

Transcript of Oral History Interview with

## **Robert Edwin Bade**

**East County Line Fire Volunteer Department, 1957-1983**



By Oral Historian Kate Cavett  
and Bob Jensen, President, Maplewood Area Historical Society

for the  
**Maplewood Area Historical Society**

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at HAND in HAND's office in Saint Paul, MN

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All pictures are from the Bade family  
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# ORAL HISTORY

Oral History is the spoken word in print.

Oral histories are personal memories shared from the perspective of the narrator. By means of recorded interviews oral history documents collect spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance. These interviews are transcribed verbatim and minimally edited for accessibility. Greatest appreciation is gained when one can listen to an oral history aloud.

Oral histories do not follow the standard language usage of the written word. Transcribed interviews are not edited to meet traditional writing standards; they are edited only for clarity and understanding. The hope of oral history is to capture the flavor of the narrator's speech and convey the narrator's feelings through the timbre and tempo of speech patterns.

An oral history is more than a family tree with names of ancestors and their birth and death dates. Oral history is recorded personal memory, and that is its value. What it offers complements other forms of historical text, and does not always require historical corroboration. Oral history recognizes that memories often become polished as they sift through time, taking on new meanings and potentially reshaping the events they relate.

Memories shared in an oral history create a picture of the narrator's life— the culture, food, eccentricities, opinions, thoughts, idiosyncrasies, joys, sorrows, passions - the rich substance that gives color and texture to this individual life.

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KC: Kate Cavett

RB: Robert Bade

BJ: Bob Jensen

RB: My name is Bob Bade<sup>1</sup>. I'm seventy-seven years old. I was a member of the East County Line Fire Department<sup>2</sup> for twenty-six years, and—

KC: What was your primary job?

RB: Well, my primary job was firefighter. I was a firefighter for part of the time, then I was promoted to captain, and then I was elected the chief.

KC: And when you weren't firefighting, where did you work the rest of the time?

RB: The rest of the time, I worked for 3M Company<sup>3</sup>, and I had responsibility for quality of copying machines internationally, and so I did a lot of traveling to Germany and Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> **Robert Edwin Bade** was an East County Line Firefighter from 1957, to 1983; with 26 years of service.

<sup>2</sup> **East County Line Fire Department** Chronology—Appendix A

The East County Line Fire District in 1957 (when Bade joined) included: Landfall, Woodbury, Oakdale and Maplewood that was south of North St Paul and east of McKnight Road. At later dates Woodbury and Oakdale started their own departments.

<sup>3</sup> The **3M Company**, formerly known as the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, is an American multinational conglomerate corporation with headquarters in Maplewood, Minnesota. The company was started in 1902 in Two Harbors before moving to the east side of Saint Paul around 1910. In 1952, they bought land in New Canada Township (later Maplewood) between McKnight Road and Century Avenue to allow expansion for their research laboratories and headquarters. In 2014 the 3M Center of 475 acres has over 50 buildings and the company employs over 88,000 worldwide. In 2013, Maplewood and 3M announced a joint decision to locate a Maplewood fire station in the northwest corner of the 3M Center.

KC: What is your understanding of the history of East County Line?

RB: Well, I didn't get there at the start, so I've only got hearsay, but East County Line started somewhere at the end, or still in the process, of World War II. It was a series of block wardens that were a civil defense unit that used to be responsible for whatever they were responsible for in the area, and a bunch of the block wardens got together and decided to form a fire department.

KC: What was it like when you first came on?

RB: Well, we were—we actually had, not nice equipment, but we had two pumper trucks<sup>4</sup> and two tankers<sup>5</sup>, and tankers were necessary at that time, because there were no fire hydrants in the area. And we had a 1,000-gallon tanker and a 2,000-gallon tanker. So we could carry 3,000 gallons of water.

KC: You had large tankers.

RB: Yes. I don't know where the one came from. The one was a Mack and it was kind of interesting, because we used to have to keep the shift lever in the office, and when the alarm would come in, whoever was going to drive that tanker would have to go and get the shift lever in the office and put it in the hole so they could shift the truck.

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<sup>4</sup> **Pumper trucks** are designed to connect directly to fire hydrants for their water supply and have a pump to increase the water pressure to hoses used for fighting fires.

<sup>5</sup> **Tanker trucks** are designed to carry their own water supply to a fire and some will have pumps to provide the water pressure to hoses for fighting fires. These are common in rural areas where fire hydrants do not exist.



KC: [laughs] So what area did East County Line cover?

RB: Well, that's a really good question, because we had all of Maplewood<sup>6</sup> from North Saint Paul to the South End, kind of a Saint Paul and—I can't think the other town—area, and it was one mile wide in Maplewood. Then we had all of Oakdale<sup>7</sup> at that time, and we had all of Woodbury<sup>8</sup> at that time.

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<sup>6</sup> **City of Maplewood** was incorporated in 1957 from New Canada Township in Ramsey County, Minnesota. New Canada Township was organized in 1858 and named by the earliest settlers who emigrated from Canada. It was largely dairy and truck farming until post WWII veterans built homes and sought the comforts of suburbia. Maplewood was named for the maple tree which was a favorite of the township supervisors and for the nearby Maple Wood School and Maple Street. Gladstone, the earliest commercial neighborhood was platted in 1886 and established a volunteer fire department in 1943. Parkside was a neighborhood that established a volunteer fire department in 1958. The city has a total area of 17.99 square miles.

KC: Wow. You covered a really large area.

RB: A lot of square miles, but not a lot of homes and businesses.

KC: Did that mean you would get called out for a lot of brush fires?

RB: Mostly.

KC: Did the firefighters come from that whole area, too, then?

RB: No. The firefighters had to live in either Oakdale or Maplewood. But we did assist Woodbury. When they were forming their fire department, we assisted them in getting started, and we did some training down there and so on.

KC: How many firefighters were on the roster at the beginning?

RB: I think we had about thirty. And choosing the firefighters was a little difficult, because we could have a roster—I think it was thirty, but the problem was that we didn't want to get all people that worked days and were home nights. So we

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<sup>7</sup> **City of Oakdale** is in Washington County, Minnesota, United States, is an eastern suburb of Saint Paul. The city of Oakdale today is the result of a consolidation of Oakdale and Northdale Townships in the 1970s, and continued to annex land well into the 1990s. The city has a total area of 11.29 square miles; 10.95 square miles is land and 0.34 square miles is water. Oakdale designates *Hadley Avenue North* as its "signature street" since it is the primary street running the length of the city and serves as a replacement for what the city lacks in a downtown or main street.

<sup>8</sup> **City of Woodbury** is the largest city in Washington County, Minnesota, United States, and is a suburb east of the Saint Paul along Interstate 94. At almost 36 square miles in size, Woodbury is a direct descendant of one of the congressional townships that Minnesota Territory was divided into when the territory was ceded by the Native Americans to the United States and "opened to settlement." Woodbury was originally named Red Rock, but was renamed Woodbury after Levi Woodbury, the first justice of the Supreme Court of the United States to attend law school, realized that another Red Rock existed in Minnesota. When first settled in 1844, the land was mostly wood but was converted to farmland. The township government was organized in 1858, and the first town hall built in 1876. The first suburban housing development began in 1955, and the city has seen an increasing level of metropolitan expansion as the farmland has given way to developments and shopping malls

sometimes let the roster get down to leave space for the people that worked nights and were home days.

KC: So the roster could handle only up to thirty, or it could handle more?

RB: There was a limit, and I'm not sure that thirty was it, but that's what sticks in my mind.

KC: Who set that limit, the city or just your charter?

RB: No, the fire department was one of three that serviced Maplewood, and each was an individually incorporated, and the rules of the corporation which were established by the originators was for thirty, I think.

KC: What attracted you to join the fire department?

RB: I joined the fire department mainly because I was moving into an area. I had been living in the city all my life, and I wanted to get into the community, and that just seemed like a good way to do it.

KC: How did that work for you?

RB: [laughs] In fact, it got me a little deeper into the community than I really wanted to.

KC: [laughs] So what kinds of things besides training and firefighting did you do then?

RB: Well, we were a private corporation, and we contracted with the cities. And so we got so much money from the cities, but that didn't begin to pay our total expenses, so we used to have to have fundraisers, and we had fundraisers like, well, we had a big ham dinner every year. And we had dances. One of the things we used to have on our ticket was,

"How would you feel if you had a fire and nobody came?"



That was because we didn't want to have a dance and nobody come. [Kate laughs] And then there was an auxiliary that also raised funds for us, and once a year, they had a big boutique where they had—they rented tables and so on. And we used to make homemade doughnuts, and we'd make three or four hundred dozen doughnuts.

KC: The firefighters or you and your wife?

RB: No, the firefighters.

KC: Were they good doughnuts?

RB: Oh, we couldn't keep them there. People would be lining up already at six o'clock in the morning to get doughnuts.



