



Winter, 2000

FOUR MILE

FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

newsletter

Interview with 4 Mile Volunteer Peter Stoller

by Annette Dula, Newsletter editor

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How did you get involved with the Four Mile Fire Department ?

It was 2:00 in the morning on a freezing night in 1972. The couple who lived next of us in Wallstreet came running to our house, shouting that their house was on fire. Sophia, my wife, ran up the road to get the Assistant Chief. I got out the garden hose and started spraying their house. When Chief Bill Follett showed up, I asked "What should I do?" He told me, "Dig a line," and I started digging with an ordinary shovel. The house lost its roof. That's when I decided to join the Four Mile Fire Department. I'm still in because I think everybody ought to do some kind of community service.

What do you remember most about that first fire?

The smell. That first house fire that I went to smelled bad for a long time.

What was the Department like when you joined?

At that time we had no protective clothing like Nomex; there was only cotton and wool. We had two trucks; one was built on the chassis of a wrecker from Marv's Wrecker. And there was the 1944 Ford field car. We only had one fire station—the Logan Mill fire station; now we have 4. We also have more trucks and better equipment. We even have self-contained breathing apparatus so that the firefighter can breathe safe air during a fire. Breathing smoke is very dangerous.

Didn't you serve as Chief at one time? How did that come about?

Yes, I was Chief back in the '70s. Chief Bill Follett said to me, "I'm tired; you do this." He recommended me to the Board and I was Chief for 2 years. At that time I felt that everybody ought to take turns being chief. Now "Command" people take turns running an incident; the Chief will come to a scene and say to an officer "You run everything," and the officer gets experience at being in command.

How is it that you live in Sunshine Canyon but work with the Four Mile Fire Department?

In 1979, I turned in my fire shirt—I don't think we had fire pants then. I was leaving the Four Mile District. Sophia and I had been living in a 25 ft by 25 ft cabin with our two small children in Wallstreet.

So it was time to get something bigger. We built a house in Sunshine Canyon and have lived there ever since. I

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Four Mile volunteer Peter Stoller moved to Sunshine Canyon in 1979 but stayed with the Four Mile Fire [(see also photo on back page)

Dave's Corner

by Dave Hustvedt, Chief Medical Officer

July Picnic

*Like the opening scenes from M*A*S*H, a helicopter skims over a ridge east of Sunset in Four Mile Canyon and banks toward the town. The pilot's voice crackles over a hand-held radio to request landing assistance. Firefighters from the Four Mile Fire Protection District had already moved lawn furniture and bicycles from the lawn in front of a house in Sunset to create a make-shift landing zone (LZ). George Fairer, a Four Mile FPD officer, runs to the edge of the LZ and begins to radio instructions to the pilot: wind direction, LZ location, and the fact that power lines run near the LZ. In a few minutes the helicopter is safely on the ground and the flight nurse begins to get a briefing on the situation that brought the helicopter here.*

A car has rolled over in a gulch off the Switzerland Trail above Sunset. Three people are injured. One of the victims appears to be so critically injured that he will need treatment at one of the major trauma centers in Denver. A helicopter can cut the travel time from 90 minutes to 20 minutes and make the difference between life and death. In addition, the helicopter carries more advanced life support capabilities than the typical ambulance. Treatment that otherwise would not start until the victim is in the emergency room can be started in flight. For now the helicopter waits for the victim to be removed from the wreckage and brought to the LZ.

The site of the rollover hums with the organized chaos of the typical emergency scene. An old Bronco is on its side 50 yards up the gulch. Three fire engines are parked along the Switzerland Trail. An ambulance from Pridemark (the main county ambulance service) is parked for triage and staging at the base of the gulch. Firefighters from the Sugarloaf Fire Department are on scene with pneumatic cutting and prying equipment. They are already going about the business of cutting away the doors and roof of the rolled vehicle so that the two victims inside the car can be removed without injury. EMTs from Four Mile are inside the Bronco administering basic life support to the victims: oxygen, controlling bleeding, and spinal stabilization. Other EMTs from Four Mile are working on another victim who has

been thrown out of the vehicle but is not seriously injured. Fire fighters from both Four Mile and Sugarloaf are stabilizing the vehicle with wooden blocks and ropes or standing by with charged hoses in case of fire.

In a few minutes the critically injured victim is out and being carried down to the ambulance and the helicopter. Suddenly, the game is over. The helicopter is quickly airborne *en route* to a real emergency. The "victims" stand up and brush themselves off. The brats and burgers are on the grill down in Sunset. It's time to eat.

This was not a real emergency. This was training. It was, so to speak, a game at the annual Fire Department picnic. Some people play volleyball at picnics; Four Mile volunteer fire fighters practice rescue.

A postscript: A few weeks later the games were real. Four Mile FPD landed a helicopter on the Four Mile Canyon road to transport a seriously injured bicyclist to emergency care.



