

The PLAYPIPE

The newsletter of Pomper Pump and Playpipe Society of Indiana, the Indiana chapter of SPAAMFAA.

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May 2005

Old Grandad' of Walnut Street Fire Co. comes home

The 1929 Ahrens-Fox ladder service truck that the Walnut Street Fire Co. No. 4 recently reacquired from the Shriners, right, for now is housed at the firehouse with the fire company's 1994 Seagrave. A permanent home is being sought for the old truck that was reacquired by the department after about 50 years. If the old ladder truck sitting in the firehouse on Walnut Street were a person, it would likely be a great-grandfather. If it could talk, it would tell about a large chunk of the history of a colorful neighborhood of old Madison.

It first came here in 1929, months before the stock market crash that started the Great Depression. It rushed to and helped to extinguish Madison's fires for many years, then left for a long hiatus.

The 1929 Ahrens-Fox ladder service truck, built in Cincinnati especially for Walnut Street Fire Co. No. 4, the city's ladder company, was recently reacquired by the company from the Shriners, who had bought it about 50 years ago from a private citizen who won it in a raffle held by the company. Few members now in the fire company were there when the old truck left, but all are glad to have it back, as if in late middle-age one suddenly encountered a high school friend not seen since graduation.

Like many 76-year-olds, the Ahrens-Fox has a few nonoriginal parts. The engine was replaced many years ago. The siren isn't original — but according to a senior member of the Fours, Frank Taff, "It's very close to the original type, and located in exactly the same place" on the left side of the truck.

The bright "fire-engine red" color is eye-catching — but also not faithful to its original hue. "It was a very deep, dark red, almost a maroon, when it came from the factory," said Taff.

But it's the same ladder truck that roared down Walnut Street to hundreds of fires over 24 years. In its heyday, with the loud clattering of its engine, the occasional backfire, and the screaming of the siren, it grabbed everyone's attention when in action.

"The Shriners told us they would have it fully serviced once a year," Taff said, one foot propped on the running board. "One time when it came back from the garage the motor sounded funny. They couldn't figure out what was wrong, and they called the garage. 'What did you do to our engine?' 'Why, we put a muffler on it.' 'Then take it off!' " He laughed at the story. The Shriners liked the racket the old truck made in the numerous parades where it was featured over the years.

The Ahrens-Fox first rolled onto the streets of Madison on May 18, 1929, having been driven here from Cincinnati by Fours member Paul Hoagland, who likely went up the river on a packet boat to fetch the new truck from the factory. A technician from Ahrens-Fox accompanied Hoagland back to Madison, spending 10 days here teaching the Fours members how to handle and use the long, cumbersome ladders, and of the intricacies of the truck itself.

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See page 4 for important by-law change information

NOTE!!
PPPSI's next meeting is
May 8th at the Carmel Fire
Bufs Station.
See page 5 for map.

From the Officers seat of Ole Gray

a few words from PPPSI President Bruce Neal

Greetings PPPSI members, our April meeting was interesting. Clyde Pfisterer read the list of committees for The SPAAMFAA National Convention and Muster we will host in 2009. Clyde explained all the committees' duties to the attending members. The Committee list was in the last issue of The Playpipe and no doubt many members will need to serve on several of the 22 different committees. Hopefully the entire chapter can get involved and participate in this exciting event.

I hope everyone was able to make it to the Fire Department Instructors Conference in Indianapolis. If you attended classes or like me just visited the HUGE vendors displays it was really something special. I spent more than a couple minutes looking over an American La France Quint that sold for over a million dollars

couple minutes looking over an American LaFrance Quint that sold for over a million dollars to the Tarrytown, New York Fire Dept. The department that bought the last Ahrens-Fox piston engine in 1952. What a rig!

The annual Great Lakes International Antique Fire Apparatus Association swap meet is this coming Saturday, at the fairgrounds at Jackson, Michigan. We talked at the last couple meetings about visiting the Central Fire Museum in Van Wert, Ohio as a chapter on the way to Jackson on Friday. Jeff Rider has informed me he'd contacted the museum to make arrangements for us and they informed him the museum was closed for remodeling, maybe next year folks!

Best Wishes...Bruce

Old Grandad' continued

A clipping from The Madison Courier of May 17 states that A.J. Winters, city fire chief, intended to go to Cincinnati the next day to accompany the truck back to Madison. Taff said there is no mention of that in the company's records. But it is likely, as the clipping said, that the members took the new truck for a spin downtown to show it off.

The truck had a full complement of ground ladders — two roof, three extension, and one collapsible attic ladder. All were made of wood. The longest was a 50-foot extension ladder, about equal to the height of a five-story building. It took six firefighters to raise it.

