

HOT SPOTS

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FEBRUARY 2006



Highlights of Chief Schiess' "Future of the Fire Department" Meeting

Submitted by Georgie Waldrop

During the last week, Chief Schiess held meetings with Fire Department personnel to discuss the future.

the ground at 78 Hwy. & Terry Foster Road for the new Training Facility.

There are many things in the works. As each group met, different information was assimilated due to the variety of questions asked, so it is my hope to cover as many things as possible so that all may know what is up-and-coming for Independence Fire.

- The Department will solicit a bid for a new apparatus within the next couple of months, however, the type of apparatus is uncertain at this time.
- We are expecting three new pumpers in March and, of course, we're in "the throws" of the 2007 Budget planning.
- On a last note of interest, the city is considering 32 square miles for voluntary annexing to the city. Ten square miles of this is from a personal property owner. The location is said to be generally in the NE area of town.

- Station 7 is expected to have personnel moved in some time in March with ribbon cutting in April.

- Request for proposals for design and construction of Stations 3 and 4 has begun. Station 3 to be reconstructed at its current site while Station 4 will be at a completely different location. The acquisition is now in process.

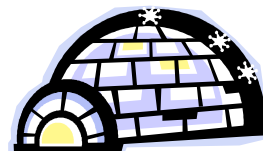
- Bids have been requested to remodel #1; and there are surveys and site work going on to check the condition of



INTERESTING DATES IN HISTORY

Thanks again to the 76ers Historical Society

- February 1, 1951-Three fire men injured by chimney collapse.
- February 6, 1843-Original Independence Fire Company Incorporated.
- February 9, 1906-Mercer Building-\$70,000 fire.
- February 11, 1915-Music Hall-\$100,000 fire.
- February 12, 1954-Kirtley house fire. Aerial credited with save.
- February 16, 1906-Clinton block \$80,000 fire.
- February 18, 1953-Parakeet named Bright Eyes rescued for 7 year-old girl.
- February 22, 1918-Christian Church destroyed by fire.
- February 27, 1899-Fire wagon overturned injuring fire man.
- February 28, 1939-Junior High School-\$100,000 fire.



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Independence Fire Department

FEBRUARY 2006

STATION 7 STILL ON SCHEDULE!



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PROMOTIONS



Battalion Chief Joseph Lay



Captain Brad Waterworth

Station 7 has been taking on quite a new look recently.



A lot has been done over the winter months so far. The windows are in, the water piping



has been insulated



and the exterior brick work has been completed.



Power to the heating units has been hooked up, drywall installed



and the sidewalks and steps are poured. The exhaust piping is in-



stalled, roof is finished and the drywall and painting is completed.



In spite of some early extraordinarily cold

weather and our 10 inches



of snow earlier in the year,



this building has really



moved along quickly and should still be on schedule.



Tribute to Chief Thomas J. Pollard *(Thanks to the Independence 76ers Historical Society)*



Chief Pollard with Mayor Weatherford (imitating Harry Truman)

(Excerpts taken from a speech given before the city council by Jerry Hall on the event of Chief Pollard's death on August, 1997.)

Once upon a time, in the early years of this century when Independence was a town of about 32 square blocks and 12,000 people, a little boy crawled out from under his quilt one morning thinking only about breakfast and the lessons ahead of him at school that day. But as he was stepping off his front porch with his school books in a strap over his shoulder, something happened that would have a profound effect on his life, the life of one other young man, and the lives of many Independence citizens for years into the future.

As he stepped off his porch onto the sidewalk, his senses came alive all at once. First he smelled the smoke. Then he looked between the houses and saw the flames leaping from the windows of the white frame house on Main Street. About then, he heard the clanging of the fire bell and the thundering hooves of the horses pulling the fire wagon down the paved brick street from the Fire House on the Square. He stood

frozen in place as he watched the firemen leap from the still rolling wagon decked out in their leather helmets and long rubber coats and tall boots. They dragged their large heavy hose from the wagon, connecting one end to the fire hydrant while connecting a long brass nozzle to the other end. While the fire chief yelled orders, one of the firemen rapidly spun a wrench to open the fire hydrant while three other firemen began playing a stream of water on the growing flames.

Suddenly, a hand on his shoulder jolted him back to his school books and the sidewalk in front of his house. How long had he been standing there? Was he going to be tardy for school? Was he in trouble? Instead of scolding him, his mother sat down beside him on the front steps of the porch. Together they watched for a few more minutes as the firemen played their stream on the burning house. First the flames began to disappear. Then the smoke changed from black to gray. Shortly after that, his mother took him by the hand and walked him to school so he wouldn't be in trouble.

