

# PETERBOROUGH Fire & Rescue (1981-2006)

*A quarter century of progress*



by  
Eric Bowman

*Dedicated to  
Deputy Chief Paul Thibault,  
one of PFR's most dedicated members,  
who took on the daunting task of  
chairing and organizing the  
150th Anniversary Celebration of the  
Peterborough Fire & Rescue Service.*

*For his role well done, we, the members of the  
Peterborough Fire & Rescue Association,  
are eternally grateful.*

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# Preface



*July 2, 1988, a fully involved garage fire at the Dezutter residence on Jarmany Hill Road in Sharon. This was one of Chief Parkhurst's first major fires as chief; he was given credit for a blitz attack that prevented the fire from spreading, thus saving the house, which still stands today.*

This updated history of Peterborough Fire & Rescue (PFR) has been written to celebrate an important birthday. In 2006 PFR will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its creation. As part of the celebration, the 150th Celebration Committee commissioned an author, firefighter Eric Bowman, to write a history of the department over the past 25 years. In 1981 the original "History of the Peterborough Fire Department" was written, chronicling the first 125 years of the department. Spearheaded

by then-chief Merton Dyer, the 125th Celebration Committee hired an independent writer who used town documents, archival material, and local newspaper articles to compile the history. This version has stood the test of time and, up until now, has served as the only written history of PFR.

This history is intended to update the original, not by editing the original, but by adding a history of the past 25 years. No attempt has been made to create flow between the original history and this updated version.



*Firefighter Eric Bowman operating Engine One at the scene of a tanker drill 2003.*

A different format and a different voice have been used. The original history has been left in its original state, except for a few inaccuracies that have been fixed. The purpose of this history is to highlight the changes and trends of the past 25 years. This has been an important time in the history of this department. One could argue that more has changed in the past 25 years than in any other 25-year period in PFR's history. The information in this updated history came primarily from personal interviews with the people who were there. The photographs in this version come from PFR's own photo archives. Many of the photos were taken by PFR's photographer and honorary member George Brown. Additional photos supplied by Jon Hampson.

## ***About the Author***

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The author, Eric Bowman, is a Peterborough native and longtime firefighter for PFR. Bowman was born at Monadnock Community Hospital in Peterborough in 1970 to Ronald and Jane Bowman of Peterborough. He attended Peterborough Elementary and Middle Schools, and graduated from ConVal High School in 1989. In 1983, Bowman's father, Ron, joined the Peterborough Fire Department, beginning a long relationship between the department and the Bowman family, which continues today. Ron Bowman served as company clerk, treasurer, lieutenant, captain, and deputy chief of the department. Jane Bowman was an original member of the Peterborough Fire Department Auxiliary and

continues to serve today. In 1995, the Bowmans' son-in-law, Jon Hall, joined the department and has been a firefighter ever since. In 1987, Eric Bowman was an original member of the Peterborough Fire Explorers. He served as an explorer for three years until he was elected a full member of PFR in 1990. Since that time, Bowman has served as lieutenant on two separate occasions. He was named the department's first Public Information Officer in 2004 and has been the liaison between PFR and the press since that time.

Bowman graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a B.A. in History in 1993. In 1994 he married Rachael

Callahan, daughter of Ken and Diane Callahan of Sharon, NH, and also a ConVal and UNH graduate. He then earned his M.A. degree in Religion from Yale University Divinity School in 1997. After permanently settling in Peterborough with Rachael in the summer of 1997, Bowman began teaching history at ConVal High School. At this time he also took a part-time lectureship in Philosophy and Religion at Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, NH. Today, Bowman still teaches at ConVal and Franklin Pierce College, and lives in Peterborough. He and Rachael have a daughter, Grace, born in 1998, and a son, Emmanuel, born in 2001.

*Peterborough Fire & Rescue 1981 - 2006*



*Commissioner Brown, PFR's official photographer, at the scene of one of our many fires, always at the ready with his camera. Next to him are Deputy Bowman and Laura Norton, 2003.*



## Joseph Lenox

*Chief of Department, 2004 – present*

With more than 32 years of experience, Lenox began his career working part-time at the Concord Fire Department in the late '60s. In 1979 he was appointed to a full-time position. In 1991, he was promoted to lieutenant and then to deputy chief in 1996. Two years later he was promoted to chief, where he remained until retiring on January 1, 2003.

During his career in Massachusetts he was a member of the Special Operations Task Force for the State Fire Marshal's office and the state's Emergency Management Team. He also served on the Concord Board of Selectmen and as chair of the Concord Local Emergency Planning Committee.

From the beginning, Lenox said firefighting was in his blood. A fourth-generation firefighter, both his grandfather and great-grandfather served on the Medford, MA fire department. His father is a retired fire lieutenant and worked in the Fire and Rescue Crash Department for the U.S. Navy during World War II and the Korean War.

Lenox was hired as the current PFR fire chief and began working on May 17, 2004. As the fire chief, Lenox is in charge of overseeing all operations at the fire department, the budget, and fire prevention.



Paul Thibault  
*Deputy Chief*

## ***Chief & Staff***

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Brian Wall  
*Deputy Chief*



Keith Rodenhiser  
*Deputy Chief*

## ***Fire Officers***

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Jon Hampson  
*Captain*



David Skerry  
*Lieutenant*



Jason Duval  
*Lieutenant*





Rebecca Rodenhiser  
*Captain*

## ***Rescue Officers***

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Steve Bolduc  
*Lieutenant*



Mary Ellen Stanley  
*Lieutenant*

# *PFR Past Fire Chiefs*

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John H. Steele  
1885-1889, 1898-1899



Earl W. Wyman  
1938-1947



Merton S. Dyer  
1966-1978



Timothy E. Driscoll  
1906-1932



David J. Rochford  
1947-1957



Lawrence Bishop  
1978-1988



Martin Hafeli  
1932



J. Frederick Webb  
1957-1959



Donald Parkhurst  
1988-1991



John V. Pearson  
1933-1937



Thomas Craig  
1959-1966



Stephen Black  
1992-2002



### ***PFR Past Fire Chiefs***

*No photo available.*

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Granville P. Felt: 1856-1880

Joseph Franklin Noone: 1880

George W. Farrar: 1881-1884

Charles H. Brooks: 1887

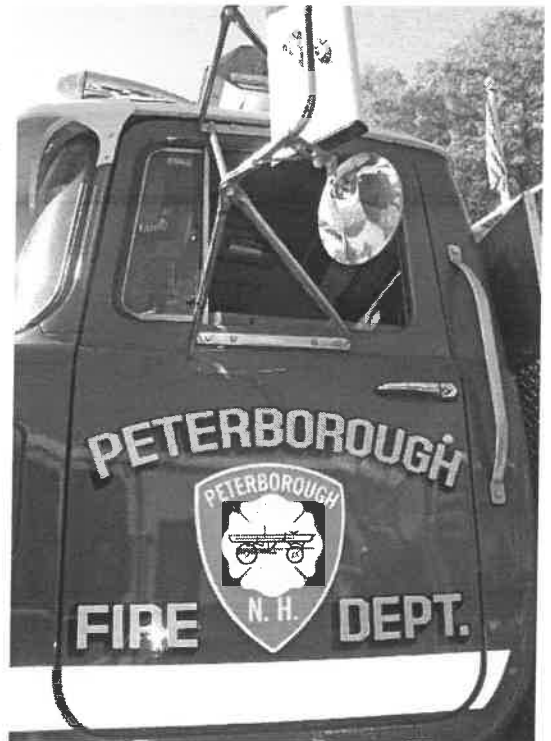
Alvin Townsend: 1890

Mortier L. Morrison: 1891

Henry B. Needham: 1892-1897

F.E. Russell: 1900-1905

William Naugle: 2002-2003





James Graham  
*President*

## ***Elected Officers of the Association***

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Jennifer Phillips  
*Vice President*



Ron Bowman  
*Treasurer*



Kyra Sweeney  
*Secretary*

## *Fireman's Prayer*

*When I am called to duty, God,  
Wherever flames may rage  
Give me strength to save some life  
Whatever be its age.*

*Help me embrace a little child  
Before it is too late  
Or save an older person from  
The horror of that fate.*

*Enable me to be alert  
And hear the weakest shout  
And quickly and efficiently  
Put the fire out.*

*I want to fill my calling and  
To give the best of me  
To guard my every neighbor and  
Protect his property.*

*And if according to your will  
I have to lose my life,  
Please bless with your protecting hands  
My children and my wife.*



*The 1914 American LaFrance parades down Main Street at the Francestown Parade, Labor Day 1999. Deputy Ron Bowman is at the wheel, his wife and auxiliary member, Jane Bowman, is at his side. In the back we see firefighter Chaz Babb and auxiliary member Patrice Hampson.*

## ***Transition from the Old Guard***

The 1980s were a time of great change for the Peterborough Fire Department. As the decade began, the department looked much like it did throughout its history: under the leadership of a traditional volunteer chief and staffed by men who enjoyed the camaraderie as much as the pride of volunteerism. By the end of the decade, PFR would be working with new technology, a new leadership model, and a whole new pool of personnel.

Larry Bishop was chief of PFR from 1978 to 1988. To many, Bishop was the Peterborough Fire Department. He was a leader of the town of Peterborough: a

long time firefighter, ambulance attendant, and charter member of the ambulance squad. In town he was a baseball commissioner and coach, and owner of Nonie's Bakery. His authoritarian leadership style, booming voice, and belief in tradition hid the fact that he was a fire chief who led the department through a time of great change. He was active with the Southwest New Hampshire Fire Mutual Aid Dispatch Center in Keene. Using this new way of communication, Bishop was "the Voice of the Valley," his commands to his firefighters being broadcast all over the region for people to hear on their scanners. Peterborough's call number was 24 and Bishop was "24-C1." If one paid attention, one could also hear

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the commands of "24-C4," Bishop's wife Bev, who may call the chief for an update from the fire scene or give a report from home. Volunteerism flourished under Bishop, with membership numbers rising into the forties. Because of the respect he commanded and because of the dedicated work of the membership, Peterborough's fire department came to be known as one of the most professional and prestigious departments in the region. That distinction hasn't gone away.