**East County Line Patches**

KC: Why a firefighter to establish yourself in the community?

RB: Well, yeah, but that was the one that I knew and probably interested me the most. Firefighting to me was always a challenge, because it was you against the fire.

KC: Talk more about that.

RB: Well, every fire is different, and every fire deals differently with the surroundings and so on. And so when you got to a fire, there you were and you had to figure out what's the fire doing, and you had to get ahead of it to stop it, and it was a challenge.

KC: That sounds like you did a lot of training, then, to learn about fires and how to fight them, and to teach others.

RB: I was very fortunate, because I worked for 3M, and so 3M sent me one year to Texas A&M, to their huge fire training grounds down there. And it's sponsored down there by the oil industry, and so we had lots of big, hot fires. And of course, it was in the summer and we were out on a field, so we'd have temperatures of eighty or ninety degrees. And then we'd go in and fight these big, hot oil and gas fires.

KC: Wow, so as an employee, because you were on the volunteer fire department that serviced 3M, they just sent you as part of your job.

RB: Right. Right.

KC: Wow.

RB: They sent me for a week, and I went with—oh, I can remember Don Latch<sup>9</sup> -- from Hastings – and there were two or three others that they sent from the

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<sup>9</sup> Donald Latch Hastings, Minnesota Fire Chief

departments that serviced their areas. And there was about four or five of us went down and spent a week down there.

KC: If you were out all night fighting a fire, how did 3M handle that?

RB: You went to work. [laughs] You worked at eight o'clock, just like you always did.

KC: [laughs] So was there ever the opportunity to say, "Golly, I'm really tired. I was fighting a fire last night," and leave early?

RB: Not unless you wanted to take a day's vacation, or I suppose you could take sick leave, although in those days, sick leave was really frowned on, so you didn't do that. And there were weeks where you maybe only got eight or nine hours the whole week of sleep. Because you'd just get to bed and we'd get an alarm and we'd be out for two to three hours and we'd get back, and of course, then it's thirty below zero, well, you don't go right back to sleep.

KC: What are some of the fires that you remember, sir?

RB: Well, the huge fires that we had, I tried to list a few of them here. And I don't know that I really got them all. Three of our major fires when I was on the department were the 3M sixth floor of Building 220<sup>10</sup>, which is their big office building. And that was the only building in the whole complex that wasn't sprinklered, because they figured that there was nothing going on that was hazardous, so they didn't think they'd ever have a big fire, and they did.



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<sup>10</sup> **3M Fire** on July 25, 1979 at 3M Company, 6<sup>th</sup> floor of building 220 in 3M Center, I-94 and McKnight Road, noted as the only 3M building that had no sprinklers and that a snorkel truck could approach building from only one end.

KC: Do you remember how that fire started?

RB: As far as I've ever heard, and they've never really gotten back with any detail, but it was an arson fire.

KC: What was it like fighting a fire on the sixth floor? I mean, do you have to drag all the hoses—

RB: Oh, you do. Fortunately, that building was as—I don't know if it's fourteen or fifteen stories. And so they have standpipes<sup>11</sup> in the corridors, so we could take lengths of hose up to the level of the fire, connect to the standpipes, and then that would pump water.



KC: What's a standpipe?

RB: It's just a—it's like a fire hydrant on each floor. It's—it protects you or it gives you the opportunity so you don't have to drag hose all the way up six stories to get there.

KC: How big was this fire?

RB: The whole sixth floor.

KC: The whole sixth floor. So could you even get onto the sixth floor to squirt water?

RB: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we had to. We always worked with the idea that you can't save a building that you can't get to the fire inside. And so consequently, we were inside firefighters mostly.

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<sup>11</sup> **Standpipe** is a large-diameter, rigid pipe running vertically inside a building to which fire hoses can be connected, similar to having a fire hydrant on each floor. This save time dragging hoses up stairwells and avoids pressure loss from long lengths of hose.

## Firemen on 6<sup>th</sup> floor of 3M Building



*The fire in 3M's main administration building, Building 220, occurred in the early morning hours of July 25. Fire fighters from Maplewood, St. Paul and surrounding suburbs responded quickly to the call. Above, fire fighters work in an office in the badly-charred sixth floor after extinguishing the fire. Below, broken windows in the building give no clue to the kind of damage to the inside offices (lower right) that occurred.*



Photo by Bob Handell

## 3M building's sixth floor gutted in July 25th fire

A fire in Building 220, the main administration building at 3M Center, in the early morning hours of July 25 caused extensive damage to the building's sixth floor and less serious damage to the fifth and seventh floors. An early estimate of the damage was \$1.5 million.

No one was injured in the fire, which was discovered by a security guard about 2:30 a.m. About 25 fire fighting and support units from Maplewood, St. Paul and surrounding suburbs were called to the scene and brought the fire under control about an hour later.

The building was closed for the day and employees who work in the building were informed over local radio stations not to report to work.

Many other 3M employees worked hard during the day and on into the

evening to prepare the building, with the exception of the heavily-damaged sixth floor, for safe occupancy by employees the following day. Supervisors and managers from Building 220 called their employees to tell them when and where to report to work.

Sixth floor employees were at work the next day also, but were relocated into temporary working quarters.

Investigators were called in to determine the cause of the fire, but that information was not available at publication time.

Clair R. Larson, vice president of Engineering, said it was estimated that the sixth floor of the building would not be ready for occupancy by employees for three or four months.



Photo by Ben Wink

KC: Did only East County Line come to this fire?

RB: Oh, no. This was a mutual aid<sup>12</sup> fire with several departments, departments like White Bear Lake, Roseville; of course, all of the Maplewood departments— Gladstone [Fire Department<sup>13</sup>] and Parkside<sup>14</sup> [Fire Department], and Newport. Bayport might have had an engine there. I'm not sure. It's a long time ago [both laugh], so I don't remember all the details very well.

KC: Well, and I—I've got a newspaper article that you shared with me, and it would have been August 1979 that that fire took place. So yes, it was a long time ago.

RB: And of course, the first thing that goes is the memory. [both laugh]

KC: I think you're doing very well with your memory, sir. I don't remember what I did in August 1979. [laughs] Any other memories you have on that particular fire?

RB: Yeah, one thing I remember. Maplewood had purchased a snorkel. Now a snorkel is like an aerial ladder, only it's just a bucket on the end of a long pole or long arm. And we couldn't use that on the sides of the building, because in the front was a swimming pool, or a reflecting pool that



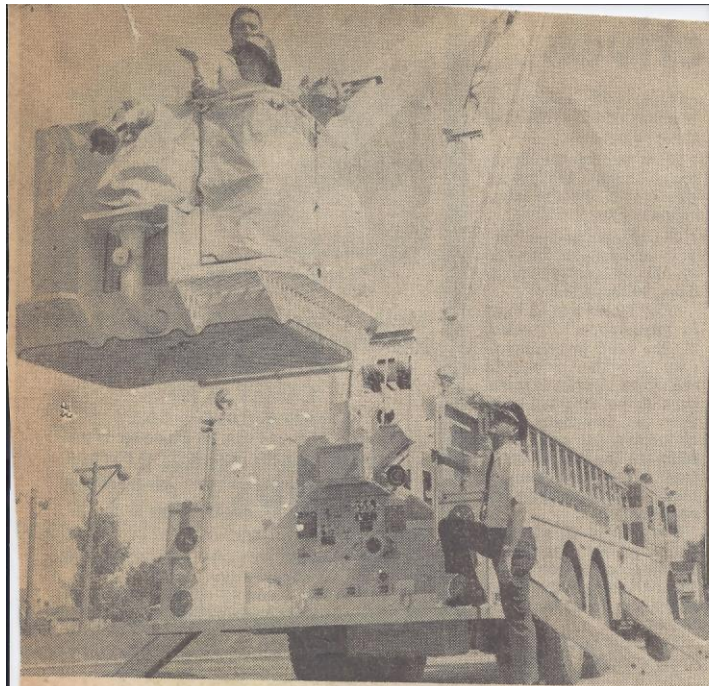
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<sup>12</sup> **Mutual Aid:** Maplewood fire departments signed an agreement in January, 1966 with approximately 25 other departments around the Saint Paul area to create the Capitol City Mutual Aid Association. When a fire department required additional firemen or equipment in an emergency—such as a disaster or a multiple-alarm fire—they could call upon the other departments to provide that support.

<sup>13</sup> **Gladstone Fire Department** Chronology—Appendix B

<sup>14</sup> **Parkside Fire Department** Chronology—Appendix C

they had for decoration. And we couldn't get in there with the aerial. And on the back was a parking garage underneath, and we couldn't put that kind of weight on the surface. So the only place we could work was one end of the building. So it kind of limited what our equipment, our specialized equipment that we had, would do, but we did use it. We were able



THE PRIDE AND JOY OF MAPLEWOOD FIRE DEPARTMENT  
A 'Snorkel' That Can Reach Top of Most Buildings

★ ★ ★ Sept 17, 1970

## New Snorkel Is Ready To Help Battle Fires

Maplewood has an \$85,000, fully-equipped "snorkel."