In the days and years that followed, the little boy would manage to spend time at the firehouse becoming friends with the firemen. He was there when the horses and fire

wagon were replaced with the motorized hose wagons in 1918. And he was there in 1923 when another young man, ten years his senior, began what was to become a long and distinguished career on the Independence Fire Department. The young fireman took a special interest in the little boy and they became such good friends that one day, the little boy looked up at his friend and exclaimed, "One day I will grow up to be the Mayor. And I will make you my Fire Chief."

The little boy was Robert P. Weatherford, Jr. He grew up to become the Mayor in 1950. That same year, he made his life long friend, Thomas J. Pollard, his Fire Chief.

I don't know a lot about Tom Pollard's early years. But I believe he came from common stock. Nothing fancy. Just plain, hard-working Midwestern folks. He was born on June 11, 1901. His family moved to Independence in 1910. As a young man, he drove a truck for Polly Compton and worked in Roger Sermon's grocery store. He married Nellie High in 1922. His first day on the Independence Fire Department was March 1, 1923. He was sent to the Kansas City Fire Academy for his recruit training. He once told the story that when he left the Kansas City Academy and began his career in Independence, he tried to get the fellas here to do things the way he had been taught there. But all that got him was the job of painting every one of the town's 83 fire plugs because then Fire Chief David Allen Kincaid thought the young man was out to take his job away from him. His wages in 1923 were \$85 a month. He worked six days a week, rotating between night and day shift every two weeks. He continued to earn his real wages driving a truck and clerking at the store during his night shift rotation.

All his life he remembered the fire department of his early days with two favorite sayings. He fondly described it as being nothing more than "seven old men and two flat bed trucks." When describing its capability, he would say, "If you couldn't reach it with 1000 feet of hose, it just burned down."

This was his way of recalling the days when the fire department had no pumping apparatus and fought all fires using only hoses connected to hydrants, depending entirely on the water pressure in the city's system.

When the 1928 LaFrance was discovered and brought home on a trailer, with the help of the Independence 76 Historical Society, it was taken to Tom Pollard's house so he could share in our joy. Never one to disappoint a crowd, he walked out on his front porch, took a long gander at the old rusty fire engine and said, "Must be old No. 1. We took better care of our stuff at No. 2."

Tom made Captain in 1930. He was there in 1939 when the Junior High School burned. And he fought both the fires on the Square during the bitter winter of 1949. These were the worst fires he could recall that he fought as a fireman. An Examiner newspaper article told the story of how Captain Pollard "was knocked down by a flash that took out the front window as he approached...his glasses and his helmet were blown across the street and his hands and face were singed" at one of these fires.

Tom was made Fire Chief in May of 1950. He and the little boy who had become Mayor began to build a fire department. They began with two fire stations and 12 men. As Independence prospered and grew during the post war years, so did

the fire department.

Mayor Weatherford completed his service to Independence in 1958, But Chief Pollard continued his service for another decade. He was a demanding Fire Chief. His standards were high but he was also a compassionate fire chief. He fired a few of "his boys" but many times would hire them right back after a few days of cooling off and a good talking to. He made it a point to know about their personal lives and their backgrounds. He took an interest in them on and off duty. He cared about "his boys." He outlived most of them and attended most of their send-offs.

Throughout his long career that spanned 45 years, Thomas J. Pollard gave it his all. In 1968, his long career as an active duty fireman came to an end. Even after he had no longer held his office, his dignity and many years of duty allowed him to carry the title of Fire Chief for his entire life.

In 1991, I asked Tom Pollard if he would like to ride in one of his old Sea-grave fire engines in the 4th of July Parade. He was 90 years old at the time but didn't hesitate to take me up on my offer. Just before the parade was to begin, he arrived and climbed into the front seat wearing his trademark white shirt, black bowtie, wireless spectacles and white Fire Chief's hat cocked jauntily off to one side. I was amazed at how he was recognized and greeted time and again as we wound our way through the streets two and a half decades after he had left office. Shouts of, "Look! It's Chief Pollard!" arose from the crowd and hands would wave and smiling faces would bob up and down.

I believe that Tom Pollard would like nothing more than for us to remember him as a hard working, plain speaking fireman who loved his job and did the best he could with what he had. And I'm sure he and "his boys" are having a grand reunion right now.