Chief Bishop was in office when great changes began to take place. In 1981, the Peterborough Lions donated a new "Jaws of Life™" hydraulic rescue tool set. The set was valued at \$7400 and was donated in memory of Winston "Winn" Whitney and Wayne Hopkins, two long time Lions. Up to this time, rescue workers used handsaws, tin snips, a porta-power, gas-powered saws, and hand-powered cutters to extricate a victim from a motor vehicle accident. With the Jaws of Life™ a gas-powered hydraulic pump runs the hydraulic tools, which can cut through the strongest metal in a fraction of the time it takes to cut by hand. Peterborough's set of tools was the first set of Jaws in the region; the closest other sets belonged to Keene or Meadowood. This new tool

was particularly important, given the increasing heavy rescue call volume in Peterborough in the 1980s and 1990s. With improved safety technology used in late-model automobiles, there were more survivors of motor vehicle accidents and, thus, more rescue opportunities. This set of Jaws served PFR until it was replaced with a new set in 2004.

The 1980s was also a time of replacing older apparatus. In 1984, a truck-purchasing committee was formed to investigate the options for replacing a 1958 American LaFrance pumper that had served the town in the past. The committee consisted of firefighter Larry Kemp and his father, Selectman Gordon Kemp, fire officer Michael "Moto" Maguire, fire officer Don Parkhurst, firefighter Ron Stickney, Chief Bishop, and his son, fire officer David Bishop. After exhaustive research, the department purchased an E-One pumper that became "24-M1." This truck became PFR's front-line attack pumper, a position it held until the department bought a new E-One pumper in 1993. This purchase also began a long relationship between Peterborough and the E-One company. Also under Chief Bishop, PFR designed its own new tanker truck, assembled

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by the Walker Company from Florida. The new tanker sat on a used 1981 Mack chassis that accumulated 120,000 miles as a tractor before its life as a fire truck. Instrumental in the purchase and design of the new tanker was a committee consisting of firefighter Larry Kemp and Selectman Gordon Kemp; fire officers Moto Maguire, Don Parkhurst, and Brad Winters; and firefighters Jon Hampson and Ted Belville. The new tanker arrived in 1988, just before Chief Bishop left office and stayed in service until 1997.

The new tools and apparatus were not the only major changes in the 1980s. For the first time in PFR's existence, the gender barrier was broken. Longtime Peterborough resident Laura Norton requested to be considered for membership. By all accounts, she was the first woman to attempt to join the department. Norton recalls that Peterborough firefighter Doug Means said they needed qualified EMTs "in a bad way." Norton responded to this call for help, submitting her application in August of 1984. While some may expect resistance to the first woman member, this was not the case. Norton was elected a member at the next monthly meeting without incident. "I'm sure some folks weren't happy about it, but they were always kind

and civil," said Norton, now an ambulance officer for PFR.

Since Norton's election, many women have been members of PFR, and they have become a major part of the force. In fact, one could argue that women members have made up the backbone of PFR's medical service. PFR women have served on both fire and ambulance, achieving state-certified firefighter levels, and nationally certified EMT levels. Several department women have served as state and national EMT and CPR instructors. Julie Thibault was named Captain and later Deputy Chief of EMS, the first woman in Peterborough to achieve the level of Deputy Chief. Women such as Norton and Karen (Ravndal) Dreyer were the first women trained as drivers of fire apparatus. Beginning with Norton in 1984, female members of PFR do everything that their male counterparts do.

Another major personnel decision came in 1987. Longtime Peterborough firefighter Ron Stickney almost single-handedly started an Explorer post, affiliated with PFR. Chief Bishop was always known as a supporter of individual initiatives and was open to good ideas. He provided Stickney with the freedom and the power to pursue this dream. Explorers





*By the end of the 1980s, much of PFR's work came in the form of motor vehicle accidents. Here, firefighter Jon Hampson sizes up one vehicle while Deputy "Moto" Maguire, Captain Ron Bowman, and firefighter Joe Thibault oversee the work of two explorers on the second vehicle, December 22, 1990.*

are a branch of the Boy Scouts of America that allows young people aged 14 to 21 to pursue (or "explore") vocations and volunteer activities. At the time, most Explorer posts in New Hampshire were affiliated with police departments and drum-and-bugle corps. Stickney went through the Boy Scouts of America and was granted his request. The Peterborough Fire Department would sponsor Explorer Post #808.

Seven local boys, each a student at ConVal High School and some with connections to firefighters on the department, made up the original class of Explorers. Lenny Emond of West Peterborough expressed the earliest interest, spurring Stickney to develop the post. Other members included Tony Nichols,

John Garabrant, Tim Connor, and Bill DeCoste, all of Peterborough. Paul Thibault, son of longtime PFR member Joe Thibault, and Eric Bowman, son of PFR member Ron Bowman, were also charter members of the post. Josh Cilley, nephew of former PFR Deputy Chief Dennis Cilley, joined the post within the first few months. Initially, PFR officers and Explorer advisors struggled with defining what role Explorers would play on the department. Boy Scout rules prevented Explorers from working certain machinery and prohibited them from interior structural firefighting. However, they were always invited to department drills and training, and all department functions and celebrations. Explorers have also been allowed to ride on fire apparatus in response



*A motor vehicle accident in front of Agway on Route 202 South, summer 1995. More and more of PFR's call volume has been dedicated to accidents. In the foreground, EMT Julie Thilbault holds an IV bag. By the mid 1990s, PFR EMTs are able to start intravenous fluids in patients.*

to emergency calls. On the fire scene, Explorers provided PFR with added manpower to conduct their operations. Explorers help direct traffic, fill air tanks, roll hose, do preventive maintenance, and many overhaul and salvage operations. On the scene, it is often difficult to see the difference between regular members and Explorers, as every effort is made to include Explorers in typical operations.

The expectations of Explorers were ironed out as Explorer posts began to grow throughout the state. In the early 1990s, a group of Explorer advisors, led by Peterborough's own Ron Stickney, got together to form the New Hampshire State Explorer Academy. The Academy was designed to provide training to Explorers in a rigorous setting that

was comparable to the training a full-time firefighter cadet would go through. In order to establish the Academy, Explorer advisors needed to come up with common rules for operation and expectations for Explorer training and behavior. Peterborough sent several explorers to the first-ever Explorer Academy, where Stickney, among others, acted as advisor and teacher. The Academy continues to this day with a heavy influence from Peterborough firefighters, who serve on the board of directors and serve as teachers and advisors; PFR association provides tuition to send cadets to the academy every year. The Explorer post has improved relations between PFR and schools in the ConVal district. It has become crucial in the recruitment of future members.

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Dozens of future members have graduated from the ranks of Explorers, including EMTs, interior firefighters and operator drivers, junior officers, and deputy chiefs.

While all of these changes were taking place in the late 1980s, there were other clues that PFR was reaching the end of an era. The nature of fire and rescue calls began to shift from structural fires to rescue calls, medical calls, and motor vehicle accidents. The last fatal fire in the town of Peterborough took place at the Doris Lindsay residence on Vale Street on April 30, 1987. Mrs. Lindsay was a widow; her husband Bill was killed in action during World War II. The fire was ruled accidental, perhaps electrical in nature, but it quickly was out of control and trapped Mrs. Lindsay inside. Mrs. Lindsay's longtime companion, "Blondie" Paquette, was rescued from the fire by PFR's aerial ladder truck. However, rescuers could not get to Mrs. Lindsay in time and she died from smoke inhalation. While this probably won't be the last fatal fire in Peterborough, it served as a symbolic end of an era. Improved technology in fire suppression, smoke detectors, and building codes have made structure fires less frequent.

Although there were changes taking place within

the fire service, PFR continued to stay connected to its sense of tradition. In 1983, in an effort to recognize the commitments of its own, the membership created two awards—one to maintain a connection to history and one to honor a present member within the ranks. Earlier that year, PFR Deputy Chief and longtime member Jere Morris died suddenly at the age of 46. Deputy Morris' funeral was the first full fire department funeral. To remember Morris' dedication to the department, the membership created the annual Jere T. Morris Member of the Year award. The award would be decided by the chief based on nominations given confidentially by the membership. The first award was given in 1984 to firefighter Larry Kemp, a man known for his dedication to the service and his tireless maintenance of the station and equipment. Since that time, PFR recognizes its Member of the Year at its annual Appreciation Night in April (see Appendix 2). It is now tradition for the previous year's winner to help the chief in determining which of the members' nominees should be chosen Member of the Year.

Around this time, PFR also began to recognize honorary members in its "Hall of Flame." The members felt it was important to recognize

those members who gave outstanding commitment over a long period of time. Honorary members are elected among those retired members who gave more than 20 years of service and left in good standing. Anyone may nominate someone for honorary membership, and anyone may speak on their behalf. After hearing the arguments, the membership votes on honorary members who, if elected, are presented a plaque, their names added to the honor role at the station, and bricks with their name is placed in the George L. Brown Remembrance Walkway adjacent to the Aquarius No. 1 Museum. The first class of honorary members included George Brown himself, longtime Peterborough firefighter and officer (see Appendix 1).

As the 1980s drew to a close, Chief Bishop began to recognize that the job of chief was getting bigger as he grew older. A fire chief's job in Peterborough was increasingly about prevention—including fire alarm and sprinkler inspections and maintenance, and building inspections and code work—and creating an operating budget that reflects the needs of a modern fire department. Because of this changing role, the fire chief was also becoming a more

political job in town, including education of and outreach to local businesses and taxpayers. The nature of the fire service began to change as well. Peterborough call volume began to increase, primarily due to increasing medical calls and a new type of incident that fell under the jurisdiction of the fire service, hazardous materials (or "Hazmat") calls. Chief Bishop, citing family reasons and his age, stepped down after 10 years as chief and 32 years as a member. It was quickly announced by town officials that the inevitable had arrived. It was time for Peterborough to hire its first full-time member—a full-time chief.