Assistant Chief Chris McKenny confers with the Chief at the July rescue practice.



Dave Hustvedt, Chief Medical Officer for the Four Mile Fire Department writes on issues pertinent to Four Mile residents.

And the Victims Walk Away: Scenes from a Practice Rescue

After securing the vehicle so that it won't roll over during the rescue (note firefighter at upper right watching for hazards) the Sugarloaf extrication squad cuts the Bronco's roof and flaps it back. Fire trucks (left) stand ready with hoses charged, in case a spark from the vehicle ignites a grass fire.

1



After gaining access to the vehicle interior, the Four Mile rescuers administer basic life support and then remove the accident victims. Here several Four Mile firefighters package a victim (volunteer Hal Crutchfield) onto a backboard so that the victim can be moved safely.

2



After firmly fixing the victim to the backboard, firefighters carefully remove the victim from the wrecked vehicle. A Pridemark EMT stands ready to assist.

3



Coordinated effort is needed to carry the victim gently, carefully, and quickly to the waiting ambulance, for transport to the Flight for Life helicopter that has just landed in Sunset.

4



The July 2000 rescue practice in Sunset was a joint effort involving Four Mile, the Sugarloaf Fire Department, Pridemark Paramedic Services, and Flight for Life.

Photographs from the July rescue practice, courtesy of Sugarloaf firefighter Jim Hubbard.

thought about joining Boulder Rural Fire Department and even went to a few meetings. I decided to go back to Four Mile Fire Department; I liked and still like being part of this Department.

What are some of your strengths, likes, and dislikes as a firefighter?

I like helping people, and helping people learn how to fight fires. I'm good at paying attention to detail and that's important for firefighting—little things, like making sure the propane is turned off when we answer a fire call. But I must say that I hate to dig fire lines. I also dislike loading hose on Engine 2; it's hard to get the hose into its compartment. You have to kneel on a grate to work the hose.

You've been in the Department a long time. Are there things that you can't do now?

I'm 59 and not as fast as I once was. But I can't think of anything I can't do that I used to do. I just do it slower. At Four Mile, no one expects you to do things that you don't feel comfortable doing.

What have you learned or gained during your tenure on the Fire Department?

I've always had a problem remembering people's names; the Fire Department has helped me with that because you

have to know people's names in order to work with them. I've learned a lot about firefighting equipment. I've especially learned how to deal with people. It's also helped me to resolve conflicts about Vietnam. As a Conscientious Objector, I was a field medic. That greatly affected me. When I came back to Boulder I was withdrawn. Being part of the fire department helped me get out and be with people. Because of my medical experience, I don't mind helping medics, but I don't want to be responsible for medical calls. Anyhow, that's all a long way behind me now.

What are some of the needs of the Fire Department?

We need to replace Engine 2. It has 14 gears and is hard to shift. It's hard to drive, especially for smaller people. I also think we should buy new aluminum nozzles for the fire hoses. We should get rid of those old brass nozzles and use them for door stops. They're heavy, and weight makes a difference when you are fighting a fire.

I know you are a cabinet maker. Will you talk a little about that?

I started by making spinning wheels. Then I built looms for a large spindle-making company here in Boulder. I worked there until I got bored. Next, I worked in a commercial cabinet shop for ten years. Then I started my own shop and have been working by myself for 15 years. Mostly, I do residential work—kitchen cabinets and entertainment centers.

I noticed that you did some of the fine carpentry at the Tea House here in Boulder.

Sophia was involved in starting the Boulder Sister City Project with Dushanbe, in Tajikistan. We hosted craftsmen who designed and built the ceiling. It took them five years. They didn't speak English and we didn't speak Russian, but we managed. When they began to assemble the Tea House, I took a month off and volunteered.

What do you do for pleasure?

I hike, go on camping trips, sail, read, and travel. This past summer Sophia, our sons—Sam and Joe—, and I went to Southwest China. (The Tibetans call it Eastern Tibet.) Joe, who speaks Mandarin, hired guides and we hiked high mountain valleys about 14,000 feet, with 20,000 peaks above us. It was really spectacular. The guides led their horses loaded with our gear.

Do you have anything else you want to say?

Be careful with fire and don't drink and drive.

I like helping people, and helping people learn how to fight fires. I'm good at paying attention to detail and that's important for firefighting—little things, like making sure the propane is turned off when we answer a fire call.

**Firefighter
Peter Stoller**



Stoller in his Sunshine Canyon wood shop.

Four Mile FPD Seasonal Safety Quiz

[good] Questions you may have asked, and some [bad] answers

by Mark Gross

Well, we hope you have not responded to the questions in this quiz with any of the multiple choice answers shown here. The answers are flippant, but our guidelines are dead serious.

