

THE HISTORY

OF

THE ALLEGHANY COUNTY

RESCUE SQUAD, INC.



On September 12, 1969, a tragic accident occurred which was to indirectly be the beginning of a lifesaving organization.

On that eventful night, a young couple, Johnny Johnson and Linda Pennington, wrecked on highway 18 approximately 3 miles east of Sparta. They were trapped inside the car for almost 2½ hours before being freed and taken to the hospital where they died.

Whether or not these people could have been saved if they were freed more quickly is no longer important. What is important is that their deaths brought to light the need for the community to have a trained, equipped rescue squad ready for such an emergency. Melvin Miles aired this need to the public by radio and newspapers and on September 23 the preliminary meeting was held at the VFW building.

Mr. Roy H. Kane, Secretary of the N.C. Association of Rescue Squads, and members of the Ashe County Rescue Squad were on hand to explain all the steps involved in beginning such an organization and exactly what its functions would be. This led to the organizational meeting held the next week on the 30th.

At this meeting, Mr. Melvin Miles presided and again, Mr. Roy Kane was present to assist in any possible way. Mr. Kane stressed to the people the importance that this squad be non-profit and comply with the laws of N.C. Since the Board of Directors was to be the police makers, they were elected first.

Money was to be a constant need so the Finance Committee was the next in line for election. These members donated the squad's first \$34.00; \$20.00 of it to be used in obtaining a charter for operation.

Mr. Claude Edwards was elected to be the squad's first captain and would preside over the next meeting on October 6.

The remaining offices were First Lieutenant, Second Lieutenant, Third Lieutenant, Four Sergeants, Secretary-Treasurer, Training Officer, Chaplain, Medical Advisor, Legal Advisor, Program Committee, Membership Committee and Steering Committee. With its newly elected officers and 43 members, the rescue squad was underway.

The squad would need to be incorporated, so the corporation papers were drawn up by Arnold Young, Legal Advisor.

Some of the rules of the corporation were;

1. Would not have nor would issue any capital stock and would operate as a non-profit organization.
2. The assets or income of the corporation would not be distributed to any member for their benefit.
3. The assets would not be distributed to any private individual for their benefit.
4. In the event the squad is dissolved, no member, director officer, or private individual would be entitled to share in the distribution of the assets.

The squad was to be known as the Alleghany County Rescue Squad and would meet on the second and fourth Monday nights of each month.

Now that the squad had begun, the members needed training, so on October 27, Mr. Arthur Hutchens was on hand to explain the First Aid Classes they would need. They were to take Standard and Advanced First Aid, a total of 26 hours of training, which were taught from the 27 to the 30 and from November 3 to the 7.

One of the first acts by the Board of Directors was drawing up the Constitution and By-Laws of the squad with the help of Mr. Roy Kane and Mr. Arnold Young, which the squad read and approved.

Then in November began the fund raising campaigns. On the 15th, Brice Miller had WCOK radio station hold a memorial to Johnny Johnson from 9am to 5pm. During this time they took pledges for the rescue squad. Nine squad members took 3 hour shifts manning the telephones with Mr. Miles working all day. This campaign raised \$3,105.

The next undertaking was a house to house canvas for the purpose of raising funds to purchase a crash truck. More than 38 members and interested citizens campaigned for \$3,927.64.

Letters were sent to the churches seeking assistance which yielded \$639.60 and business donations reached \$1,562.

By January of 1970 the treasury had \$6,942.64.

February brought Unit 1 of the five Rescue Training courses. Eighteen members took this 12 hour course held at Alleghany High School. It was taught by Mr. Graham Johnson, a State Fire and Rescue Instructor.

Bids had been let for the crash truck which was awarded to Irwin Chevrolet. In March the truck arrived and the committee

that was to find a storage place, chose Alleghany Farm Equipment because of its ready access to main roads. Squad members met to build the storage cabinets in the truck themselves thus saving on the expense. In order to equip the truck, some light equipment was donated by local merchants and the squad purchased a winch, generator, electric lights and siren, and 3 used army blankets.

Now that the truck was being readied, the squad needed uniforms. Troutman Industries furnished green shirts and pants for the men and enough material to make blouses and slacks for the ladies. The ladies uniforms were made by Carolina Silk Shop and Linda Evans.

In the summer the squad decided to move their meeting place to Alleghany Farm Equipment to be nearer their equipment.

July 6th thru the 9th was when Unit 2 of the Rescue Training was given to 10 members again taught by Instructor Graham Johnson.

Communication lines for the squad were installed. One phone was placed at Alleghany Farm Equipment and one in the home of Mr. Roscoe Evans—Third Lieutenant since four members of his family were also members of the rescue squad and the phones could be manned on a 24hr. basis.

As of September the squad had been organized for approximately one year and had an impressive record to its credit. Their hard work and persistence had brought them an income of \$10,320.51 and expenses of \$6,909.94.

Elections were held in September for the year 70-71, with the position of Third Lieutenant hereafter being known as Equipment Lieutenant. The captain for the up coming year was Mr. Melvin Miles.

A change in their method of operation occurred also. The squad divided itself into four equal teams with a sargeant in charge of each team. They were then on call for one week each.

Communications were improved by the installation of a C-B radio in the crash truck and erection of a radio tower at their base.

The squad held their first night-time manned stand-by over the Christmas holiday weekends. They assembled at their base and waited throught the night in order to offer a faster rsonce time to any emergency call.

June brought the squad one of their first very important

events when they were called to assist in the search for a lost little boy at Mountain Park. Their ready response and dedicated work brought recognition from the other rescue squads in North Carolina as being a vital working organization that could be called upon in time of need.