## ***A Full-Time Chief***

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Former Peterborough Fire Chief Mert Dyer was one of the selectmen in 1987, and he was the catalyst for creating the full-time fire chief's job. Dyer, having passed the reins to Chief Bishop, recognized that the job was beginning to require more time and more training. After sifting through candidates, the town Board of Selectmen appointed a full-time chief and it was a familiar face. Don Parkhurst of Peterborough had faithfully served on the fire department for more than two decades when he was appointed the first full-time chief in June of 1988. Parkhurst was well-



*24 A2 shortly after delivery in 2003.*

qualified, having served in virtually every officer and committee position on the department. He was also one of the most learned members in department history, holding multiple state certifications. In fact, he was the first PFR member to be a state-certified Firefighter Level One—certification that is much more common among members today. He also held an Associate's degree in Fire Protection and was a state-certified instructor in several subjects. Parkhurst was officially named chief in a ceremony on the steps of the Town House on May 31, 1988.

Parkhurst's qualifications served him well, as the expectations of the department had grown in recent years. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) had passed recommendations calling for increased safety on the fire ground. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration

(OSHA) handed down guidelines on workplace safety that the department was committed to. Peterborough was the first town in its area to adopt ICS (Incident Command System), with Southwestern New Hampshire District following a few years later. Jon Hampson was named the first Safety Officer of the department. His job was to ensure that the message of safety was reinforced in every department operation. Firefighter Jon Hampson and Chief Parkhurst were instrumental in training area departments in ICS, as Hampson was a graduate of the National Fire Academy ICS Pilot Program in 1980. The first area town to adopt the program was Harrisville, after sponsoring a class taught by Chief Parkhurst. Expectations that the department deal with hazardous materials incidents meant more training

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in such operations. New technology in automobiles such as air-bags and the Nader bolt meant more survivors, which also meant more heavy rescue for PFR. Parkhurst used his experience as an instructor and his broad knowledge and experience to begin to bring these practices into PFR. Many PFR officers and firefighters were sent to take state-certified courses in safety, NFPA codes, and ICS. Even with a new full-time chief, the membership had increased responsibilities and leadership roles.

The medical branch of PFR also continued to grow during the 1980s. While ambulance attendants could still serve on the squad with "first-responder" certification, more and more members became EMT certified. An appointed position of Ambulance Coordinator administered the EMS branch, coordinating training and assisting with the budget and fundraising. Some of the first Ambulance Coordinators included Jay LaRoche, Barry Costa, Mike Hall, Ted Jarest, Bernie Cutter, Dennis Cilley, and Claudia Cleary-Nichols. This was an appointed position that served under the officers in an administrative role.

Parkhurst also began to add the basic accoutrements of a fire chief to his position. The department was given

a retired Peterborough Police cruiser, which was refurbished and converted to the fire chief's car. The chief would use the command car to respond to calls, but also on routine inspections and official business. In 1985 the Department's first computer was donated at cost by Business Computers of Peterborough. The owner of the business, Bill Gollan had local programmer Tom Westheimer, develop a custom database to keep track of incidents and activities. Parkhurst also oversaw the shift to digital technology; he was the first fire chief to use a computer on the job daily.

As the emphasis of emergency calls began to shift to medical calls, motor vehicle accidents, Hazmat incidents, and alarm malfunctions, major structure fires began to stand out as rare occurrences in Peterborough and throughout the country. One major fire stands out during Chief Parkhurst's tenure. On April 9, 1991, a fire broke out at the North Gallery (also known as "Tewksbury's") at the intersection of Routes 123 and 101. The fire quickly spread from the gallery into the home, and was out of control before the fire department arrived. This fire tested the municipal water supply and snarled traffic for an entire day. More than

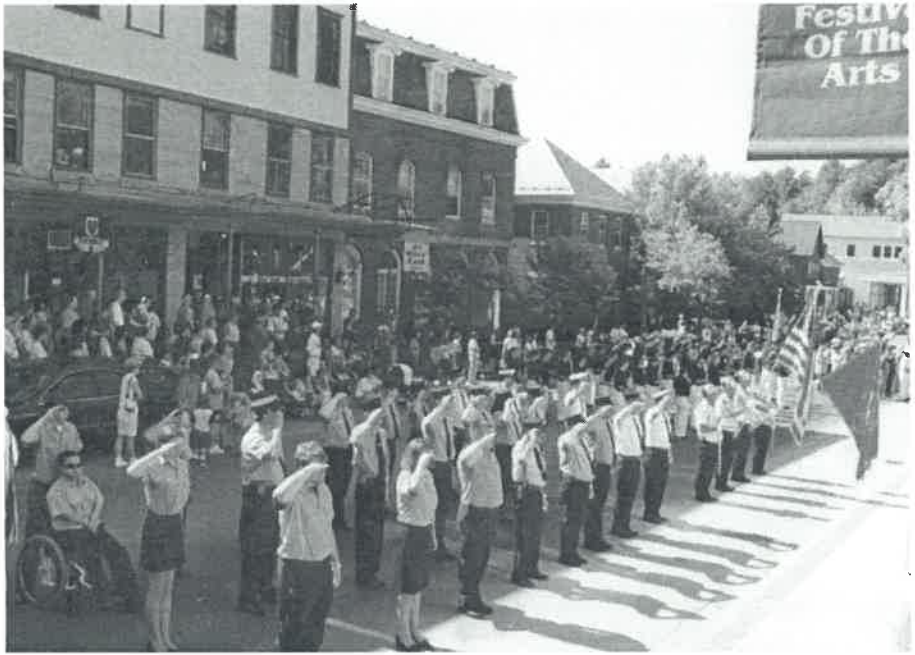


*Firefighters from many surrounding towns work together with Peterborough to fight the fire at Tewksbury's (North Gallery) at the intersections of Routes 123 and 101, April 9, 1991.*

10 area departments were called to fight the fire, including a ladder from Keene, the first time mutual aid came from that city in many years. When the fire was finally brought under control, firefighters had saved the majority of the house. Despite great damage, the North Gallery was rebuilt and the retail shop re-opened.

After four years on the job, Chief Parkhurst resigned as chief and selflessly returned to the ranks of the department. This began an interim period when the selectmen conducted an exhaustive search to find the next full-time chief. Serving as acting chief during this interim period was long-time firefighter and Deputy Fire Chief Brad Winters. Winters had been a Peterborough firefighter since 1976. Under Chief Bishop, Winters

served as company captain. He then served as deputy chief under acting Chief Parkhurst. Chief Winters did more than just keep the seat warm until another chief came along. He maintained the training regimen and budgeting process that was put into place under Chief Parkhurst and handled difficult personnel issues with firmness and efficiency. Winters' officers at the time were also extremely helpful in keeping the department running. One who was particularly instrumental in assisting Chief Winters was longtime member Lieutenant Bruce McPherson, who would later become chief of the State Fire Academy in Concord. Winters also oversaw some transitions. In early 1992 the department began a search for a new ladder



*PFR standing in formation at the Memorial Day parade, 1999.*

truck. PFR's current ladder truck was a 1960 Seagrave that was no longer able to pass its safety tests. A committee was formed and extensive research was done to find a new truck. Serving on the committee were Acting Chief Winters and his full complement of officers: Deputy Chief Ron Stickney, Captain Ron Bowman, Lieutenant Mike Burke, firefighter and ambulance Coordinator Ted Jarest, and Lieutenant Bill DeCoste. After a comprehensive search, the department struck a deal with the Middletown, PA fire department to purchase its ladder truck, a 1978 Seagrave with a 100-ft. aerial. When the truck arrived in Peterborough, it was light blue and PFR acted quickly to have the truck repainted and lettered to match other

Peterborough apparatus. The truck was in service by late 1992.

Under Chief Parkhurst and Deputy Chief Winters, the Explorers program continued to flourish. The first class of Explorers finished its tenure, and many of the charter members graduated to the ranks of the department. Explorer John Garabrant was the first, and he was quickly followed by Paul Thibault, Bill DeCoste, Tony Nichols, and Lenny Emond. Just a few years later, the first Explorers would be elected to officer positions on the department, as DeCoste was elected lieutenant. This time of transition presented a challenge to the Explorer post, as advisor Ron Stickney and his new assistants, Mike Burke and Ted Jarest, worked to bring in new members to replace graduating members. At this time, many future mainstays of the



department joined the Explorers, such as Keith Rodenhiser, Jason Duval, Jon Berube, Brett Kruger, and Steve Hobbs.

## **A Big-City Fire Chief?**

While leading the department through this transition period, Acting Chief Winters also led the search committee for the next chief. The search brought in candidates from surrounding towns, but also from cities and towns far from the Monadnock Region. The committee selected Stephen Black, a retired chief from Wellesley, MA. Chief Black's nomination would seemingly present new challenges to the town of Peterborough. He had a strong resume and came with glowing recommendations, but there were some who feared his status as an outsider. He was the first chief of PFR who did not reside in the town when he was appointed. He had neither lived in Peterborough nor served on the Peterborough Fire Department. There were some who questioned his experience as a "big-city chief" and wondered if he could handle the challenges of rural water supply and a small-town mutual aid system. These fears proved to be unfounded as Chief Black fit in seamlessly with the small-town department while also helping PFR modernize.