"It's going to help us fight fires," said Fire Marshal Al Schadt.

He said the "snorkel," an elevated platform attached to a fire truck, will reach the top of all buildings in Maplewood with

the exception of some in the Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing complex.

"We can go up 75 feet in the snorkel," Schadt pointed out.

He suggested that the new equipment will be especially effective in rescue operations:

"Taking somebody out

of a burning building on an elevated platform is a lot easier than going up and down a ladder," he said.

Schadt described the snorkel as the "pride" of

## New Snorkel Helps To Fight Fires

Continued from Page 1  
the 116-member Maplewood Volunteer Fire Department.

"It really helps morale to know that we have a first-class piece of equipment," he reported.

He said the snorkel places Maplewood in an elite group.

"I know of only two other fire departments in the St. Paul area with that kind of equipment," he noted.

Maplewood also has eight fire engines; two tankers, three jeeps, two rescue trucks and a boat

— all spaced out at three different fire stations.

"Our biggest problem up to now was in assuring ourselves of adequate means of fighting fires in multiple-story buildings," Schadt said.

"We are a rapidly-growing community," he reported, "with many multiple story apartment complexes."

He also pointed to towering school and church buildings!

"And what always worried us most was the Ramsey County Home," Schmidt said. "If we ever had a serious fire there, rescue operations would be important. With the snorkel, we feel more secure."

The snorkel also has a turret through which can be fed 1,250 gallons of water in a minute, the chief reported.

to use it, but not—we didn't have the full function of the equipment because of the limitations of the terrain.

KC: Tell me about another fire.

RB: Well, that same year, if I remember right, Knowlan's Supermarket<sup>15</sup>. A month later, Knowlan's Supermarket burned down. And that was a fire where the boys had been stocking shelves and had a lot of cardboard, and they were burning a lot of—some of the cardboard. And they saved some of it and recycled it, but there was some of it—and I'm not too sure what—and they'd piled it all in front of their incinerator in the back, and somehow, the fire got out of the incinerator and into the pile of cardboard, and the building construction was such that it was wide open in the back up to the overhead and up to the front of the store. And the fire immediately went up and overhead, and the whole store was engulfed in a short time. And that was another mutual aid fire that we had several departments from North Saint Paul, and of course, all of the Maplewood departments.

KC: What—how did it work with mutual aid? Who made the decision to call in other departments?

RB: Well, that was usually up to the officer in charge of the fire. He decided what he needed and would [make a] call. Now, how did he choose which departments? Well, he chose some because of what equipment they had. For example, we had a fire out on—well, it wasn't really in Oakdale, but it was very near, and it was on the freeway, of a tanker truck, and Roseville had a truck that was equipped with foam for fighting tanker truck fires, and so obviously, that was one that you

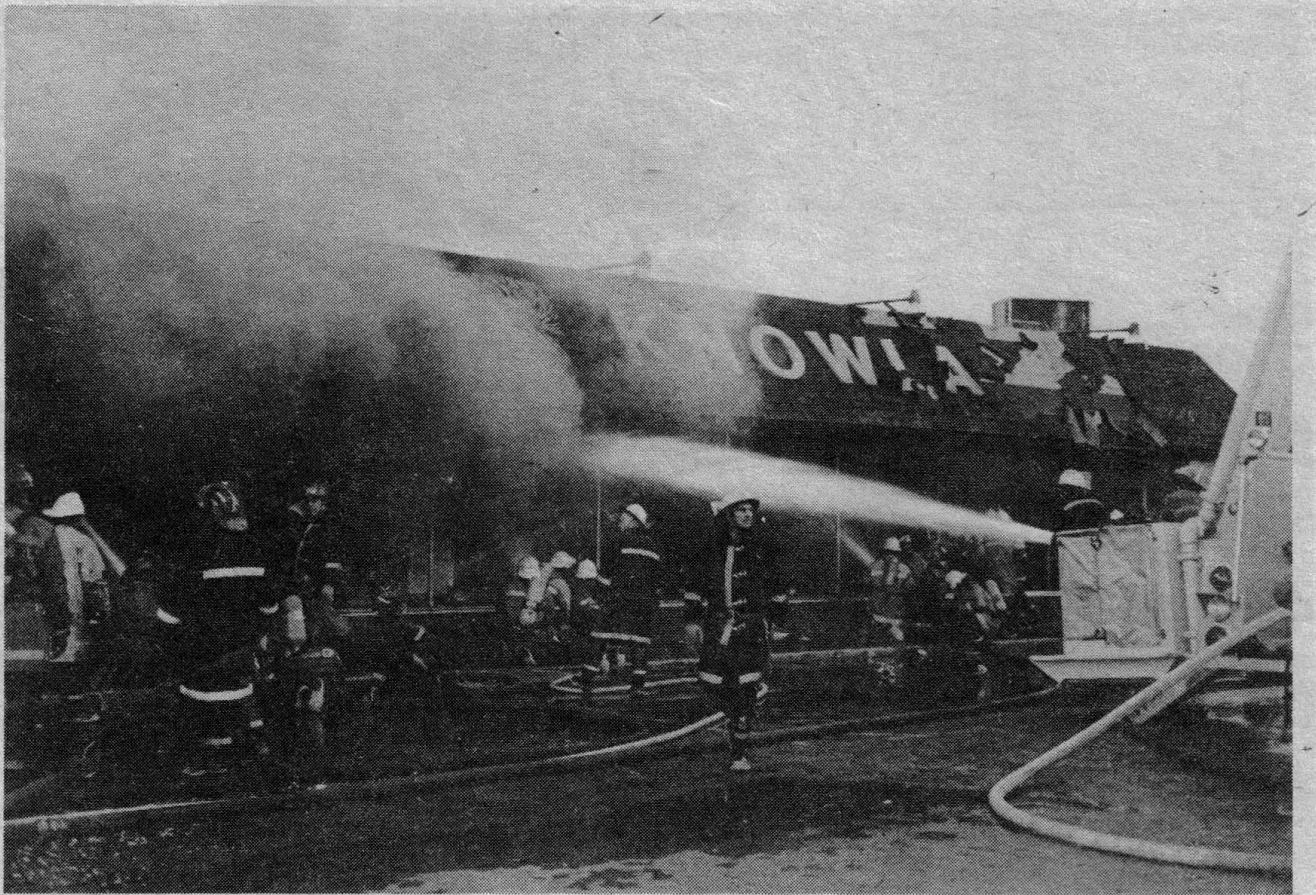
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<sup>15</sup> **Knowlan's Grocery Store Fire**, at Century Avenue and Stillwater Road, was September 6 1979; flames from incinerator ignited boxes inside the store and flames were carried quickly along open ceiling to entire store.



called. But you called the closest departments, and it was kind of a step up thing. Like you called the departments that were immediately around you, and then you called the next row of the departments, not to come to your fire, but to move up to the stations that you emptied.

## Maplewood Supermarket Is Destroyed



Firemen from a half-dozen area fire departments fought a four-alarm fire that destroyed the "Wild" Bill Knowlan's supermarket at Highway 120 and Stillwater Boulevard in Maplewood. Story appeared in last month's Smoke-Eater.  
—Photo By Margaret Bakken, Washington County Bulletin

KC: To bring their trucks and sit in your stations.

RB: If we called Woodbury, then Woodbury might call Saint Paul Park or Newport to move a truck into their station to cover for them.

KC: Lots of communication, lots of coordination between different volunteer departments.

RB: Right. Right. And it was a necessary thing, because you never knew when one of those others were going to have a major fire, and all their vehicles were at yours.

KC: Did you ever call Saint Paul?

RB: I never got used to calling Saint Paul, because the only place we fought fires with Saint Paul was in the 3M complex, and the 3M complex was all sprinklered. So as soon as the alarm went through on the sprinkler system, well, Saint Paul was automatically called, just like we were. But on the big building fire, not being used to calling Saint Paul, I never called them until one of the last units that we called in, because I just wasn't used to calling Saint Paul. I knew all these other departments and I knew the equipment they had. Saint Paul, I didn't know anything about.

KC: Were you at the—were you the chief or the officer-in-charge at 3M?

RB: I was chief then. My first assistant chief did all the direction of the firefighting, and I did all the supply orders from getting the other departments in.

KC: Tell me about another fire.

RB: Ramsey County Workhouse. Ramsey County Workhouse fire<sup>16</sup>, we had a fire in the kitchen that went into the area where people were being held, and they had three people in solitary confinement that were in the smoke, and we had to go in with self-contained breathing units and give them the units to breathe until we could get somebody that knew how to work the mechanism, because they've got one master lock that locks all the cells, and there was nobody there that knew how to work it.

KC: What, to open up all the cells so—

RB: To open all the cells to get the people that were in solitary confinement out. We can stand right outside the bars, so we could hand them a mask that they could breathe.

