knowing you're going to be the first one there."

Fire fighting has traditionally been classified as the most dangerous occupation, Brewer adds. Heart attacks are the number one killer of firemen. Hence anyone over forty must have his heart checked periodically.

The station's rescue unit is dedicated to the memory of Sherman Reed who died of a heart attack at the scene of a fire.

July 1, 1977, the fire department opened a second Broomfield station at 135th and Lowell, cutting the fire and rescue squad response time to Westlake and the trailer parks by approximately five minutes.

The second day the station was in operation, a "core zero" heart attack occurred in Cimmaron Trailer Park. Core zero indicates the victim has no pulse, and brain damage is certain if rescue attempts aren't started within four to six minutes, with death close behind. Since a response time of at least seven minutes is necessary from the downtown station, the proximity of the new station is credited with preventing the victim from being dead on

arrival.

"They couldn't have put this station in a better spot," said Fireman Gary Hale. Hale, a Westlake resident, is one of the firemen stationed at the house. Hale noted the station was in a high use area because it is near the trailer parks. There were 17 fires in Front Range Trailer Park last year, and six or seven of them were destroyed. Brewer also noted the trailer courts had a high fire rate and that a trailer "goes fast." The volunteer spirit which organized the West Adams County Fire Department continues to make a major contribution to fire fighting and rescue efforts. Approximately 30 trained volunteers monitor the dispatch calls of the stations and respond to any incident in their area.