The truck also had a chemical tank — a water reservoir with a soda and acid bottle inside that could be released into the water, providing enough pressure to propel it in a stream through a hose and onto a fire. The tank could hold about 50 gallons of water, Taff said.

"With that on board, you were known as a 'chemical truck,'" he said. Soda and acid fire extinguishers carried on the running boards

operated under the same principle, he said. The Ahrens-Fox had no pumping ability when purchased. But in 1946 the company mounted an engine and pump on it. The truck carried 1,000 feet of 2 1/2-inch hose, by city ordinance. Until 1946 the company had to use hydrant pressure, or rely on one of the city's engine companies to deliver water to its hoses at a fire, Taff said.

"The duties of a truck company were not significantly different then than they are now," he said. "But erecting ladders was more difficult and gaining access to higher floors was more difficult. Firefighters would have carried shovels, rakes and tarpaulins, much the same as they do today. They would have assessed whether they would have to perform rescues at a fire scene, enter the building and perform searches."

The old firefighters would have been amazed at the amount of turnout gear and protective equipment used today, he said. Back then you were going into a building bare-lunged. You stayed as low as you could and breathed as little as you

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The Playpipe

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Old Grandad' continued

“could. The only protective gear you would have had would have been a raincoat and boots.” But there was no turnout gear, breathing apparatus or protective headgear, standard equipment today, Taff said.

In 1952 the Fours put a pump on the side and a water tank in the hose bed. They also added a feature the truck had not had before — a windshield. But the next year the decision was made to purchase a new truck — the city’s first “Quint” or five-way fire vehicle, a 1953 Diamond Reo that replaced the Ahrens-Fox.

When the new truck arrived, a raffle was held to dispose of the old Ahrens-Fox. The winner, a local man, later sold his acquisition to the Shriners for use in their parades.

The names of many U.S. cities are now gold-lettered onto the body of the old truck, denoting all the places where the Ahrens-Fox rolled through parade routes over the years. Taff said the number of smaller towns where the truck appeared was too numerous for the Shriners to list the names on the old vehicle.

When the Fours held their 125th anniversary celebration in 1998, the Shriners agreed to bring the Ahrens-Fox back to participate. Fours officers told them at the time, “If you ever decide to sell it, we hope you’ll give us first crack.” Late last year, they did. “It was just too cumbersome for those old men to handle anymore,” Taff said, laughing.

The old truck, bought back by the company for a price Taff declined to reveal (although he said the Shriners were “very generous to us”) arrived at the Fours firehouse a few weeks ago and has sat in the engine bay ever since, right beside the fire company’s huge green “Quint.” But Taff said the extra space in the firehouse is needed by the company for other purposes, and another place must be found to house the Ahrens-Fox.

“We’d love to have a place to display it all the time,” he added.

Several anecdotes concerning the Ahrens-Fox’s tenure at the Fours’ old firehouse, farther north on Walnut Street, were recalled by company veteran Don McKay, whose family has been members of the Fours for several generations. “My grandfather, William Schnabel, ran and jumped onto the running board once as the truck started to a fire. It went past his house at 611 Walnut St., and my grandmother ran out with his raincoat, which he’d forgotten. She hauled off and slung the coat to him, but it swept him right off the running board. He wasn’t hurt, but he was pretty upset about it.”

McKay said once the Fours responded to an alarm, with a driver named Jocko Ackerman at the wheel. As it pulled out onto Walnut — a narrow street for a long truck to negotiate— and Ackerman began his turn to go south, he couldn’t get it straightened out in time as the steering wheel was very hard to manipulate. The long rig made an unintended U-turn, plowing up a neighbor’s yard and striking the porch of the house. Again, no one was injured.

But the then-new truck was involved in a tragedy shortly after it was acquired, in the summer of 1929. A company driver, Peter Ike Hoagland, was visiting a friend, Henny Johann, across the street from the firehouse when a fire alarm sounded. Hoagland, hurrying across the street to the firehouse, didn’t see an approaching car, which struck and critically injured him. He lived for eight days, then died Aug. 2, 1929.

The truck participated in one very happy occasion, though, near the end of its life as a firefighting apparatus. In 1950 when the Madison Cubs won the state basketball championship, a celebratory parade was held, including the Ahrens-Fox and other local fire apparatus, with residents aboard, waving lighted flares.

Taff said no firefighting funds will be used in the ongoing restoration of the truck to its “as delivered from the factory” condition. So he said the Fours will have to raise the funds on their own. “We welcome donations,” he added.

So why did the Fours re-acquire the old fire truck — nostalgia? “Yes,” Taff said, nodding his head. “To bring the history back to Madison. She’s back in Madison now, where she belongs. And she’ll never leave here again.”

Story courtesy The
Madison Courier
newspaper.
Written by Wayne
Engle.