KC: [laughs] Wow. I have the illusion that technology has gotten better.

RB: I hope so. Yeah. And we had one—3M had a scrap barrel refinishing building. This wasn't in the 3M building. This was a private company. But they used to go and pick up 3M's barrels, bring them out, and they'd sandblast them and repaint them, the scrap, and then they'd take them back to 3M. And that burned one night. And that was an interesting fire, because we went in the dock area. We made the approach to the fire in the dock area, and all of a sudden, we'd see a flame [Bade makes whooshing noise]. And then nothing. And then a little while later, we'd see a flame again [Bade makes whooshing noise].

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<sup>16</sup> **Ramsey County Workhouse** (297 South Century Avenue, Maplewood, MN 55119) fire on September 16, 1970 is noteworthy because of three inmates were locked in solitary confinement and there was no immediate way to open their cells.

# Workhouse Fire Injures Eight

By BILL RIEMERMAN  
Staff Writer

A fire that started in the butcher shop of the fire-proof Ramsey County Workhouse on Century Avenue just south of Upper Afton Road caused about \$100,000 damage Wednesday night.

Eight persons were injured, but none seriously. The fire also forced more

than 100 inmates out of the nearby mess hall into the exercise yard, according to Supt. Waldron Douglas.

The fire was discovered by an inmate investigating an odor of smoke, Douglas said. The inmate opened the butcher shop-cooler door and faced flames shooting down from the styrofoam lower ceiling. The ceiling

collapsed and fell on the inmate. He was taken to St. Paul-Ramsey Hospital where he was treated and released for superficial burns.

Meanwhile, six security prisoners were locked in cells nearby and were trying to combat the smoke with wet towels given to them by guards.

Firemen had tried to get the inmates out of cells, but couldn't get keys to work.

Supt. Douglas frantically ran from fireman to fireman trying to get smoke masks for the inmates, without success. He was told there were not enough to go around.

About 10 minutes later Douglas, some masked firemen and some police officers got the right keys and released the security inmates from their cells. One of the rescuers, Ramsey County Sheriff's Deputy Herman Ziehlman was without mask and was overcome by smoke. He was admitted to St. Paul-Ramsey Hospital.

The inmates were taken to the exercise yard and then put on stretchers for treatment at the hospital. Five were released and taken to Ramsey County Jail and one was kept for observation.

Fifteen other security risk prisoners also were taken to Ramsey County Jail.

The actual fire was confined to the butcher shop-freezer room, the kitchen and mess hall housed in a wing on the southwest corner of the complex.

A St. Paul fire chief on the scene said the fire spread through the ceiling and resulted in the roof sagging and walls spreading from the red brick building.

The butcher shop with inmates butcher the supply for the Wood Detention Home, Town and the city and ty jails, as well as for selves, was damaged stantially. Douglas mates that six to seven of meat, bakery goods, vegetables were stored in this section.

The food supply means inmates of the ous institutions supplied the Workhouse will have to make other arrangements for food. About 120 inmates remain at the Workhouse.

The rest of the building had substantial smoke damage. Electrical wiring in the southwest wing shorted out the remainder of the electric power in the building. But power was stored later.

Fire fighting units on scene were supplied by Paul, East County, Gladstone and Woodbury police and Ramsey and Washington county sheriff's deputies also assisted in providing security and transporting the injured.



SNORKEL IS USED TO POUR WATER IN WORKHOUSE WINDOW  
Dozens of Fire Fighting Units Quickly Controlled Blaze  
—Staff Photo by Joe Olsen

**ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS**

ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS

First Newspaper in Minnesota

44 PAGES

ST. PAUL, MINN., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1970



RAMSEY COUNTY Workhouse inmates who suffered smoke inhalation in a fire Wednesday are placed on stretchers by police and firemen. Other prisoners waited in an exercise yard while the fire, believed to have been of electrical origin, was extinguished. A state fire marshal,

—Staff Photo by Joe Oden

Maplewood Fire Chief Al Schadt and Workhouse Supt. Walron Douglas were investigating and inspecting the building today. The fire damaged the building's butcher shop, freezer room, kitchen and mess hall.

KC: And this is the fire shooting up?

RB: Mm-hmm. And so when we got the fire out, we found out that the whooshes that we saw were the relief valves and propane tanks that they had stored inside of the building that we didn't really know anything about.

KC: That sounds dangerous.

RB: Oh, it was dangerous. [laughs] But sometimes what you don't know don't hurt you. [Kate laughs] Or does hurt you. I don't know which.

KC: Luckily, nobody got hurt then.

RB: No, no, nobody got hurt.

KC: Was the owner of that company called out and he didn't tell you about the propane?

RB: I don't recall what the exact situation was, but it was a place that shut down at four o'clock and opened up again at eight in the morning, and there was nobody around except—I don't even think they had a night watchman in those days. But those are some of the fires.

We had a couple of mutual aid fires. Of course, you know of the G.E.M. fire<sup>17</sup> -- which was a large retail or wholesale vendor.



<sup>17</sup> **Gem Store Fire** The GEM Department Store was located at 2280 Maplewood Drive, the southeast corner of Highway 61 and Highway 36, was a discount department store for members. A fire destroyed the store on August 28, 1967, noted for large plumes of dark smoke visible for many miles and shutting down Highway 61 to pump water from nearby Keller Lake.

Northwood Country Club<sup>18</sup> was a huge one.

## Northwood Country Club burns

A fire destroyed the Northwood Country Club, 2409 E. Skillman Ave., North St. Paul, early today and nearly forced authorities to evacuate a nearby nursing home.

Firemen from the North St. Paul, Maplewood, Oakdale, Gladstone and East County Line fire departments battled the blaze which was reported about midnight, bringing it under control about 4 a.m. Ten fire rigs and about 50 or 60 fire fighters were at the scene.

FIFTY PATIENTS in the North St. Paul Nursing Home, 2375 E. Skillman Ave., next door to the country club, were moved to the west end of the home when smoke filled the structure, and firemen cleared the building of smoke with fans. Other firemen sprayed the roof and walls of the home with water to keep it from catching fire.

The elderly patients were returned to their rooms by 8 a.m. No injuries were reported.

Capt. William Weber of the North St. Paul Fire Department said damage was estimated at between \$300,000 and \$500,000. The club, which recently changed owners, was newly remodeled, he said. It was purchased by Gerald Murphy from John Heimel, who retained ownership of the building, Weber said.



Firemen battling a blaze that destroyed the Northwood Country Club are shown as they worked through the night to try to save the building and keep the fire from spreading to a nearby nursing home.—Photo for the Dispatch by Dave Bade

<sup>18</sup> **Northwood Country Club fire** at 2409 East Skillman Avenue in North Saint Paul on June 1, 1976, with 10 rigs and 50 to 60 firefighters from North Saint Paul Gladstone, East Co Line, Parkside, Oakdale fought the fire from midnight till 0400. The fire is remembered because of lack of communication between the different departments responding to mutual aid.





FIREMEN hampered by heavy smoke shoot water through basement windows in efforts to extinguish a Stillwater Prison fire Monday night in a basement storage area. Firefighters were still at the scene early today. —Staff Photo.

We had a big fire under the theater section of the Minnesota State Prison<sup>19</sup> that we worked on all night.

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<sup>19</sup> Minnesota State Correctional Facility (970 Pickett Street N. Bayport, MN) fire is noted because of possibility of the possibility of an explosion due to dry cleaning fluids stored nearby. No date of the fire is available—believed to be in the early 1960s.

# Smoky Fire Breaks Out At Prison

By DAVE GIEL  
Staff Writer

A smoky fire broke out about 7:30 p.m. Monday at Stillwater State Prison in a basement storage area below the 1,300-seat auditorium and the prison kitchen and was still burning early today.

About 500 inmates were in the prison yard when the fire was discovered, according to Warden Jack Young. He said they proceeded to their cells without incident.

Picture on Page 2

"They were orderly throughout the whole thing," he added.

Several suburban fire departments responded to the alarm under a mutual aid agreement. Their efforts were hampered by the thick, dark smoke.

Firemen tried to get at the fire through a basement door but were forced outside by the smoke and were aiming their hoses through basement windows.

A St. Paul Fire Department foam rig was dispatched to the scene about 11:30 p.m.

Cause of the fire was undetermined. No damage estimate was available. Young said he believed the storage room was locked throughout the day Monday but had to check with one more person before he could be certain.

The storage area contained excess bedding, surplus rock salt, cleaning solvents, grease and oil used for maintenance purposes, some canteen items, such as coffee and cookies, and paper supplies.

The cell blocks are joined to the auditorium by a corridor but the fire was confined and the inmates were in no immediate danger.

Suburban fire departments at the scene included those from Bayport, Stillwater, Lake Elmo and North St. Paul.

KC: Wow. What was your role in that?