The years under Chief Black proved to be years of looking forward while also keeping the department firmly connected to the heroes and traditions that had made PFR great. The role of the fire department continued to grow and change. As the Cold War was ending, the Civilian Defense system, which was designed to train civilians to be a part of the police and fire departments, was dismantled by the federal government. In its place came the newly formed Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), which was to prepare not only for nuclear war but all kinds of hazardous events. In 1995 Chief Black oversaw the liquidation of Peterborough's old Civil Defense resources, formerly stored at the police station under the Town House and at the rear of the fire station. The creation of FEMA meant that the department would get new resources from



*Chief Black at one of his last calls, November 2002.*

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*Peterborough firefighters in action at a garage fire at the Haase residence on Elm Hill, December 27, 2001. The fire started in and quickly engulfed the garage. The house was saved and still stands today. Chief Black stands in the foreground while attack crews attempt to protect the house from the flames.*

the federal government and would be eligible for grants to pay for tools, equipment, and training. This would also mean that PFR would have new responsibilities under FEMA, accounting for protection for the town in case of emergency or natural disaster. This was symbolic of the increased responsibility that PFR had in protecting its citizens and the new threats to health and safety that the members of PFR faced.

Chief Black was not afraid to ask for help in his transition to the Peterborough area. Retired firefighter George Brown became one of Black's closest confidants, earning the nickname "Commissioner

Brown." Using his knowledge of his native Peterborough and his more than 40 years involvement in the department, Brown showed Black the ins and outs of Peterborough—from learning street names to understanding the politics of the town. It was a common sight to see Chief Black and Commissioner Brown in the chief's car together, making inspection visits or house calls, or going for a quick lunch. Chief Black also developed strong rapport with other town officials and chiefs of surrounding towns. He developed a strong working relationship with Peterborough Code Officer Tom Weeks; the two would work together

to develop many cutting-edge town codes designed toward life safety. Black developed strong ties with other towns, strengthening the partnership and developing standards that each would work by. Because the mutual aid system frequently brought them together, Chief Black worked particularly well with Jaffrey Fire Chief Jack White—Chiefs Black and White developed a strong working relationship together. But Peterborough worked not only with Jaffrey, but all towns in the mutual aid system, and Black worked hard to promote this cooperation. He served on the board of the Southwestern New Hampshire Dispatch Center in Keene and helped the dispatch center update its technology and serve the needs of its member towns. It is safe to say that Black not only was instrumental in bringing Peterborough into the 21st century, but also was inspirational throughout the Southwestern New Hampshire district.

Encouraging the input of many members was part of his philosophy in firefighting, too. Black continued the emphasis on the ICS started by Chief Parkhurst and made ICS training mandatory for all officers or anyone interested in an officer position in the future. Black expected all members to be experts in all areas of the department, creating a versatile force that could do whatever was asked of it. Firefighters Jon Hall and Jon Hampson both served as training officers for Chief



*Julie Hanson, Member of the Year, 1994. A year later, Hanson would be named Ambulance Captain.*

Black. Interior firefighters were encouraged to become operators/drivers, often taking courses offered in-house and taught by PFR members Jon Hampson, Don Parkhurst, and Paul Thibault. Firefighters were encouraged to become first responders and medical technicians (and vice versa), completing in-house courses taught by members such as Laura Norton, Claudia Cleary-Nichols, and Julie Thibault. The medical side of the department continued to grow under Black, and in 1995, the position of Ambulance Coordinator was officially changed to Ambulance Captain, the first in the position being Julie Thibault. The ambulance captain was later given a lieutenant's position to help with the many responsibilities, with Laura Norton serving first from 1997 to 1999 and then Ellen Carter serving from 1999 to 2001.



*A famous shot of PFR firefighters in front of a house engulfed in flames. No, it is not common for PFR to pose for group shots at house fires; this was a live burn drill, and the house was being allowed to burn to finish the drill, June 14, 1998.*

This was the first time that the administrator of the ambulance service was considered a true member of the department's management team, and Thibault would become one of Chief Black's closest advisors. Many of the advances made by the medical branch of the department were made with Thibault at the helm. At the same time, the two worked to keep the department from being divided between fire and medical personnel.

Part of Chief Black's vision was to create a safety-conscious department. Black built on the practices started under Chief Parkhurst, creating a Health and Safety committee whose job it

was to promote the welfare of the membership. Under this initiative, full turnout gear was made mandatory at all calls. Department policy was made requiring SCBAs for nearly all firefighting and below-grade operations. The department bought new turnout gear and SCBAs during Chief Black's tenure. New lightweight gear and eye protection were purchased for fighting brush fires, making grueling forestry work more manageable. Continuing a practice begun during Parkhurst's tenure, members were given accountability tags as a way to keep track of who came on what apparatus and who was engaged in what activities on the

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fireground. Communication was emphasized as a way to ensure accountability during all operations, and officers were made responsible for the safety of all their crews. All of these initiatives were designed to protect the members while at work on the scene.

Black recognized that health and safety didn't matter only on the fireground. Under Chief Black and Ambulance Captain Julie Thibault, PFR developed the firefighter physical plan with the Occupational Wellness program at Monadnock Community Hospital (MCH). Firefighters were put on an annual schedule to have a complete physical to assure that they were healthy enough for the job. This physical also established baseline vital signs for each member. By comparing baseline vital signs to one's vital signs at the scene of a fire, medical technicians could determine if a firefighter was being overtaxed at an incident. A rehab station became standard at all major incidents, where ambulance attendants would check the vitals of firefighters and rescue workers, and water, food, and shelter from the elements would be provided. Soon the firefighter wellness program began to offer annual flu shots and TB tests for all members and

members' families. And in the year 2000, with the opening of the Wellness Center at MCH, members were allowed to join the health club under the PFR group membership. PFR members had truly begun to think about health and safety on a daily basis.

While Black clearly had the interests of the membership in mind, he also concerned himself with possible liability faced by the department and the town. In addition to preparing members for the physical demands of the job, Chief Black initiated the types of practices that are common in all full-time municipal jobs today. Members were required, as town employees, to attend sexual harassment awareness seminars. Black and the officers addressed the hiring process to ensure that members were following applicable "equal opportunity" laws when hiring new members. Firefighting and rescue training continued to be among the most progressive of any department in the area. Black even had the foresight to insure PFR apparatus for full replacement value in case of a catastrophe. This paid dividends in 1997 when Peterborough's tanker was involved in a major accident with a propane truck in downtown Jaffrey. The tanker, on its way to a house fire in Jaffrey, struck the propane

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truck on its way through a busy intersection. The tanker was totaled. Insurance paid for a brand new truck that matched the specs of the old tanker.

All of these plans were a result of Black recognizing that the volunteer fire and rescue service was becoming like a part-time job. He recognized that there was danger in the job, but he also recognized that responsibilities were increasing over the years. Throughout his tenure, Chief Black encouraged members to learn all that they could. However, his mantra was familiar to all who gave their time to the department: "Family comes first, your job second; the fire department comes third." This was becoming more difficult as call volume was steadily increasing over the years. The types of calls had evolved over the years, meaning that new training was always needed. Due to increased concerns about liability, members were required to update training more frequently; the excuse that "we are just volunteers" was not acceptable. One way to recognize the increased demands on the members was to increase the wages of the members. Chief Black along with Deputy Winters, Deputy Stickney, and Ambulance Captain Thibault

began to investigate wages in similar departments, and after exhaustive research they presented a plan to the Board of Selectmen to increase the hourly wage to more than \$14 per hour. The plan also created an incentive program, offering bonuses to any member who accrued a certain number of calls per pay period. But the new salary plan was proposed and defended confidentially. Black and his deputies were wary of the fact that the town might not be able to support a wage increase, and did not want to give the membership false hopes that might damage morale. The new salary plan was accepted by the Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen and was passed in 2000.

Black would also request a new position that would support his administrative duties. With the permission of the town, Black hired an administrative assistant, Penny Seavey, who would help the chief with correspondence, data entry, and office management. The position was considered part-time, although Seavey gave much more than just hours to the department. For the first time, PFR had recognized that the administrative side of the chief's job required increased attention. After Seavey retired and moved to Florida in 2000, the job was



*Lieutenant Mike Caisse gives longtime custodian and member Ken Guyette a ride in PFR's all-terrain six-wheeler. Firefighters Nate Ingersoll and Liz Sordillo look on.*

filled by firefighter and EMT Karen Ravndal. In 2004, after Ravndal left for another job, Captain Rebecca Rodenhiser and EMT Amanda Fleury served during an interim period until Heather McCluskey was hired for the position, which she still holds today.

Black had another way to deal with the increasing demands on PFR: a major restructuring of the officers' positions. The first step meant creating a new deputy chief position. For years, the fire chief had deputies to whom he could delegate jobs and authority. This position did not exist for the medical side of PFR's operations. Black recognized that EMS had its own entirely different needs for management, licensing, and

training. In March of 2001, Black, with the concurrence of the PFR membership, created the position of "Deputy Chief of EMS" and appointed longtime EMT and Ambulance Captain Julie Thibault to this position. Thibault served symbolically as the first deputy of EMS, but immediately resigned to spend more time with her family. The position was passed to Ellen Carter, who served as deputy from March 2001 until October 2002. Included in the deputy's job description were handling personnel, coordinating training, compiling the budget, making purchases, scheduling night duty and Sunday check duty, and serving as the point









*A patient from a motor vehicle accident being loaded into a med flight at the old Temple Mountain ski area on Route 101. It is much more common today for patients to be flown to Boston, Worcester, or Dartmouth to receive the critical care they need.*

person in all EMS matters. At the same time that the Deputy Chief of EMS position was created, the position of Ambulance Lieutenant was made into the position of Ambulance Captain, with Becky Stanley appointed to the position. Although Thibault resigned her position in 2001, she was drafted back into the service during Deputy Brad Winters' second stint as acting chief. During her second term as Deputy Chief of EMS from October 2002 to March of 2003, Thibault would continue to offer visionary leadership, guiding the department through times of serious change.