Always updating their training, twenty one of the squad's members completed Unit 3 of Rescue Training in August. Instructor for the course was Graham Johnson.

In this year the squad joined the Benevolent Brotherhood. This is a life insurance only available to members of the N.C. State Association of Rescue Squads. Under this program, the members pay \$1.00 in dues which are only assessed when another member dies. This money is then given to the deceased member's family.

This administration also brought another type of uniform to be worn during physical work. This consisted of white coveralls for the men and lab coats for the ladies. Donations received were a C-B radio, an American Flag, 25 folding chairs, and a coffee pot.

Another change in offices occurred at the September elections when the office of Secretary-Treasurer was divided into two separate positions. Captain for the year of 71-72 was Mr. Melvin Miles.

After the election, the phones were placed in the homes of Captain Miles, First Lieutenant Robert Green, and Sargeant Richard Andrews.

One of the squad's most meaningful gifts came to it in December when Mr. Perkinson of Danville, Va., presented the squad with a check for \$500.00. This was given in appreciation for the fast response with prompt and courteous service in answer to a call in September. At this time, Mr. Perkinson was visting Roaring Gap when he suffered from choking and a heart attack. With his generous donation, the squad purchased a boat, trailer, and life jackets.

The hospital showed their esteem for the squad when they requested its help in the blood bank. They would call on the squad whenever they were in need of blood and the members with that blood type would respond. All of these actions and more proved that the squad could be depended upon and was gaining acceptance from surrounding people and establishments.

The squad hit upon what was to become their most famous

and well liked fund raising campaign in March. They held their first barbecue on the opening day of fishing season with tremendous results. Later in the next year, they would decide to hold one on the first Saturday of each month during the warm weather seasons.

Always in training, twenty members of the squad completed Unit four of Rescue Training. Once again taught by Instructor Graham Johnson.

The squad's largest break through in communications came when Roscoe Evans informed the squad that they were eligible for money to purchase communications equipment. This improved system would enable them to communicate with the police, hospital, and surrounding rescue squads. Work toward this and began but the big accomplishments were to come in the following year.

As this administration nears a close, a quick recap shows they raised a total of \$1,647.71.

The September elections resulted in Roscoe Evans being elected Captain for 72-73.

The phone lines were installed in the homes of Captain Evans and First Lieutenant Allen Finney.

Important work on the communications system began when the Board of Directors requested the County Commissioners to compose a letter of support. In this letter the commissioners pledged their support to the new system by stating that they would pay 20% of the cost for the new equipment. This enabled the squad to obtain a federal grant for the remaining 80%. The commissioners also informed the squad that they would have the old fire building to use as their own when the Fire Department moved into their new building. The squad was finally to get a building of their own.

Plans for the communication system got underway in full swing. A tower was erected on Green Mountain to house the base. Again the squad members helped cut the cost by doing much of the work themselves. Every penny counted since the squad had to raise \$5,000.00 for their part in purchasing the equipment. Fund raising campaigns were underway in full force.

But through all this hustle and bustle, time was set aside for more training. Unit five of Rescue Training was taught by Instructor Johnson with thirteen members completing this course.

August brought another transportation vehicle with the pur-

cash of one the ambulances from Dewey Sturdivant of Sturdivant's Funeral Home.

Donations were received from Mr. and Mrs. Gene Hall, Sparta Pipes, Mary Norris Preyer Fund, Belks Store, and Dewey Sturdivant. Fund raising and donations amounted to \$3,967.75.

Another first for the Board of Directors came at the September elections for 73-74. Board members were on hand to oversee the elections and tally the votes. Melvin Miles was elected Captain.

Phones were placed in First Lieutenant Robert Green's home, the Bantam Chief, and the jail.

The first death of a squad member in the squad's history occurred in October. Outgoing Captain Roscoe Evans suffered a heart attack and died while away from his home on business. The squad extended a Rescue Squad Salute at the funeral and presented his wife with a plaque in commemoration of his actions while in the squad. They also established a trust fund in his name and later purchased a police monitor with the donations received in his memory.

A change in officers took place when Secretary Richard Andrews withdrew from the squad and Charity Gambill was chosen to succeed him.

November and December brought early Christmas presents to the squad when they moved into their first building and some of their communications equipment arrived. Later the building was completed on Green Mountain and monitors were issued to the members.

Fund raising for the year netted \$2,183.05.

Mr. Gene Crouse was elected captain for the year 74 - 75 in September.

The Board of Directors again exercised their power of policy making when they requested the squad to compose a list of all incomes and expenses incurred each month. Copies were to be made and distributed to the Board of Directors, the County Commissioners, and the Town Council. The Board would also have to approve all expenditures exceeding \$100.00.

In April the County Commissioners leased to the Rescue Squad a lot for their use for the next 99 years. This was to be the future site of the new Alleghany County Rescue Squad building.

The squad members furthered their training in the form of

an Emergency Medical Technician course. This was an 87 hour course with 12 hours of volunteer work in the hospital emergency room. Thirteen members successfully completed this strenuous training procedure.

In order to improve their equipment, an application was filed to obtain a new ambulance through a federal grant.

At the September elections, another change in offices came about with the election of two people to the position of Training Officer. Captain for the 75-76 year was Mr. Gene Crouse.

This is the story of the Allegheny County Rescue Squad from their beginning in September of 1969 through the elections in September of 1975. Like all volunteer organizations, their existence has not been easy. It has been laced with the struggle, hard work, and devotion required of its members. They have gone from a handful of interested citizens who had nothing to an organized body of trained personnel with the skills and equipment vital to its purpose. Their history has not ended; its just beginning.