RB: Well, we got called in as a mutual aid company, and we went down and we to work in the area, and they said, "Oh, you can't go in that room," because they stored dry cleaning fluids in there. So they wouldn't let us go in, and finally, about four o'clock in the morning, well, the chiefs left. [laughs] We said, "Let's put the fire out."

KC: [laughs] So you went in the room?

RB: Yeah. Well, we figured if it hadn't blown by that time, it had burned for about six hours already, but they stored all their toilet paper and all their paper towels and that kind of stuff, and so that was what was in there, and it just burned and burned and burned.

KC: So one of the underlings made the decision to—

RB: Well, it was just a bunch of guys standing around. We had been to coffee earlier, and now they invited the chiefs to coffee, so once we weren't burdened with chiefs anymore. Yeah, the chief isn't always the smartest guy there.

KC: Except when you were chief.

RB: No. Especially when I was chief. [both laugh]

KC: Who—when you were chief, who were the people you really wanted to be at a fire, that had special skills that you knew you could trust?

RB: Any one of our men was really trustworthy. You knew that when you were in a fire, they were going to be right with you, not running away from you.

KC: Did any of your people have special skills?

RB: Well, we had—as far as firefighting goes, I don't think so. We didn't have any specialists in any way, although over the years, some of our people got jobs with other fire departments full-time and were part-time with us, you know, volunteered with us, but actually worked—we had people at West Saint Paul, people at the airport, and Burnsville.

KC: How did pay work? When you first came on, were you paid anything to be a volunteer?

RB: No, you paid.

KC: You paid?

RB: You paid.

KC: Tell me about that.

RB: Well, in order to belong to the organization, you paid annual dues. I can't remember what it was. I think it might have been five dollars, and you paid annual dues. You got nothing for what you did. Any losses that you sustained, mainly clothing, were at your expense.

KC: Did there ever get to be a time where you got paid anything?

RB: Well, then as time went on, they got to where they felt they could pay everybody a dollar a call. And that was good and it was bad. It was good because you did finally get something, but it was also bad because there were a few people then that just came and signed the roster and left again and didn't participate the way they should.

KC: [laughs] So what—now you left in 1983. How much were you paid in '83?

RB: Oh, probably, maybe three dollars a call. I really have no concept as to what it was.

KC: When you were chief, did you get anything more?

RB: Yeah. I got like fifty cents more a call, or maybe a dollar more a call. I can't remember that either for sure. But it was a lot of hours, too, because there was a lot of hours where you sat at night making out all the state reports that you had to turn in on each call that wasn't the responsibility of anybody else, just the chiefs.

KC: So now you became very involved in training.

RB: We organized a training session along—yeah. Maplewood training people – and most of the departments had a training officer, and those officers, along with Roseville and Falcon Heights and White Bear Lake and maybe one or two others, formed an organization and we started to format a class of basic training for new firefighters. And then we started working a program. We talked with 916 Vo-Tech<sup>20</sup>. We got our program authorized and supported and they actually put that on their list of classes that they offered. I think it was a thirteen-week training session that new firefighters would go through.

KC: So you helped write the curriculum for that.

RB: Well, and we instructed it. We were the instructors. I taught two things: I taught Fire Behavior and I taught Communications. And White Bear Lake taught

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<sup>20</sup> **916 Vo-Tech** was an Area Vocational Technical Institute at 3300 Century Avenue North in White Bear Lake began in 1969 and in 1996 was merged with Lakewood Community College to create Century College to provide post-secondary education in technical and occupational areas, including adult extension programs to prepare for or upgrade employment skills, such as firefighting.

Ladders. They had about a four-week session, I think, for ladders. And Gladstone had a pumper training. They all had certain things. Not that any of us were experts in any of them, but just somebody had to do it, and we wanted to get this off the ground, and so.

KC: Is that when Firefighter I, and II<sup>21</sup> started taking place?

RB: Mm-hmm. Right. Yeah, that was Firefighter I. Then a little later, we did some things with Firefighter II, which was an advancement of what they'd get in Firefighter I. And I never was involved if it got into a Firefighter III. I think by then, they were getting more professional type instructors

KC: When you first came on, how were you notified?

RB: Oh, that's an interesting thing. When I first came on the department, I think there were four people and two businesses that had a fire phone. They were all an extension of the fire number. And they would answer the call. They would answer the phone, and then they all had a switch in their house that set the siren off, and there was a siren on top of the building. So when there was a fire, they blew the siren. And that worked all right. The only thing is, occasionally the fire phone would get unprotected, because the four people that had them in their homes on the weekend would decide to go away on the spur of the moment and forget to call to see if somebody else was going to be home. So occasionally, the fire phone wouldn't be answered, but it was just the best we had to offer at that time.

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<sup>21</sup> **Firefighting I and II** classes were taught at several technical colleges in the metro area. Starting in 1972, ISD 287 Vo-Tech (since 1995 called Hennepin Technical College) sent instructors to local fire departments (including Maplewood's volunteer departments) for training in basic firefighting procedures that had been established by the National Fire Protection Association. In the early 1980's, 916 Vo-Tech (in 1996 became Century College) began teaching these procedures which eventually became Firefighting I. Firefighting II was later established for more advanced firefighting skills.

KC: So you had to be close enough to hear the siren.

RB: Right. To start with.

KC: What happened next?

RB: Well, then when you went to the station, the first person in the station, and they were usually somebody who had a phone in their house, were supposed to write the address on the blackboard.

Now there was an interesting thing, when I was a new recruit I went to a fire. My wife said, "The siren's been blowing for about an hour, so they must be short of help and they need somebody, so you'd better go to the station." So I went to the station and there written on the board was "Tony the Greek's." [both laugh] If you didn't know Tony the Greek, you didn't know. So that was the fallacy there. If they didn't write something that was definitive, then you didn't know where you were going.

KC: Did you know where "Tony the Greek's" was?

RB: No, I didn't have the foggiest idea. I was new in the neighborhood, so I had no idea. I had to wait until somebody else came that knew where that was, and then I went.

Then we got a phone system that when the phone rang for the fire station, they could just leave the address on the phone, and each one called two [other people]. So for example, the phone call would come into the fire station; then they would call me, and Connie, [my wife], would call two [pre-assigned people] while I was going to the fire. And the problem there was if Connie wasn't home, I sometimes went to the fire and the calls never went any further.

KC: A system dependent on wives.

RB: Well, not just wives, but just dependent that somebody made the calls. And of course, everybody wanted to get going to the fire, so sometimes if there wasn't a wife to forward the calls, well, it didn't happen. [Kate chuckles] But then we got to pagers. And then we went to a central dispatcher, and Maplewood had a central dispatcher.

KC: Did you ever, when you had pagers, get a page at work and decide, "Oh, I should go fight this fire"?

RB: Oh, no. Oh, no That wasn't a choice. And that was true, but like a couple times, I took a half a day's vacation. Like we had an alarm at a school building, and so I went because it was a school. I took half a day's vacation. But you just didn't leave work and go do something.

KC: Were supervisors pretty understanding for an immediate half day's vacation if it was to fight a fire?

RB: Oh, yeah, yeah. My job was such that I worked Saturdays and weekends and stuff, especially if we were going to have a new machine that was going to be shown somewhere, so we'd work evenings and weekends. So if you took a half a day's vacation now or then, well, they usually didn't mind that much. Unless you were right in the middle of developing for a show, then they weren't too happy.

KC: So what other stories do you have to tell me, sir?

RB: Well, I've listed a few things that were kind of interesting. I told you the story of getting a call to Gladstone. I was a rookie again, pretty new, and we got called out to Gladstone to assist on a house fire, and it was in the middle of the night, and it was about thirty-two below zero, and we went and when we got there, the chief said to me, "I'd like you to relieve that guy that's up on the ladder." And it

was the kind of house where it was balloon construction<sup>22</sup> and all the floors had burned out in the center, and the only way to fight the fire was to squirt water in the windows when you'd see flames erupt. And so I went up on the ladder and I was doing that, and I'd been up there for about half-an-hour, and they said, "We're going to get you some relief." And so they said, "You can come down and we'll send somebody else up." Well, I couldn't come down because the water had run down my coat and down around my boots and around the rungs of the ladder, and I was froze to the ladder. And so I had to wait for somebody to come up and chop me off the ladder.

KC: You just had to provide your own really warm equipment to be able to not freeze out there.

RB: Oh, yeah, you dressed—I had a pair of winter coveralls that were insulated, and I'd usually slip them on before I left home. I don't think at that time I did, because I was pretty new. I didn't know what I needed. But anyway, I eventually got thawed out and got warm.

KC: Did you have to go back up again?