One of the most important innovations brought in by Captain Thibault, with the approval and assistance of Chief Black, was the ambulance "fee-for-service"

plan. This plan was suggested and encouraged by Town Administrator Pam Brenner, who came to Peterborough from a town that was using a fee-for-service plan. Brenner recognized that there was an undue tax burden for Peterborough residents since they were already paying for ambulance service through their insurance premiums. Under this plan, anyone riding on the ambulance would be charged for that call. MCH agreed to handle the billing for ambulance runs, including the charge for ambulance service in the invoice from the hospital. After one year, it became evident that ambulance billing was too cumbersome for MCH, and PFR hired another agency to handle billing. Most often, one's ambulance fee would be paid by one's insurance company. This plan was never

intended to prevent people from calling the ambulance—most often, fees were paid by one's insurance company or Medicare and Medicaid. If one was unable to pay, they would be given a waiver of payment. Fees collected by the ambulance service would go into a special town account which, by law, is used only for support of the ambulance service. With the fee-for-service plan, Peterborough Ambulance virtually paid for itself. Ambulance fund-raising still paid for special programs, but the day-to-day operations and supplies were paid for by the people who used the service. Peterborough Ambulance Service was the first service in the area to charge fees. The move to fee-for-service was accepted easily by the PFR

membership, even though they had always prided themselves on offering a free service. Members understood that no one would be denied service if they could not pay and were empowered to speak with any patient who had concerns about paying. The transition to fee-for-service was smooth and began to provide tax relief to Peterborough almost immediately. Call volume continued to increase over the years and the fee-for-service plan is considered a great success.

Chief Black could see that fire prevention was emerging as a critically important job of the fire service and began to advocate local ordinances that would protect firefighters and the public's lives and property. Black, Code Officer Tom Weeks, the Town



*Members of PFR spend hundreds of hours each year on training. Pictured are PFR members conducting their annual extrication training, 2006. Firefighter Bob Dutton operating the ram under the watchful eye of Deputy Chief Wall.*

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Hillside Committee, and a team of PFR members sponsored a new town ordinance defining the width and grade of driveways in town. This was designed to improve accessibility for fire apparatus and a large-diameter hose. A more controversial ordinance was sponsored by Black, Weeks, and a team of PFR members in 2001, which required sprinklers in all new domestic dwellings in town. Black, Weeks, and PFR members Jon Sawyer, Jon Hampson, Ron Stickney, Bob Berube, Dan Failla, and State Fire Investigator (and PFR Lieutenant) Keith Rodenhiser argued that sprinklers are the single most important factor in fire suppression and thus in preserving life safety and property. The ordinance passed in 2001, although it would face challenges in the future.

With all the forward thinking of the 1990s, this was also a decade when PFR looked to connect with its past. The Aquarius No. 1 Fire Museum on the grounds of the Peterborough Fire Department would undergo major renovations in an effort to preserve history. The museum was donated by the family of Dyer F. Brown, longtime PFR member and father to George Brown, the

owners of the 1833 former one-room school house (it was their longtime family home). The Brown family gave the home and the surrounding grounds to the town in 1973 under Chief Merton Dyer for the purpose of creating the Aquarius No. 1 Fire Museum. The old Brown homestead was gutted, creating a single-room museum with attic space above. While the building is owned by the town, the contents were owned by the membership of PFR. Most of the contents were originally held in the Goyette Museum on Elm Street but were moved to their new home in 1973. The museum remained largely unchanged since that time until an initiative in the mid-1990s to update the building and better preserve its contents. In 1998, the museum board hired Peterborough firefighter Jon Hall to replace the roof. At the same time, Deputy Chief Ron Bowman was hired to replace the windows to make the museum more weathertight. The outside trim of the building and the interior were painted and museum-quality lighting, picture frames, and display cases were installed to better preserve the contents. The renovations were paid for primarily by



*PFR firefighters extinguish barn fire at the Well School, 2006.*

the PFR association, not by taxpayers' money. The contents of the museum continues to expand with donations of fire memorabilia from various citizens, including Ruth Parker, Henry Emory, the family of longtime firefighter Fred Morin, the family of former Fire Chief David Rochford, and former Deputy Fire Chief David Crooker. A museum board of directors was created to oversee the museum's operations. Charter members of the board include Stephen Black, Ron Bowman, George Brown, Dick Dunning, Mert Dyer, Jim Grant, and Jay LaRoche. Brown accepted the job as museum curator and treasurer with Jim Grant as his assistant. In 2000 the museum was renamed the Merton S. Dyer Aquarius No. 1 Fire Museum,

to honor the founder. The PFR Association continues to provide ongoing financial support for the museum.

This year also marked the beginning of a new way to raise funds and a new way to recognize PFR's history. For years, PFR conducted fund-raising through annual mailing campaigns and through the Penny Sale, an event where local businesses donate prizes to be raffled off. The Penny Sale, held every June in the gymnasium at Peterborough Elementary School or South Meadow School, was a chance for the public to connect with PFR members, as they delivered prizes and raffle tickets to attendees. This event was an important part of PFR's history and remains a fun



*Longtime member Jim Grant makes a special dedication to Honorary Member George Brown, July 4, 1998. Here Grant presents a photo of the fully restored 1914 American LaFrance to Dick Dunning.*

community event today. In the late 1990s, an entirely new way to raise funds—and connect with the community—was developed. Grass space between the museum and the fire station was converted into the George L. Brown Remembrance Walkway. The walkway was created with commemorative bricks that were sold to raise funds for the museum. Approximately 2000 bricks are available in the walkway, and as of 2005, roughly 450 were sold. For \$50, the bricks are custom inscribed according to the wishes of the purchaser. The bricks were skillfully installed by PFR members Meas Rouen and Mike Caisse. Along with the names of many community members and PFR members in the walkway, there are a number of sections set aside for specific purposes.

George Brown was the first to create a monument, placing a granite bench under the maple tree at the rear of the walkway in memory of his wife, Pat Brown. PFR members paid for a brick for all 21 Peterborough fire chiefs recognized, all Members of the Year (from 1984 to present), and all honorary members of PFR. A granite post recalls the high-water mark from the hurricane and flood of 1938. Another granite monument commemorates Peterborough native Phil Sangermano, a World War II pilot ace who was killed in action, and his family. At the far side of the walkway near the fire station is "Bonnie's Gate," dedicated to Peterborough EMT Bonnie Leete, who died tragically in 2001. At the rear of the walkway stands a beautiful fieldstone and bench seat dedicated to the late wife of

former Congressman Perkins Bass. The park is constantly updated and bricks can still be purchased. As a result of this initiative, a new unofficial town park and popular downtown destination has been created at no cost to the taxpayers.

At the same time that the Remembrance Walkway was begun, senior member firefighter Jim Grant and Dick Dunning also spearheaded an effort to restore Peterborough's 1914 American LaFrance fire engine. The truck has stayed in Peterborough since it was first purchased in 1914. Grant's idea was to preserve the truck, but to keep it running and active in functions and parades. The effort was funded through museum fund-raising opportunities. Original parts and accessories were located



across the country and used to restore the truck. More than \$5000 was paid to seal the truck's paint and gold leaf, preserving its original surface rather than repainting it. The result of this careful restoration is what is believed to be the most original, best preserved fire truck of its kind. To

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*Jim Grant on the 1914 American LaFrance 2004.*

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this day, the 1914 LaFrance continues to visit parades and shows, and has won numerous awards and honors. And it is perhaps the most obvious symbol of PFR's connection to its past.

In the 10 years with Chief Black at the helm, PFR experienced some major incidents that stand out in the history of PFR. On a frigid night in February of 1993, the Otter Brook Farm on Gulf Road in Peterborough caught fire and quickly spread throughout the horse barn. Firefighting efforts began when neighbors and passersby, including Peter Morin, son of longtime PFR firefighter and honorary member Fred Morin, heroically rescued livestock from the blazing barn. PFR arrived on the scene and battled the blaze and the elements for more than 14 hours. The barn was heavily damaged, although thankfully all the animals were saved and no one was hurt. The barn was rebuilt and reopened. Because the fire was ruled suspicious, the owner, the DuBois family, initiated a series of security measures to ensure that such a tragedy would never take place again.

An incident with a much higher profile came to define Black's tenure as chief. On New Year's Day, 1999, calls to 911 came in at the same time box 131 at the

fire station was pulled by Peterborough resident Tom Keenan. Reports came in that the Marionette Theatre on Main Street, formerly the Monadnock Ledger Building and the original Baptist Church, was ablaze. The first crews on the scene attempted an interior attack, only to realize that the fire was quickly spreading out of control. Approximately a half hour into the call, Chief Black ordered all companies out of the building to protect them in the event of a building collapse. It was an exterior operation from that point forward. Black and his officers Deputy Brad Winters and Deputy Ron Stickney coordinated a massive operation including all branches of the fire/rescue/police services and municipal organizations. Mutual aid was dispatched from towns as far away as Keene and Meadowood to try to bring the fire under control. The below-zero temperatures made firefighting efforts even more challenging; fire streams were kept flowing constantly to avoid freezing and firefighters were forced to return to the station in shifts to thaw their gear and prevent frostbite. The DPW sanded and salted the slippery roads around the fire ground, and the water department had to open an alternate well to replenish the





*Firefighters extinguish car fire on Rt. 136. Pictured are Deputy Chief Wall, FF Fraley, and Lt. Bolduc, 2006.*

water in the municipal hydrant system. To supplement water for the town's system, water was drafted from the Contoocook River as well. In all, an estimated three million gallons of water were applied to the fire. Community volunteers gathered at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Main Street to prepare hot meals for the firefighters and to provide a warm resting place just a few yards from the fire ground. Local businesses provided food and supplies to help maintain firefighting efforts: Roy's and Mr. Mikes donated food and drinks, Twelve Pine brought warm soup, Ames Department store and Eastern Mountain Sports donated new socks and balaclavas to help keep firefighters warm and dry. An investigation by the fire

marshal's office revealed that the fire was accidental, starting in the heating system and traveling undetected in the ductwork. The historic structure, built in 1826, was heavily damaged, but was eventually renovated to become the Mariposa Museum. The Marionette Theater fire remains in Peterborough lore as one of the greatest fires in town history, and the combined efforts of volunteers and community members stands as one of the finest examples of community cooperation.

