

## **Back Then - Fire Department Humor**

Compiled by Sheryl Drost



We ran a column in this newsletter back in 2005 titled *Time's Rekindled* where each month I would interview one of the guys that had been around for awhile. (See next month's newsletter for the return of the column) One of the questions was to have them recall something humorous. These are good, read on...

**Virgil Johnson** – Ken O'Dell was driving the old rescue truck with three firefighters in it and a fire extinguisher went off in the truck. (Ken says because Virgil sat on it!) Virgil's wife was following them and said they looked like McHale's Navy when all of the sudden the truck stopped and smoke billowed out as the guys piled out. Then they all jumped back in and continued on their way.

**Ken O'Dell** - "We headed out to a grass fire where Rock Cut State Park is now. We pulled in and Fire Chief Alexander said we might not be able to make it back in the field. I put the grass truck in four-wheel-drive and got a run at it. Come to find out it was a pig yard full of pigs! And, yes we did sink down to the axles."

**Ike Schoonover** – Ike was driving on Gleasman Road in a snow storm with Oscar in the officer seat. He said you couldn't see the road and the wind was blowing snow all over. Well, Oscar kept asking him, "Can't you go any faster? Can't we go any faster?" and Ike said he finally sped up only to do a complete 360 on the curve. Ike says after that Oscar said, "I think you better slow down a little!"

Ike also remembered a training barn fire where they had new recruits inside the barn when something exploded (like an aerosol can) and here they all come charging out of the barn. He said Oscar tried to stop them but they barreled right into him knocking him to the ground and ran right over him.

**Fred Tuttle** – They were responding to a house fire on the south end of the district. Fred was the last truck out and all the trucks were heading down 251. Well, he began to think the governor had broken on the truck because he was flying. Shoot, he passed up all the trucks and wow, he got to be the first one on the scene. Well, he quickly found out why, the truck was empty of water!

**Oscar Presley** – He responded years ago to a call where they all thought the lady was dead after having an insulin reaction. She was stiff and foaming at the mouth. A family member was praying over her and told Oscar it was too late. He told her no it wasn't and hooked up an IV to give the victim Glucose and the lady responded right away by waking up. The family member literally started chanting he was a miracle worker and prayed for him all the way to the hospital.

**Donny Ball** - They were en-route to a call at the Rainbow Trailer Park. This was back when firefighters rode hanging on the backs of the truck. Well, Donny was driving down the frontage road and the snow hadn't been plowed. They hit a slick spot and the fire truck literally slid down the street sideways with the rear end now in the lead. He said he could no longer see where they were going, but Dave Bergeron and the other firefighters hanging on the back of the truck sure could!

**Chuck Schoonover** – Chuck was riding on the back of a truck with Marty Schoonover out to a fire on Burr Oak Road and Marty's \$30 dollar sunglasses flew off. Needless to say that's all the firefighters heard from Marty for days was how he lost those darn expensive sunglasses!

Chuck also said that most of the drivers would fight over the newer trucks, but not Donny Ball, He would always take the oldest truck in the bay.

**Bob Schoonover** - There was a fire in a small house that used to be where the gas station is on 173 and 251. They got there right away and couldn't understand why the house had already almost burned to the ground. Come to find out the guy that lived there found the fire and went to the Prairie Moon Bar to call the fire department. Well, it seems he had a couple beers first and then remembered his house was on fire, and finally made the phone call!"

Bob also remembers the time Harold Jones went running up with a hose line and climbed up the ladder to get to the second floor at a fire on Belvidere Road. Well, I guess they had too much pressure on the hose line, because as soon as he opened the nozzle, it blew him back to the ground ladder and all.

**Dave Bergeron** - "Lang and I were riding on the back of Engine 702 heading to the fire out at the saw mill in Argyle. Oscar was in the front seat. All of the sudden, here he comes. He had crawled out the window and back to us and slid down between us on the back of the truck – while the truck was moving!" Oscar goes, "Boys that fire is a \*&%^ burner, so when I tell you to jump, you grab the hose and jump." "So when we got there, he said jump, and we jumped! And of course, we tumbled right on our butts. We then headed up to the fire and things started exploding and we got scared and dropped the hose line and started running. We didn't make it far though before Chief Ben Alexander had a hold of both of us and sent us right back up there, telling us to fight that fire!"

**Terry Pitkus** – They got back from a call in the middle of the night and Oscar still had his gear on and asked Terry if he could give him a ride home. Terry asked him wasn't he going to take off his gear. Oscar told him no. Well, it seems Oscar had flown out of bed for the call and forgot to put any clothes on before he ran to the station!

**Jerry Schreck** - There used to be a time that there weren't as many access points to I-90 and they would just cut the fence along the Tollway to get out there. He remembers the one time that the cop came up to them in a rage and said they couldn't do that, and that Oscar replied to him that they already had!

Jerry also said back then they had a key to McDonald's Gas Station on Main Street to get gas after hours. Whenever they needed gas, Oscar would unlock the door, fill up, fill out a receipt, and lock the door on the way out.

**Norm Iverson** - They were responding to a call, back when you used to hop on the back of the truck (if you were not driving), and the policy was to NOT hop on if the truck was moving! But, as you can guess, one fireman tried to hop on, he grabbed onto the handrails, but lost his footing. Instead of letting go, they made it down Main Street before he let go! The call on him was worse than the original call. What was humorous about this was, after the fact, that he was not seriously hurt, but his pants and legs looked like he had been in a dog fight and he lost!