The Ahrens Fox sits in
front of Company 4’s
house. In the back-
ground is their 1994
Seagrave Quint.

By-law change

Below are two possible amendments to our by-laws. We need to vote on which, if any amendment we want. These will be voted on at our May 8th meeting in Carmel.

Article IV Members: Membership shall be divided into 5 classifications:
Individual, family, junior, affiliate and honorary.

Section 1:

1) Individual Memberships

Individual members shall be of good moral character and are required to pay annual dues. Individual members must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Individual members shall be eligible to hold office, attend and vote at regular meetings, and should participate in drills, parades, and other functions of the organization whenever possible. Individual members are entitled to 1 vote at meetings and elections.

2) Family Memberships

Family memberships shall consist of two adults and will include their dependent children up to age 18, residing in the same household, with all mailings going to the same address. Each family membership shall be entitled to two votes at meetings and elections, requiring both adults to be present at said meeting. Any adult of the family may run for office.

3) Junior Membership

Junior memberships are for individual members that are under 18 years of age. They shall receive a copy of the newsletter and may attend all regular meetings and functions but have no voting rights.

4) Affiliate Membership

Affiliate memberships shall be any fire department or other organization owning antique fire apparatus. They are not eligible to hold office, but may attend meetings and functions of PPPSI. An affiliate member is entitled to a single vote to be cast by a representative appointed by the Chief or President of the affiliate group.

5) Honorary Membership

Honorary members shall be comprised of certain individuals who by virtue of their position, could advise and counsel the organization. Acceptance to this category shall be by two thirds majority vote of all active members present at a regular meeting. Honorary members are exempt from paying dues. Honorary members shall not be able to hold office but may attend meetings and functions of the group. They may serve on committees, but shall not chair committees.

Article IV Members: Membership shall be divided into 4 classifications:
Individual, junior, affiliate and honorary.

Section 1:

1) Individual Memberships

Individual members shall be of good moral character and are required to pay annual dues. Individual members must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Individual members shall be eligible to hold office, attend and vote at regular meetings, and should participate in drills, parades, and other functions of the organization whenever possible. Individual members are entitled to 1 vote at meetings and elections.

2) Junior Membership

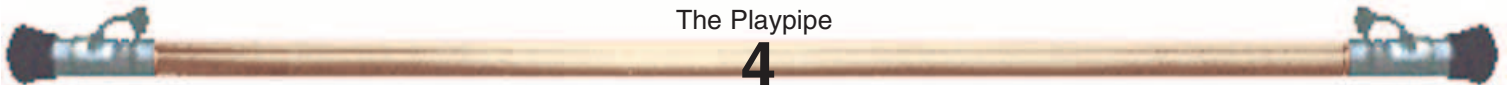
Junior memberships are for individual members that are under 18 years of age. They shall receive a copy of the newsletter and may attend all regular meetings and functions but have no voting rights.

3) Affiliate Membership

Affiliate memberships shall be any fire department or other organization owning antique fire apparatus. They are not eligible to hold office, but may attend meetings and functions of PPPSI. An affiliate member is entitled to a single vote to be cast by a representative appointed by the Chief or President of the affiliate group.

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April Minutes

submitted by Secretary Trina Falk

Meeting called to order by President Bruce Neal at 2:00 PM.

Treasurers Report: The treasurer's report was read. A motion was made to accept the treasurer's report and accepted.

South Region Report: Jeff Rider reported that the South Region has set a tentative date for a meeting in May.

Jeff also reported that he has nearly twenty apparatus entries already for his muster that will be held at his house on Sunday, August 20, 2005!

North Region Report: The April North Region meeting will be on Sunday, April 17, 2005.

As a reminder, Dan Bernth mentioned that the PPPSI North Muster normally held in South Bend will be held in conjunction with the Potato Creek Festival on Saturday, June 18, 2005, in North Liberty rather than at the Studebaker Museum in South Bend.

Old Business: The Auction and Swap Meet in Milford, Ohio, was discussed by those who attended.

Show flyers for our annual muster in Indianapolis are prepared for the Jackson, Michigan, swap meet. These will be distributed to various vendors.

The book 100 Years of American LaFrance by Walt McCall is now available for sale.

Dan Bernth has come up with a couple of different variations for the proposed changes to our by laws (re: family membership).

- i. The proposed changes to the by-laws will be presented to the membership in the newsletter. (see page 1)
- ii. The proposed changes have been tabled for the May meeting but will be put to a vote at the June meeting.

New Business: The side trip to the fire museum in Van Wert, Ohio, on Friday, April 29, 2005 (en-route to Jackson, Michigan) was discussed. Those of us planning on going to Van Wert would like to setup a specific time to visit, along with a list of people who will be attending, in order to make arrangements ahead of time with the museum. Please contact Jeff Rider as soon as possible for further details—1-812-523-3305 or firetruckjr@yahoo.com.