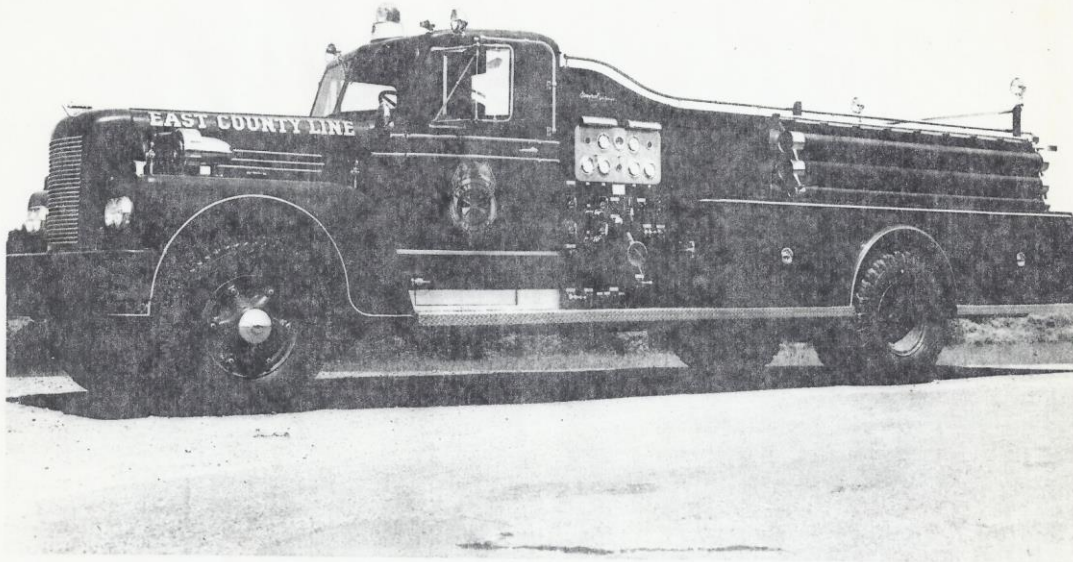
RB: No, no, they gave somebody else the next turn, but one thing that I had a disadvantage. I don't drink coffee, and so a cup of hot coffee wasn't good for me, because I didn't drink coffee. Another incident, we were having a ham dinner to raise funds for new equipment, and I was working the kitchen, and all of a sudden, the ladies called for a pan of ham, and they had big pans that they sliced the ham on and laid them out and put them in the oven. Well, unbeknown to me, the oven pilots had gone out, and the oven had went off and leaked gas. So when

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<sup>22</sup> **Balloon construction** is a method of building construction that utilizes long continuous wall studs that run vertically for several floors. This allows fire to easily travel between floors, unless fire stops are installed at each floor.



# EAST COUNTY LINE FIRE DEPARTMENT



UNIT NO. 3

The unit pictured above is the latest addition to the EAST COUNTY LINE FIRE DEPARTMENT. This unit is a 1000GPM pumper-tanker combination. By this we mean that the truck carries 1000 gallons of water and that the pump on this unit is capable of pumping 1000 gallons of water per minute.

The cost of this unit, completely equipped, is \$29,203.25, and was purchased by the EAST COUNTY LINE FIRE DEPARTMENT without any help from outside sources, so as to be able to give YOU, the residents of our fire district, the best fire protection available.

The addition of this unit gives us a total of eight pieces of fire fighting equipment. One 500GPM Pumper, One 750GPM Pumper, One 1000GPM Pumper, One 2000 Gallon Tanker, One 1200 Gallon Tanker, One Rescue Truck, and Two Jeep Fire fighting units.

Since this department was originated in October 1942, by asking for donations to buy a used fire truck, we have grown to what we are today, having a building and equipment worth approximately \$175,000.

Not one cent of the money we receive has ever been spent for the time of firemen while at fires, drills or on any other occasion. ALL OF THE TIME PUT IN BY FIREMEN IS ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS AND IS FOR FREE.

Any money received from fire contracts or from the ANNUAL HAM DINNER is used for more and better equipment.

Our ANNUAL HAM DINNER will be held SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1961 from 12:00 noon to 5:00 P.M.

Adults \$1.50      Children \$.75      Children under five—FREE

**RIDES FOR THE CHILDREN - BINGO - GAMES - DOOR PRIZES - FUN FOR ALL**

**"HELP YOUR FIRE DEPARTMENT TO HELP YOU"**

**EAST COUNTY LINE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

1177 North Century Avenue (Highway #100 and Stillwater Road)

**EMERGENCY-FIRE PHONE SPRING 9-8011**

I opened the oven door and I bent down into the oven, the gas floated back up, and when it got to the burners on the top of the stove, it blew with my head in the oven and my arms in the oven.

KC: Were you burnt? Were you singed?

RB: I was burned over my whole face and a lot of my arms.

KC: Oh my gosh! Did they take you down to Ramsey [Hospital]<sup>23</sup>?

RB: Down to Ramsey. Yep. And they released me that day, and I had to go back the next day and they peeled a little more of the scabs off, and I just had to wait to heal.

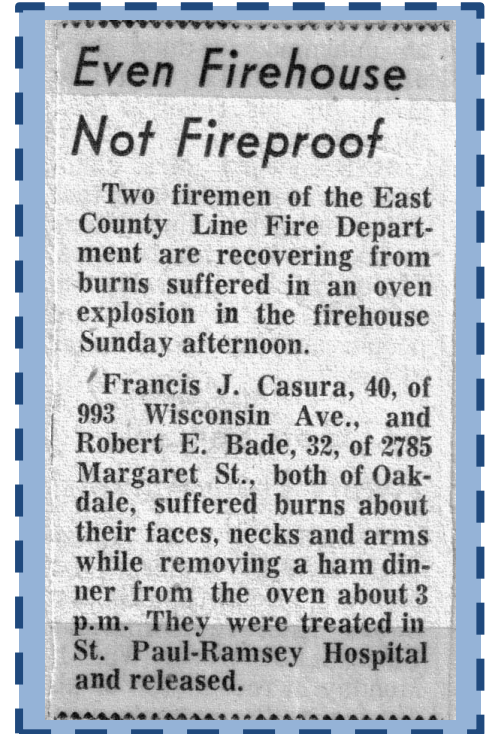
KC: Was that a painful healing process?

RB: No, the healing process wasn't, but maybe the initial burn was.

KC: Did the rest of the firefighters have to come in and put out that fire then?

RB: Oh, no. It was just a flash.

KC: It was just a flash.



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<sup>23</sup> The City and County Hospital opened in 1872. In 1923, it was renamed Ancker Hospital in honor of its late superintendent Arthur B. Ancker. Over the years it encompassed twelve buildings over several acres with a mailing address at 495 Jefferson. In 1965 it moved to 640 Jackson Street and was renamed **Saint Paul Ramsey Hospital**, renamed again in 1977 Saint Paul-Ramsey Medical Center. In 1986, the hospital becomes a private, nonprofit facility and was no longer county-operated; in 1993 it merges with HealthPartners; and in 1997, renamed Regions Hospital.

RB: Yeah, it was just a flash. There was another guy that was—I was going to hand the pan to, so he was into there, and he got burned on the arms, but his head was above, so he didn't get burned on the face so much.

We had an incident where we had a cow in a tree.

KC: How did the cow get in the tree?

RB: Well, we had a lot of the little farms around. We were—it was really a rural area – or mostly rural area. There weren't a lot of businesses. But anyway, there was a farmhouse about half-a-mile from the station and they had a bunch of cows in a pen, and there was a tree in the inside of the area where they kept the cows, and they had eaten all the leaves off the lower branches of the tree, and so the cows had learned that if they put their feet up on the tree, they could reach the leaves at the upper level. So they were eating the leaves on the upper level, and one of the cows slipped off it, and instead of slipping off to the side, slipped off into a fork in the middle of the tree and actually got hung up on the fork in the middle of the tree, and they had beef steak that night.

KC: [laughs] So they had to put the cow down.

RB: Yeah.

KC: And how—so how did you get it out?

RB: Well, heavy rescue equipment, had to winch it out of there.

KC: Did the farmer bring some steaks over to the [fire station]?

RB: No, no, that was just part of the service.

Another one. It's funny to me, but it's not funny to the people. We got a call on night that there was the smell of smoke in the house. Well, you got to know that smell. When you went into a house, a lot of times, the fan motor on

the furnace had overheated and you could smell the electric, and we knew right away when we got in there that that's what it was. It was a furnace fan motor. So two of the fellows went down to work on the furnace, and my buddy and I, the chief said, "Put a fan in the upstairs window and clean the smoke out of there." So we went up in the window and we opened the window. It was not winter, but it was like it is now where you have some warm days and some cold days, and so we opened the window and we put the fan in the window, and of course, we have really big fans. I mean, they're not a little circulating fan like you'd have in your living room. And we plugged it in, and we turned it on, and the curtains went [makes strangling sound]. [both laugh] And went right out the front window.

KC: Just shredded them and took them out. [both laughing]

RB: Shredded them. Yeah, until the day my buddy died, we talked about the curtains that we shredded. But again, you know, you make mistakes, too. And we made mistakes.