In November of 2002 Chief Black retired from the department. After serving the town for 10 years—years of remarkable growth and change—Black felt it was time for a change in leadership. In his farewell address to the membership, Black thanked the



*Members extinguish fire in a town-owned garage at the Sand Hill Road cemetery. Explorer Elizabeth Reynolds is on the nozzle, backed up by FF Steve Hobbs, May 2006.*

members for their dedication and their support of him as chief. He specifically praised the work of his officers over the years, especially Deputy Chief Brad Winters and Ambulance Coordinator Julie Thibault. Black called Winters "one of the finest fire officers I have worked with." He praised Thibault for her organizational skills, her leadership, and her visionary work as Ambulance Coordinator. Black found the input of both of these officers invaluable, making it possible for him to be a successful chief. He also warned the department of days to come, when the demands of training, budgeting, and administrative work would tax the members and the department like never before. Black himself would be credited by many for his leadership and for the professionalism he brought to the

department. He had the uncanny ability to bring the department into the next century while also maintaining a connection the storied tradition of PFR. Replacing Black would be the first major challenge the department would face as it entered the 21st century.

## ***Transitions***

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The town named William Naugle the next chief of PFR, and he started immediately after Black's final day as chief. In his short term as chief, Naugle would work to continue the cutting-edge work of Chief Black. A group of active citizens challenged the sprinkler ordinance that was put into effect the previous year. Claiming that the ordinance restricted growth and placed high costs on home builders, the petitioners mounted a fierce campaign to eliminate the

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ordinance. A committee of PFR members was organized to answer this concern. Led by members Jon Hampson, Jon Sawyer, Dan Failla, Ron Stickney, Lieutenant Keith Rodenhiser and retired Chief Black, the sprinkler committee was re-formed to mount a public information campaign explaining the benefits and costs of domestic sprinkler systems. Acknowledging that sprinklers are the best way to ensure life safety in case of a fire, the committee used a series of public hearings to answer questions, share data, and show informational videos on the benefits of sprinkler systems. With a new chief who had not written the original ordinance the work of the committee was even more important. The petitioner's bill was narrowly defeated—a victory in the eyes of PFR—and the sprinkler ordinance, remained in effect for the time being.

One major incident marked the short tenure of Chief Naugle. Just before dawn on a frigid February morning, a Rymes gasoline tanker, filling the underground tanks at the Rymes gas station in Depot Square, experienced a catastrophic failure, spilling an estimated 300 gallons of gasoline into the streets and storm drains of downtown Peterborough. The first calls to 911 gave the indication of the

gravity of the situation. The smallest spark could ignite the gasoline vapors, causing an explosion and fire that could destroy much of downtown. To prevent such a disaster, the first step PFR took was to kill the power and completely shut off the center of town. People were restricted from entering the downtown area by vehicle or on foot. Hazardous waste booms and pads were strategically placed to stop the flow of the liquid gasoline and absorb the massive puddles of gas that were forming. Of particular concern was the gasoline that had entered the storm drains and had run through an abandoned underground canal under downtown shops and into the Contoocook River. Dozens of firefighters were on the scene for the entire day and into the next day to prevent ignition and help with the cleanup. The sub-zero temperatures once again challenged the firefighters and cleanup crews, though the cold weather was also a blessing—in colder temperatures, gasoline does not convert to vapor as readily, meaning it would stay in a liquid form and thus be easier to control. PFR members were required to stay on the scene for days after the spill, monitoring the vapor levels and chasing the liquid in to storm drains. State environmental cleanup crews were brought

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*Chief Joseph Lenox III is appointed chief, June 15, 2004. Here during the ceremony, Lenox's wife, Carol, pins his badge on his uniform while Town Administrator Pam Brenner (standing at the table) and Town Administrative Assistant Pam Crook (sitting at the table) look on. The Lenox's children are seated in the front row.*

into remove the gasoline in a safe and effective way. The spill would be a major concern for PFR and the town for many months after, and would turn out to be the dominant event of Chief Naugle's term as chief.

Chief Naugle resigned as chief, leaving for southern Maine where he joined the fire service in the town of York. This left another interim period when PFR was placed into the capable hands of Deputy Chief Brad Winters. While Acting Chief Winters handled chief duties in the field and on the scene, Deputy Chief Paul Thibault, assisted by Captain Keith Rodenhiser handled the majority of the operational components, while Deputy of EMS Mike Roper, with the support of EMS Captain Rebecca Rodenhiser, stepped

up to take on the majority of administrative duties and day to day operations of the organization. The interim administration recognized the diversified talents within the membership of the department and tapped them as a resource to not only sustain emergency and business operations, but to advance the organization during difficult times and with enormous concessions to family and full time employment obligations. This dynamic leadership team under Acting Chief Winters, was behind many of the innovations that make PFR what it is today. The proactive budgeting process, the shift to daytime on call personnel, the development of the new divisions and major purchases

of the ladder truck and the hydraulic rescue tools all could not have happened without the leadership of this group, and the work of a dedicated membership. Acting Chief Winters and Town Administrator Brenner worked with Deputy Chief Mike Roper and firefighters Jon Hampson, Jon Sawyer and Brian Wall to create the most complete, organized, and forward-thinking budget PFR had ever submitted. A 30 year plan was created for equipment replacement, along with a preventative maintenance schedule to care for the equipment and apparatus. Virtually every expense was accounted for, from personal protective equipment, to training, to apparatus replacement. The budget committee also took the first steps into the world of grantwriting, securing money for equipment and programs and thus saving thousands of dollars for the taxpayers. With this practice in place, the new chief could pick up where they left off, continuing to help PFR grow into the future while preserving the taxpayers' investments.

The search committee for the new chief found its man west of Boston once again. Concord, MA native Joseph P. Lenox III was named the new chief of PFR on May of 2004, after an exhaustive search and a rigorous interview process. He started on a part-time basis in May and was named full-time chief in a ceremony on June 15, 2004. Lenox would bring

considerable experience to his job in Peterborough. He was a member of the Concord, MA Fire Department for 32 years, retiring in 2003 as Chief of Department and Director of Emergency Management. After retiring, Lenox was employed by the State Fire Marshal's Office in the Code Compliance Unit. What did not show up on Lenox's resume was that he was a visionary, open to change, and a great leader.

Among the changes that Chief Lenox would usher in would be increased responsibility for officers. Lenox showed a great knack for delegation, trusting his members and officers to share the workload. In 2003, recognizing the growth of the department and its increased responsibilities, Acting Chief Winters and Acting Deputy Chief of EMS Julie Thibault, with the help of Ambulance Captain Becky Stanley, created new elected officer positions: two lieutenants of EMS. These first EMS



*Chief Lenox at a Tanker Drill, 2005.*



*Members of the PFR and officers of the Peterborough Police Department participate in a disaster drill held at ConVal high school. Pictured are PFR members treating injured students, 2006.*

lieutenants were Don Parkhurst and Karen Ravndal. At this time, the officer corps of the EMS branch of the service resembled the fire branch. The Deputy Chief of EMS was the overseer of all operations, licensing, safety, and personnel management. The Ambulance Captain was responsible for new member orientation and training and the two Lieutenants were in charge of quality assurance/improvement, supplies management, and the rehabilitation program. By 2005, Chief Lenox divided the operations of PFR into three divisions: the EMS Division, under Deputy Chief Brian Wall; the Training and Safety Division under Deputy Chief Paul Thibault; and the Technical Services Division under Deputy Chief Keith Rodenhiser. Chief Lenox recognized the effectiveness of the interim administration

under Acting Chief Winters and Deputies Thibault and Roper upon his hiring. Building on this momentum and adding his own vast experience with delegation of duties, he formally instituted a major reorganization of the department. Lenox also created a host of new appointed positions so he could delegate tasks. Firefighter and fire protection designer Dan Failla was appointed the first Fire Inspector; his job was to help the chief with the many inspections of new buildings and new sprinkler installations. Longtime member Ron Stickney was appointed Fire Alarm Superintendent, in charge of maintaining the town fire alarm system. Deputy Chief Mike Roper served as Training Coordinator for a short time. That job was passed on to Lieutenant Rich Daughen, before settling as the responsibility of Deputy Paul Thibault. Firefighter

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Eric Bowman was named the department's first Public Information Officer, in charge of communicating with the press during incidents and writing press releases. Information Systems was placed under the jurisdiction of Deputy Chief Keith Rodenhiser. Captain Rebecca Rodenhiser was designated the department's information and technology coordinator. With the assistance of Deputy Chief Rodenhiser, Captain Rodenhiser greatly improved the department's system of documentation and record keeping. This was achieved through the purchase of state-of-the-art software called *Firehouse*. Captain Rodenhiser was tasked with the responsibility of training the entire department in the use of this software which is used on a daily basis by all members of the department. Lieutenant David Skerry was placed in charge of the Motorsquad, responsible for vehicle maintenance and maintenance of buildings and grounds. To support the chief at major incidents at the command post, Lenox appointed Mary Ellen Stanley the Chief's Aide. Inspector Failla's job was placed in the Staff Division under Chief Lenox. All of these changes were made official in September of 2005. The scope of the job of firefighter

or EMT grew to include much more training than in years past, taking up more and more of a member's time. The political elements of writing a budget and communicating with the press were recognized and accounted for. And in an increasingly litigious society, the importance of protecting the town and the department was recognized. True to the prophetic words of Chief Black, gone were the days of volunteers who needed to worry about their job only when the fire whistle sounded. To go along with changes in job descriptions and expectations, the station itself went through some structural changes designed to support the new work being done within its walls. Spearheaded by Ambulance Lieutenant Victoria Zimmermann, and with the help of Lieutenant Steve Hobbs and Inspector Dan Failla a training center was built in the rear of the station, filling a space that was once storage. Using funds from the PFR association and a Grimshaw-Gudewicz grant, this new training center was built, complete with new carpeting, climate control, new tables and chairs, and new audio-visual components. The training center was built with volunteer labor with many PFR members and community contractors offering their time. The training

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center would become the focus of firefighter and EMT classes, department training, and monthly meetings, and would become the emergency operations center. Moving monthly meetings to the new training center freed up space at the front of the station in the old meeting room, where cubicles were set up as office space for the officers and appointed positions. This would eventually lead to a completely renovated space, completed in early 2006, with private offices for the chief, administrative assistant, and officers in addition to the radio room and kitchen remaining in their same locations.