The 2009 SPAAMFAA Convention and Muster Committees were discussed in detail. If there is something that you may be interested in helping with, please contact Bruce Neal or Clyde Pfisterer.

PPPSI Member Mark Storey is now our trustee for SPAAMFAA National.

If your antique fire apparatus needs any type of brake-related work, Clyde Pfisterer recommends Todd at Midwest Brake.

Good of the Order: The May meeting will be held on Sunday, May 08, 2005, at the Carmel Fire Buffs Station. Map is to the right of this column.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 PM.

CLASSIFIEDS

1946 ALF 100 foot ladder truck. Original owner was Gary, IN. I am the 3rd owner. Purchased truck 2 years ago with over 90 percent original equipment still on truck. All ladders, tools, hoses, nozzles stay with truck. Ladder extends to 100 feet. Truck runs well. Have invested \$7,000. Will sell for \$6,000. Losing storage. **Also for sale;** a 1956 Maxim pumper, ex-IFD and Whiteland, IN \$3000.00 OBO Contact: Mark Storey 765-674-8936 or e-mail mstorey303@aol.com



-NOTE SELLER VERY MOTIVATED-

Chuck Moore is looking for the following articles:

1. Fire related floor mats.
2. 21" Fire related steering wheel cover.
3. Two red headlights for the four light system.
4. CO₂ Type fire extinguisher for the passenger side of my ALF.
5. Air brake release valve knob. Has push to release printed on it. Mine is yellow in color.
6. Automatic parking brake release knob. Mine is green in color and I think it states to hold down after taking the air brakes off.
7. Any other interesting items for my 1973 ALF.

Chuck Moore has the following for sale:

1. Federal Signal Model 184 Emergency Light. This was the original light on my ALF. It has four lights, which two are red and two are white. This light works and is excellent working order. No reasonable offer refused. To contact Chuck--seymourabate@aol.com



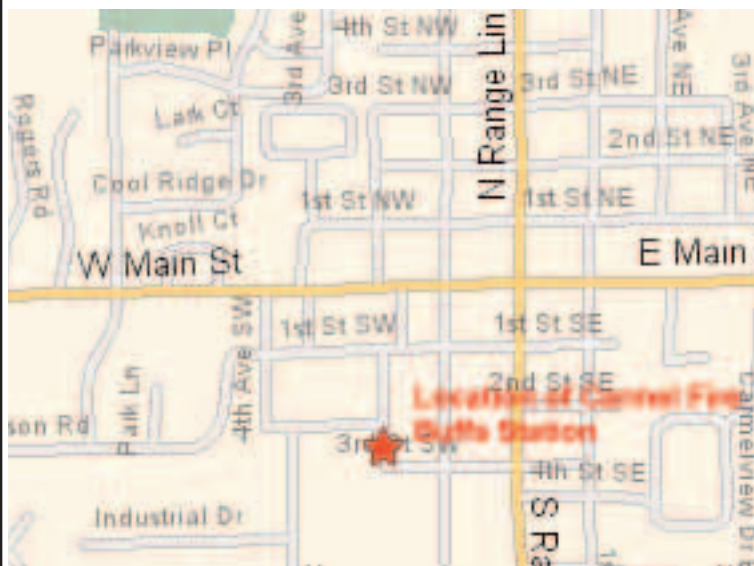
1973 Ford C8000 Pierce. Has Cat V8 Diesel, 5 speed manual transmission, 2 speed differential, air brakes 1000 gpm pump/1000 gal. tank

37,000 miles, served South Haven, Indiana. Runs and drives great, never tried pumping. Will run 60 mph. Asking \$2500 For info call John 574-286-2246 (South Bend)

For additional pictures contact stonegates@netnitco.net



The next PPPSI Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday, May 8, 2005, at the Carmel Fire Buffs Station in Carmel, Indiana. Refer to the map below for the general location of the Carmel Fire Buffs Station. If you need further directions, please contact Scott Rollins 317-439-8425.



PPPSI
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The Indiana chapter of
SPAAMFAA

Upcoming meetings and events

April 29th 2005 Trip to Van Wert, Ohio fire museum on the way to Jackson, Michigan swap meet.

April 30th 2005 Jackson, MI Swap meet

May 8th 2005 Meeting at the Carmel Fire Buffs station at 2:00 p.m.

June 5th 2005 Meeting at Wayne Twp Fire HQ at 2:00 p.m.

Rig of the Month



Pictured is Jeff Rider's 1918 American LaFrance pumper. It is a Type 40.
The ALF originally served Richmond, Kentucky.