KC: But I'm sure the people were glad that you took care of the fire, besides losing their curtains.

RB: Oh, yeah. And when we started, we didn't have much in the way of equipment, and so what equipment we had was on the back of the trucks. There'd be a compartment with maybe three pair of boots and a compartment with a couple of helmets and a compartment with maybe two or three raincoats. And so when you got there, if you were one of the first three or four that got there, you'd get equipment. The rest of us just fought in our t-shirts and whatever.

KC: Now when you'd get a call for a fire, would you have to go to the station, or could you go directly to the fire?

RB: When we first started, we used to go directly to the fire if we knew where it was, but a lot of times, we had to go to the station to find out the address.

KC: But then you would drive your cars to the fire.

RB: Cars to the fire, right. And of course, that was all at your expense. Eventually, they said, “You all have to have turnout gear<sup>24</sup>.” And I’m not just sure. I think that was probably after about four or five years that I had been there that they decided that everybody had to have turnout gear, so they made a bulk purchase of coats and boots and helmets.

Turnout gear was that you had protective equipment, yeah. And in those days, all it was was a rubber raincoat, which blistered pretty heavy if you got close to any really warm fires. And boots to protect your feet with usually steel toes and steel plates in the bottom, so if you stepped on nails, well, they didn’t go through. And a helmet with a brim that protected, so if you walked into a front door and it was burning on the roof, the tar dripping off of the roof didn’t go down your neck.

KC: That’s why fire helmets are the way they are. Oh.

RB: Yep, that’s—it’s to protect you, because whatever comes off the roof is going to go down your neck if you don’t have a brim on there.

KC: Wow. So, and of course, there isn’t a lot of tar on roofs anymore, but—

RB: Well, yeah, they still make—well, they make asphalt shingles. I guess they don’t drip as much as the old ones did.



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<sup>24</sup> **Turnout gear or bunker gear** --- The outer protective gear worn by firefighters and so-named because they are kept beside a firefighters bunk at the fire station to be readily available when they turnout for a fire.



KC: That's fascinating.

RB: Well, and now they wear bunker pants, which protect your legs. In those days, what went up under the coat, you know—fire could burn your legs above the boots.

KC: And the boots—were the boots really high? Did they stay up or—

RB: Well, the boots, the tops folded down, and so when you put the boots on, you put them on and they came up to about just below your knee, but then you reached down and you pulled the down portion, and they pulled up so they were just about the middle of the leg.



KC: Did they stay up or did they sometimes fall down?

RB: Oh, no. They stayed up pretty good. An interesting thing happened to me with that, too. We had a lot of grass and field fires, probably more than anything else. And we were fighting a fire in a field one day, and it was near a driving range, a golf driving range. And so some of the golf balls had gotten out into the area where we were fighting the fire. And as we were walking along, I saw a golf ball, and I picked it up and I dropped it in my pocket. Well, so we kept fighting the fire, and there were a lot of field mice running around that day. So we got the fire out and we got on the trucks and we went back. And the last thing you did before you went back to the station was refuel the vehicles so they were ready for the next call. And I was on the tailboard of the vehicle. And all of a sudden, I felt something move in my boot, and I grabbed it like that. They said, "What's the matter." And I says, "I think I got a mouse in my boot." And they said, "Well,

you sit down on the tailboard, and you hold it while we pull your boot off.” So they pulled the boot off and out rolled a golf ball. [both laugh]

We did lots of crazy things.

KC: Sounds like you had a really good time. Did you usually have to ride on the back of the fire truck?

RB: Yeah, in those days, we rode tailboards. Because the trucks were only two men in the cab, so if you had a crew of five or six, well, the rest of them had to ride tailboard. And we spent many a day catching both sides and keeping a man in here so he could put on his boots or whatever while we were going down the road.



KC: Oh, wow.

RB: We didn't have safety straps or anything like that.

KC: You just hung on.

RB: We hung on.

KC: By the time you got there, your arms would be tired.

RB: Well, they'd probably be cold if it was winter time.

KC: What other stories do you have for me, sir?

RB: Well, I think I've pretty much exhausted what I had in notes.

KC: Do you remember a time when you were frightened? Or it was a dangerous, scary situation.

RB: No, I don't think you ever thought of that until after it was over. If you didn't keep your head about you when you were in a dangerous place, you were in trouble. So I think you thought about other things afterwards.

KC: [laughs] Do you remember a time where afterwards you thought about it and said, "I was creative. I did a good job there"?

RB: Well, if you survived, you did a good job. When you crawl through a apartment building down to the end of a hallway and the smoke is so black that you can't see anything, and so the only way you know where you're going is feeling, that gives you some thoughts of "What am I doing here?"

KC: What—you were chief for—

RB: Oh, about seven or eight years.

KC: Any specific memories that you have of that responsibility?

RB: No. I mean, the chief is just another position. You got a little different responsibility. As chief, the first thing you have to do at a fire is make a size-up. When you get there, your job is to see are there people in the building, where did the fire start, what way is it going, where do you want to make your attacks, so that when your first truck gets there, you've already decided how you're going to attack the fire, and then you lay out your equipment accordingly. That's the chief's job, or the officer in charge. It isn't always the chief that's—in fact, the chief might be after the fact. In other words, that captain on the first truck in might have to make the size up and do that, and when the chief gets there, all he does is say to the chief, "This is what we've got. This is what we're doing." So it isn't always the chief that makes that decision.

KC: So when you were captain and deputy chief, you had those responsibilities some of the time.



RB: Well, yeah. You have to work according to what the situation is. You know, it might be a fireman that does it, if only four firemen on the truck and—day crews used to run into that a lot, because there might not even be a captain on the truck, because there were only four guys at the fire that were available that day, and none of them were any officers.

BJ: And the East County Line station, is that the one that's always been there, the one that is on Century, near Highway 5? Is that the station that was started back in the 1940's?

RB: Right, right.

BJ: Okay, and can you tell me a little bit about Londin Lane Station<sup>25</sup>. That was like an auxiliary to the East County Line station?

RB: Yeah, the reason for the station on Londin Lane, which was our station, two, was that fire codes, insurance codes, require that there's no more than—and I can't recall. I think it's five miles from a fire station that people can live or they get penalized. And all those houses on the south end were more than the required amount. And I sound like I don't know what I'm talking about, but I don't remember all the detail of the insurance requirements, but volunteer fire departments usually never got better than a Class Six rating, and we were getting Class Five ratings in Oakdale, and we were getting Class Five ratings in Maplewood, except for those houses that were beyond that limit, and so we felt we had to do something for those people, and that's why we started a second station so that the mileage limits would be less.

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<sup>25</sup> **Londin Lane Fire Station** first organizational meeting was October 1977. The station was opened in December, 1980 and dedicated on March 22, 1981 by the East County Line Fire Department.

BJ: And did you essentially split the equipment so half stayed on Century Avenue and half went to Londin Lane?

RB: Yeah, well not half. Because of 3M, we had to keep the main pumpers and so on, but we put a pumper and I can't remember, but I think we put a tank truck down there, too.

BJ: Whatever might have been needed to meet the insurance requirements of the day?

RB: Yeah.

KC: How did Londin Lane work?

RB: They acted more as an individual station, even though they weren't supposed to be. Well, they just were on call with us. And if we'd get something small down there, they would handle it, and they'd never tone out<sup>26</sup> the station on the north. And if we had something that was little, we wouldn't tone them out either, but then, soon as we got something that was bigger, then they'd tone out both stations.

KC: You said that they acted more as their own little department.

RB: Well, they sort of did, yeah. They weren't supposed to, and you know, but you're a group. And this other group is five miles away from you or three miles away from you or whatever the distance is, and so you kind of knit together with the

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<sup>26</sup> **Tone-out:** When fire dispatchers broadcast an alarm over the radio they may include a series of audio tones to advise which firefighters and fire stations must respond to the verbal message. Each station and its personnel has its own combination of tones so only they need to respond. Others listening to the radio can hear the verbal message and might standby in case they are subsequently called with their own set of tones. To "tone-out" means to request certain stations to respond.

people you're with. So even though it wasn't intended to be that way, it turned out that it was that way to some degree.

BJ: Did they have their own chief or did they report to the chief up at East County Line?

RB: They had a district chief.

KC: You were the primary department servicing 3M, is that correct?

RB: Right.

KC: So calls would come to you always for 3M.

RB: Well, and Saint Paul. Saint Paul had a contract with 3M, so that's why they'd get rung in on any fires in any of the buildings, because when the sprinkler systems would go off, then Saint Paul would be notified as well as us. 3M is right on the border of Saint Paul.

BJ: Was 3M the only company that was sprinklered and that had the alarm system, or was there anybody else in the Maplewood-Oakdale-Woodbury area that also were sprinklered or had an alarm system?