These renovations provided a secure work space for the administrative branch of PFR. Confidential records could be processed in privacy and stored in a secure manner. The new space was also updated for technology, with the necessary wiring for several computers and wireless Internet access. The administrative assistant, Heather McCluskey, was given a proper office where she could act as the receptionist while also forwarding calls and processing confidential materials without interruption. The officers were housed in an officers' suite, the newly dedicated Jim Simonds Room. This workroom was named for former Peterborough

Selectman and strong supporter of PFR, Jim Simonds, who helped convert the former town highway garage into the present-day fire station. He certainly would have been proud to see the latest renovations and how far the station had come.

Each year since Chief Black's resignation, PFR's call volume increased. The demands on a PFR member had been changing for years. Early in its history, PFR members were expected to leave daytime employment to respond to emergency calls. By the year 2004, call volume was so great and work demands so uncompromising that it had become clear the PFR had to consider a shift to on-call personnel during the workweek. In 2004 there was an average of three to four calls per day, with 66% of these calls occurring during the workday. In 2004 the drastic increase of primarily EMS calls for service were beginning to take a toll on the paid on call membership. Members were often leaving their full time employment in the morning and not being able to return to work until the afternoon. In attempt to address this issue Deputy Chief Roper with the support of the EMS officers was the first to develop and implement a day time coverage program to best utilize the





*Deputy Chief Rodenhiser supervising members operating at the scene of a two-car motor vehicle accident with injuries, January 2005.*

overworked and understaffed membership. Soon after Chief Lenox took office, this practice evolved into the day time staffing program which began January 1, 2005. This program was a major step forward for the PFR. In January of 2005, the first daytime, on-call crew served the town of Peterborough. Firefighters and EMTs were invited to sign up for daytime shifts from 6 am to 4 pm, primarily to cover ambulance calls though they would be available for fire calls as well. These members work fewer than 39 hours a week in order to avoid crossing the line into full-time work. In addition, every effort was made to assure that any member who wanted a shift was able to sign up for one. Some of the first members to make up the day crew in the first months of the new practice were Deputy

Brian Wall, Lieutenant David Skerry, EMT Rich Daughen, Lieutenant Steve Bolduc, Lieutenant Steve Hobbs, Medic Amy Morss, EMT Mary Ellen Stanley, and EMT Amanda Fleury. Since the day crew was on town time when they were on duty, they took care of tasks such as preventive maintenance, administrative duties, and community service. Many of the jobs that took so much time for the volunteer department could now be completed during the day by paid members. This freed up significant time for the officers and allowed the members to focus on other tasks.

As preventive maintenance was now accounted for by the day crew, a significant change in the schedule of the PFR volunteer took place. For years, one of the basic expectations of a PFR member



*Peterborough's newest apparatus: 100-ft. E-One Aerial Ladder Truck, equipped with state-of-the-art firefighting and rescue equipment, 2005.*

was "Sunday Check," a duty that required members to report to the station on Sunday mornings based on a rotating schedule. At Sunday Check, members would check the apparatus and equipment to make sure it was in working order. Because of the preventive maintenance schedule that was established by the Budget Committee and because of the efficient work of the day crew, there were fewer essential duties to perform at Sunday Check. Rather than completely eliminate the Sunday duty, the officers decided to alter it to maximize the use of time. Tuesday night trainings did not offer enough time for the in-depth training that was required in the new era of firefighting and rescue work. With Sunday Check going by the wayside,

Sunday mornings were now set aside for a once-a-month training session. These sessions would be longer—allowing for up to four hours of continuous training time—and could therefore become more in-depth and more hands-on. Deputy Chief Paul Thibault, the latest training coordinator, could also enlist the help of members to prepare and teach these training sessions. In the first of these sessions, firefighter Jon Hampson taught an auto extrication class, including the latest techniques and using PFR's newest rescue tools, with the help of firefighters "Moto" Maguire, Jason Duval, Jon Sawyer, and Deputy Chief Brian Wall.

Just prior to Chief Lenox's hiring as chief, PFR would make a number of major purchases to update the equipment and

*Peterborough Fire & Rescue 1981 - 2006*

apparatus. March of 2004 was the final year of a capital reserve account established by the town to replace the existing ladder truck. Early in 2003, PFR established another truck-search committee, including members Dan Failla, Jon Hampson, Steve Bolduc, Gordon Kemp, "Moto" Maguire, Jim Grant, Nate Ingersoll, Ron Bowman, Don Parkhurst, Jon Sawyer, David Skerry, Ron Stickney, Billy Sweet, Bob Berube and Lieutenant Keith Rodenhiser, Captain Paul Thibault, Lieutenant Mike Roper, and Deputy Brad Winters who considered the many options available. After considering the input of the entire membership on both new and used truck options, PFR purchased a 2004 Emergency One 100-ft. aerial truck. The truck went into service in November of 2004. PFR's old ladder truck, the 1978 Seagrave purchased from Middletown, PA, was advertised for sale. Thanks to Jon Hampson's efforts, the message made it to Argentina, where a fire department in Buenos Aires found the truck suited their needs. Two fire officers from the Argentine capital visited Peterborough to test drive the truck and see it firsthand. Finding the ladder truck to

their liking, they submitted a bid to purchase the truck. Peterborough accepted the bid, and PFR's old ladder truck was on its way to South America. At last check, PFR's old ladder truck was proudly serving the Argentine capital. In 2004, the time had also come to replace another vital piece of PFR equipment. The Jaws of Life,™ originally purchased by the Peterborough Lions Club, had finally aged to a point where it was no longer an efficient tool. PFR established yet another search committee, led by Jon Hampson and Lieutenant Mike Roper and consisting of most of the same members as the ladder truck committee, to find the best equipment for the town. Representatives from major reputable companies were brought to the station for demos and after the membership had a chance to use them and ask questions, the committee decided to purchase a set of Holmatro hydraulic rescue tools, the best tools available, according to the membership. After exhaustive research, PFR presented a warrant article to the town, asking for money to purchase a new set of hydraulic rescue tools, a new gas-powered hydraulic pump, and hydraulic hose lines. Although the Town Budget Committee and Selectman reduced the original

# *Peterborough Fire & Rescue 1981 - 2006*

funds PFR requested, the PFR membership, believing strongly in their decision and want what was best for the town, even agreed to pay an additional \$5,000 out of company funds to cover the \$37,000 cost of the tools, thus ensuring that the town would receive what PFR believed to be the top of the line equipment. The new tools were put into service in November of 2004 while parts of the old set of Jaws were sent to the Aquarius No. 1 Museum for display.

Recent budgets have added essential new additions to the station and PFR's tools and equipment. For example, in 2005, tax dollars paid for a new Hazmat trailer used to free up space in the station and safely store hazardous materials cleanup equipment. However, taxation isn't the only way that PFR has added essential new equipment to their arsenal. PFR members have taken the initiative to step into the world of grant writing and have saved the town dollars. Members Rich Daughen, Jon Hampson, Steve Bolduc, and Deputies Mike Roper and Keith Rodenhiser have each written grants that have brought new equipment with minimal matching funds from the town. Grants have paid for 25 new breathing apparatuses, a new air compressor, and a multi-channel base radio for the training center.

Under Chief Lenox, PFR continues to dominate local news with its fire prevention message, cutting-edge training, willingness to accept change, and, of course, ongoing fight to protect lives and property. One major incident stands out early in Lenox's term: the fire at "the Common." Since the 18th century, the estate known as the Common stood off of Old Street Road, adjacent to the town's oldest cemetery and overlooking downtown Peterborough. On February 14, 2005, fire broke out at the Common, currently owned by the Clay family. By the time the first fire crews arrived on the scene, the home was fully engulfed, lighting up the midnight sky, visible from as far away as Dublin. Despite the efforts of PFR and many mutual aid towns, the home could not be saved. The size of the fire and the historic nature of the building stood out and the fire was covered by New Hampshire and Boston media outlets.

The work of PFR at the Common was so impressive to the Clay family that they wanted to do something to show their appreciation. Of particular interest to them was the work of the PFR Explorers, who stayed on the scene into the early hours of the next morning, despite having school the next day. The Clays recognized the



*Explorers with their new unit 24 S-2 at the New Hampshire Fire Academy, Concord. From L to R. Explorers Cody Clark, Joe Winters, Kelsey Stewart, Caroline Hampson, Brad Winters and Explorer Advisor Steve Hobbs, 2005.*

dedication of the young men and women, as they worked through the night lugging hose, manning fire streams, overhauling, and providing support for the firefighters. To thank them and PFR for their efforts, the Clay family made a generous donation to the Explorers, as well as donations to the six fire departments that responded professionally to the fire. Since the beginning of the Post, the Explorers and their advisors have fantasized that they would one day have a vehicle of their own to help them help PFR. The Clays made this a reality, donating \$5000 to purchase a 1995 Ford F350 chassis that holds an ambulance cube body. The truck was refurbished and painted

with PFR lettering and decals. The compartments on the truck were fitted with a jump kit, water, and a fixed oxygen system so that it may be used as a rehab truck on fire scenes. Explorers also added various hand tools, a collapsible tent, and a small gas-powered generator so that they can set up a work post in the field. The vehicle can also be used to transport specialized equipment to incidents and will also serve as a place where department members can warm up, cool off, receive hydration, or simply rest during prolonged emergencies. The Explorer's truck was put into service officially in February of 2006.