RB: Well, I guess first of all, we've got to clarify the time, because yeah, when 3M first built, which was in 1954 out there, I don't think anybody else were even thinking about alarm systems or sprinklers or anything at that time. But now state laws require that even apartment buildings have to be sprinklered.

KC: How would you like to be remembered as an East County Line firefighter?

RB: I don't want to be remembered anything special, just that I was another member of the department. Just that I did my job, I guess. That's the way I'd like to be remembered.

KC: Thank you very much, sir. This has been an honor.



## APPENDIX A

### Chronology of East County Line Volunteer Fire Department

East County Line Station - 1177 Century Avenue

Londin Lane substation - 2501 Londin Lane

Noted for their annual Halloween parties for children and families of the community.

October, 1942

First meeting at the home of Frank Kass to discuss creating a volunteer fire department.

Source: Newsletter, MAHS 2012.0009.0564

November, 1942

At a second meeting, Ruggles Sanders was elected fire chief with 14 charter members. The first homemade equipment was a 1929 Dodge truck chassis with a soda acid water tank purchased for \$250 from Lindstrom, MN. Later, a portable fire pump was added.

Source: Newsletter, MAHS 2012.0009.0564  
and History, MAHS 2013.0001.0115  
and Newspaper of June 30, 1982

1946

Chief Sanders went to Merchants State Bank to get the department's first loan of \$3,500 to purchase the first pumper truck.

Source: Newspaper of June 30, 1982

1946

They purchased a 1946 Ford pumper with a 500 gallon tank built by Flour City Fire Equipment Company.

Source, MAHS 2013.0001.0115

April 12, 1947

The department was incorporated.

Source: Newsletter, MAHS 2012.0009.0564

- December, 1947 A 2-bay station was constructed on land purchased from John Geisinger.  
Source: Newsletter, MAHS 2012.0009.0564
- c. 1952 Building enlarged to 4-bays.  
Source, MAHS 2013.0001.0115
- Early to mid- 1950's They began contracting with townships for fire protection, including today's southern Maplewood, Oakdale and Woodbury. These areas included the 3M Center and Landfall Village.  
Source, MAHS 2013.0001.0115
- 1954 Fire station was expanded with another 40' x 60' addition.  
Source: Newspaper of June 30, 1982
- 1957 The fire district included Landfall, Woodbury, Oakdale and the southern leg of Maplewood that was south of North Saint Paul and east of McKnight Road. Oakdale and Woodbury eventually started their own departments. He's not certain what happened to Landfall.  
Source: Verbal from Bob Bade, former fire chief of East County Line.
- Late-1960's – Building enlarged to add offices and meeting spaces, a hose  
Early-1970's drying tower and additional bays with higher doors.  
Source, MAHS 2013.0001.0115
- 1975 Maplewood police officers were trained as paramedics by Saint Paul-Ramsey Medical Center (later known as Regions Hospital) with Dennis Cusick (both a Maplewood police officer and a Gladstone firefighter) as champion. Later, training was done through 916 Vo-Tech.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.0006.0017 and verbal from Chief Steve Lukin



- June 30, 1982                   The equipment used by the department includes: three pumpers, one rescue squad, a city owned Snorkel truck, a tank truck, a grass fire unit, a utility van with cascade air and salvage equipment, one basic life support ambulance and two advanced life support ambulances.  
Source: Newspaper of June 30, 1982
- 1986-1988                   Additional remodeling of the station.  
Source, MAHS 2013.0001.0115
- 1995                         Most firefighters were required to be EMTS-- Emergency Medical Technician.  
Source: Oral interview with Steve Lukin
- June 1996                   Tentative agreement to consolidate with Gladstone and Parkside volunteer fire Departments Into Maplewood Fire Department.  
Source: Letter, MAHS 2013.0001.0109
- January 1, 1997           Gladstone, Parkside and East County Line Volunteer Fire Departments merged to create the Maplewood Fire Department and all firefighters were required to become EMT's.  
Source: Oral interview with Steve Lukin

### CHIEFS

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1942 - 1964 | Ruggles Sanders                                   |
| 1964 - 1965 | Harvey Brockman                                   |
| 1965 - 1972 | Herb Johnson                                      |
| 1972 - 1972 | Don Hove  |
| 1972 - 1976 | Bob Bade  |
| 1976 - 1978 | Bob Murray  |
| 1978 - 1979 | Bob Bade (2 <sup>nd</sup> time for 7 years total) |
| 1980 - 1985 | Duane Williams                                    |



1986	Dave Selbitschka
1987	Bob Miller
1988	Dave Selbitschka
1989 - 1996	Larry Bush

## APPENDIX B

### Chronology of Gladstone Fire Department

Gladstone Station: 1900 Clarence Street  
and  
Hazelwood Station: 1530 East County Road C

- December 11, 1942      First meeting to discuss starting a volunteer fire department held at the Gladstone school. 16 men attended.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001
- November 23, 1943      An organizational meeting was held. Six officers were appointed so training could begin by the North Saint Paul Fire Department.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001
- February 8 & 12, 1944      The department was incorporated with 27 volunteers and Leonard Foeller elected as the first chief.  
Source: Document, MAHS 2013.0004.0035
- May 7, 1944      Open house held in Gladstone for their first fire engine - a 1923 Pirsch fire engine that was purchased for \$1,000 from the Excelsior Fire Department.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001
- August 12, 1944      First fire run to a grass fire at 1794 Flandrau Street. Three men extinguished the fire in 30 minutes.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001
- September 16, 1944      Construction was started on a station with donations from local citizens.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001



- 1957 New Canada Township residents voted to incorporate as the Village of Maplewood. Village Council Meetings were held in the Gladstone Fire Station until a new city hall was constructed in 1965.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.0006.0017
- 1958 Gladstone Fire Station had 40 men and 4 pieces of equipment.  
Source: Newspaper, MAHS 2006.1430.0001
- 1970 Station was enlarged with a 4<sup>th</sup> stall to accommodate the new snorkel truck and a meeting room, small kitchen and restrooms.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001
- July 25, 1972 An organizational meeting was held at Holy Redeemer Parish Center to consider improving fire service to the rapidly growing north end of Maplewood and the Maplewood Mall. This led to creating Hazelwood Fire Station as a substation to Gladstone.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001
- October 3, 1972 Bill Mikiska was elected as the first district chief of Hazelwood Fire Station.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001
- September 15, 1974 Hazelwood Fire Station's 2-stall building was completed for \$192,000. Fire truck #124 was transferred to Hazelwood from the Gladstone Fire Station and a second truck was rented from Parkside Fire Department.  
Source: History, MAHS 2006.1424.0001 and 2006.0006.0017
- 1974 Firefighters were asked to drive ambulances to assist policemen who were trained as paramedics.  
Source: Oral interview of Dick Juker and Joe Waters



January 1, 1997 Gladstone, Parkside and East County Line Volunteer Fire Departments merged to create the Maplewood Fire Department and all firefighters were required to become EMT's.

Source: Oral interview with Steve Lukin

2001 A new fire station constructed at 1955 Clarence Street and the department is relocated.

Source: Report, MAHS 2012.0009.0391

July, 2005 The Gladstone Volunteer Fire station is demolished.

Source: Maple Leaves, MAHS 2011.0010.0021

#### **Gladstone Fire Chiefs:**

1944 – 1947 -4 years Leonard Foeller

1948 – 1951 -4 years John Cottrell

1952 – 1964 -13 years Alwin (Al) Schilla

1965 – 1968 -4 years Al Schadt, became City Fire Marshal 1968 to 1985.

1969 – 1975 -7 years Robert Finberg

1976 – 1979 -3 years Tom Kansier

1979 – 1980 -2 years Jerry Kasmirski

1982 -1 year William Mikiska

1983 – 1984 -4 years Dennis Cusick

1985 – 1991 -7 years Jim Franzen

1992 – 1993 -2 years Howard (Howie) Weber

1994 – 1995 -2 years Richard "Dick" Peterson

1996 – 1997 -1 year Steve Lukin

January 1, 1997 Gladstone joined the Maplewood Fire Department with Joel Hewitt as their first Chief

## APPENDIX C

### Chronology of Parkside Fire Department

2001 McMenemy Street

- June 1958      First meeting with 14 men. Bob Westbrook elected first chief and their first engine was a 1947 pumper purchased from Gladstone Fire Department.  
Source: History, MAHS 2013.0001.0117
- January, 1959      They went under contract with Village of Maplewood for fire service.  
Source: History, MAHS 2013.0001.0117
- May, 1959      Completed construction of 3-stall building on a 9 ½ acre site.  
Source: Newspaper, MAHS 2013.0001.0117
- 1962      There were 40 members.  
Source: Newspaper, MAHS 2013.0001.0117
- 1988      There were 42 firefighters and 3 multi-purpose fire response vehicles.  
Source: History, MAHS 2013.0001.0116
- 1995      Negotiations to consolidate all three volunteer fire departments into Maplewood Department.  
Source: Letter, MAHS 2013.0003.0093

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