Lenox has also kept PFR involved in the community and



*FF Reece J. Roberts preparing to join other members of PFR operating at an LPG leak simulation.*

in the mutual aid system. Upon arriving in town, Lenox joined the Peterborough Patriotic Committee and agreed to spearhead a new tradition for the proper and respectful retirement of American flags. The new tradition is now part of Peterborough's Veterans Day celebration in November. To show its appreciation to Lenox for his vision, the American Legion presented Lenox with its "Americanism Award" on Memorial Day, 2006. In September of 2005, Lenox was also a leader in developing the Monadnock Area Fire Chiefs Association. The Association is made up of chiefs and deputy chiefs from area fire departments representing 14 area towns and is committed to working together in areas such as joint training, joint problem solving, and cooperative buying in

order to cut costs between town departments. Peterborough is one of the 14 charter communities, and Lenox was elected the first chairman of the committee. It is clear that Lenox intends to keep PFR at the center of activities in Peterborough and the surrounding communities.

In March of 2006 the membership voted in another major change in the organization of PFR, even if it is a change in name only. So much of the business of PFR is administrative, having nothing to do with fire, rescue, or medical calls. Officers such as the company captain were overwhelmed with community outreach and correspondence, which was taking away from their fire officer abilities. To distribute the workload more evenly and to provide opportunities for

# Peterborough Fire & Rescue 1981 - 2006

different leaders to emerge, Deputy Keith Rodenhiser drafted a proposal to separate the firefighting and rescue operations from the business of the association. At the annual meeting in March, the membership approved the Deputy's plan, creating the Peterborough Fire & Rescue Association as a separate and distinct body. In practice, much would remain the same: firefighters and ambulance personnel were employees of the town, still required to attend training. Firefighters and EMTs would still attend monthly meetings and would be members of the newly formed association. However, these meetings would be association meetings. Members of the association could be non-firefighting members. The association would act as a volunteer organization that handled the variety of jobs that go along with running a non-profit agency. To be a member of the association, one could be, for example, a retired firefighter, or a community member who had expertise in public relations, or someone who was interested in fund-raising, or simply someone who wanted to help out without donning the fire gear. PFR would continue to hold its annual fund-raisers but fund-raising for association projects only—the town would



*Deputy Chief Keith Rodenhiser during a Safety and Survival Drill, March 2006.*

be fully responsible for paying for tools and equipment that were needed for firefighting and rescue operations. PFR had once again managed to adapt to its needs, remaining on the cutting edge for such a small operation, but it had still maintained a connection to its tradition of a small-town volunteer department. One of the first tasks undertaken by the newly formed association was the establishment of a Sunshine relief Fund for members who are experiencing financial hardship due to extenuating circumstances. The seed money for the fund was secured by Captain Jon Hampson and senior member

Jim Grant, long-time chairman of the Peterborough Salvation Army. Distribution of the fund is overseen by PFR Association president-elect, Jim Graham and his board.

### ***Toward the Future***

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In the past 25 years, PFR has maintained a delicate balance. Fire departments today go well beyond firefighting alone. Hazardous materials, heavy rescue, disaster relief, and even homeland security now fall under the responsibility of the fire department. To protect its personnel and to protect the town from liability, departments must pull out all the stops to offer state-of-the-art training. Medical calls have increased dramatically and EMTs are expected to administer much more specialized care at the scene. In addition to these increased demands, all the departments of southwest New Hampshire have struggled to keep up with growth, as more and more people from out of state move to the region. Although these are great challenges, an even bigger challenge for PFR has been maintaining a connection to its tradition. While the fire and rescue demands on PFR have increased, it has been more difficult to run the Penny Sale or Fire Prevention Week. As PFR personnel

have done their job in a most professional way, they must also remember to celebrate their own at Appreciation Night and build community at the Company Picnic. New members are welcomed to the family as experienced people retire, and creating a seamless transition is not always easy. There will always be a place for those people who make up PFR's history. They remind us of where we have been and put new challenges into perspective. They have helped to make us who we are—a highly professional organization and a family that takes care of its own. It is exciting to think where PFR is headed in the future, but one cannot do that without recognizing PFR's history. Hopefully, this history will help us remember where we come from—and hopefully it will not be the last time we pause to look back.





# *E.M.T. Prayer*

*As I perform my duty, Lord, whatever be the call*

*Help to guide and keep me safe from  
dangers big and small*

*I want to serve and do my best  
no matter what the scene*

*I pledge to keep my skill refined  
my judgment quick and keen*

*This calling to give of myself  
most do not understand*

*But I stand ready all the time  
to help my fellow man*

*To have the chance to help a child  
restore his laugh with glee*

*A word of thanks I might not hear,  
but knowing is enough for me*

*The praise of men is fine for some  
but I feel truly blessed*

*That you, oh Lord, have chosen me*

*To serve in EMS!*

## *Department Members*

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*Nancy Beringer*



*Charlie Briggs*



*Bob Berube*



*George Brown*



*John Berube*



*Tom Dardas*



*Eric Bowman*



*Rich Daughen*

## *Department Members*

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*Bob Dutton*



*Michael Fredieu*



*Dan Fialla*



*Jon Hall*



*Craig Fraley*



*Stephen Hobbs*



*Jim Grant*



*Jennifer Hotaling*

## *Department Members*

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*Alan Merrill*



*Meas Roeun*



*Glenn Myhaver*



*Reece Roberts*



*Laura Norton*



*Jon Sawyer*



*Don Parkhurst*



*Ben Schofield*

# Department Members

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*Brian Shaw*



*Al Whitney*



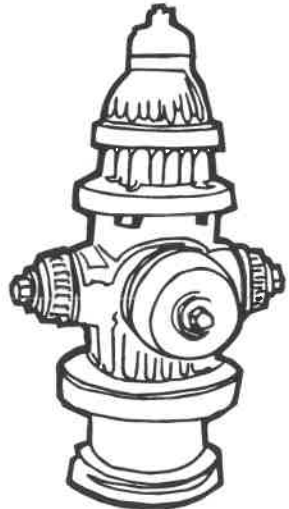
*Ron Stickney*

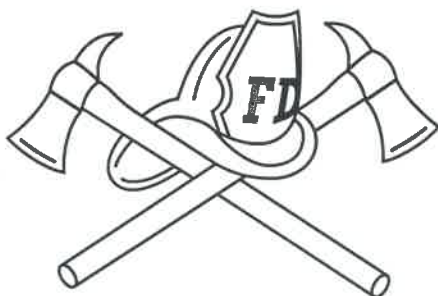


*Heather McCluskey*



*Zeke Vought*





### **Appendix 1:**

#### ***PFR Honorary Members, or the "Hall of Flame," as of May 2006***

Chief Lawrence Bishop  
Deputy Chief George Brown  
Fred Morin  
Chief Merton Dyer  
Deputy Chief Jere T. Morris  
*(Awarded posthumously)*  
Lieutenant Harry Gillette  
Deputy Chief Joseph Russell, Jr.  
Carl Brown  
Deputy Chief Dave Crooker  
Captain Fred Gove  
Captain Martin Keenan, Jr.  
Lieutenant George Coombs  
Lieutenant A. Bruce McPherson  
Joseph Thibault  
Dep. Chief Herman "Brim" Woods  
Captain Wayne Webb  
Chief Stephen Black  
Deputy Chief Dennis Cilley  
Chief Bradley Winters  
Dep. Chief Michael "Moto" Maguire

### **Appendix 2:**

#### ***Jere T. Morris Member of the Year Recipient***

*(Date of the award follows name)*

Lawrence Kemp, 1984  
Lawrence Bishop, 1985  
Fred Morin, 1986  
Donald Parkhurst, 1987  
Deborah Atkinson, 1988  
Ronald Stickney, 1989  
Ted Jarest, 1990  
Julie Hanson, 1993  
Al Whitney, 1994  
Tom Woodbury, 1995  
Glenn Myhaver, 1996  
Steven Hobbs, 1997  
Donald Blanchard, 1998  
Ellen Carter, 1999  
Michael Caisse, 2000  
Karen Ravndal, 2001  
Robert Berube, 2002  
Jon Hampson, 2003  
Dan Failla, 2004  
Mary Ellen Stanley, 2005



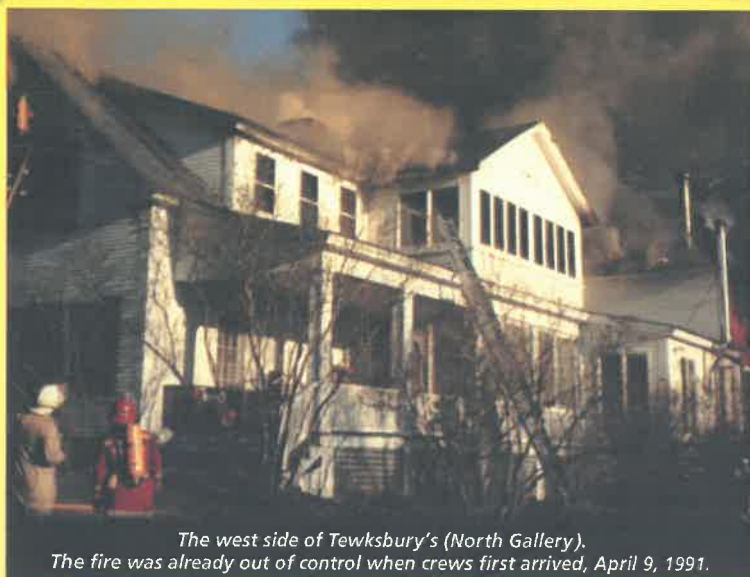
*The old 24L1 at Open House 2003.*



*Paul Thibault at tanker drill 2003.*



*The Old Jaws of Life being donated to the Museum by Sheldon Tucker, MBA Rescue 2004.*



*The west side of Tewksbury's (North Gallery).  
The fire was already out of control when crews first arrived, April 9, 1991.*



*The old Baptist Church, home to the Marionette Theater at the time, the morning after the great fire, January 1, 1999. Crews remained on duty through the night, with the ladder pipe fixed in position to continue water flow. With the frigid temperatures, the entire structure and surrounding landscape was encased in ice.*