• Are there any fire hazards in my house?

- a. No, I dealt with all of that a year or so ago.
- b. Yes. But there are more in the house next door, so a fire would probably start there first.
- c. Yes, lots. I'm planning to get around to it soon.

Guideline #1: Check your home for fire hazards. Don't place flammable materials (newspaper, curtains, kindling) near wood stoves. Be extra cautious with candles, oil lamps, and other open flames. Look out for frayed or overloaded extension cords and other faulty wiring. Store flammable liquids (gasoline, fuel for camping stoves, paint thinner, etc.) safely, or dispose of them responsibly.

• Even though it says "No Parking," can I park in the Fire Department lot on a snowy day when I can't get my vehicle up the hill to my house?

- a. Certainly, if you don't mind a trip to town to retrieve it after we get it towed.
- b. Of course you can. We always need cars to practice firefighting on.
- c. Yes, if you're driving a 4 Mile fire truck.

Guideline #2: Please don't park in Fire Department parking areas. We may need the space to move fire trucks or for firefighters to park while responding to an emergency. The trucks are big and need a lot of space to turn around, and your car could be in the way. Find another safe place to put your vehicle.

• Am I likely to have an accident on an icy mountain road?

- a. Not at all likely. I've never had an accident in my life, so it won't happen to me.
- b. Nope, not me. I have four wheel drive so I can do anything.
- c. Could happen, but it'll be the other driver's fault.

Guideline #3: Driving conditions in the mountains can be treacherous in winter. A patch of ice on an otherwise dry road; 'black ice' that's hard to see; low sun in your eyes in the early morning and late afternoon; and an early twilight all contribute to increased hazards. Four wheel drive does give you more traction when driving, but won't help you stop quickly on ice. Badly worn tires don't help either. Please be extra cautious when the roads are bad. And even if you're doing everything right, watch out for the fool in the other lane.

• Why wouldn't I call the fire department when I smell smoke?

- a. It's probably only a little fire, and it will go out on its own.
- b. You started the fire while doing something stupid, and you don't want anyone to know.
- c. If it's a real fire, someone else will call the fire department anyhow.

Guideline #4: Call us if you think there might be a fire. We're happy to check out any problems, and we're happier if we can deal with them while they are small problems. Don't hesitate to call us if you think there might be a fire. Dial 9-1-1 for help.

• How can I watch Four Mile rescuers in action on a traffic accident?

- a. If you drink and drive, chances are you'll skid into the creek. We'll come haul you out.
- b. If you drive too fast, you'll likely to have a serious accident, injuring yourself or others.
- c. Cross the center yellow line when going around curves and passing bicycles. There's never anyone in the other lane anyhow.

Guideline #5: Please avoid traffic accidents on Four Mile's twisty mountain roads. Every year we haul several cars and people out of Four Mile and Boulder Creeks. It's really dangerous. Many of these accidents occur late on a cold Friday or Saturday night, when an evening of partying meets up with a slippery patch on the road. We'd really rather meet you under happier circumstances: if you really want to learn about rescue, join the Fire Department and learn to help out. Slow down, stay on your side of the road, and please don't drive drunk.

Okay, the answers are meant to give you a chuckle. This mock quiz is our shameless way to get your attention to some serious safety concerns. Believe it or not, these questions and answers are based on years of firefighting and rescue in the District. We're always ready to respond to any emergency, but if you observe these safety guidelines this winter, you may be able to prevent some needless fire and rescue incidents.

We're always looking for volunteers for a variety of important jobs, not just firefighting and rescue. There's always lots of work to do, and we do need your help. Call any of the people listed on the back page of this newsletter and let us know you're interested. We'll take it from there.

from the Chief:

Community Cisterns— the Best Gift of All

by Bret Gibson, Four Mile Fire Chief

Congratulations! to the folks of Sierra Antigua! This holiday season Santa brought something special to the whole community and it didn't fit under the tree. Although it was too big to wrap or put under a tree, it could end up saving a tree or two. The good folks of Sierra Antigua gave themselves a Christmas present of a 20,000-gallon fire cistern that will benefit the entire community.

As many of you know, our Four Mile mountain community is full of beautiful forestland and while it may be long on gorgeous views, it is seriously short on water for fighting fires. When it comes to defending your home against a wildland or structure fire, water is our most essential tool. Without it, your Fire Department is seriously handicapped. To be reminded of the perils of mountain living in the Front Range of Colorado, we need look no further than to our Southern neighbors who survived the Walker Ranch fire.

For fighting fires in our district, the Four Mile Fire Department does have several heavy water tankers to bring water to the fire, but the largest holds 2,000 gallons, and it can take a long time to get a tanker from the nearest water source to where it is needed. To put a 2,000-gallon supply in perspective, our primary pumper truck (Engine 1) can pump 700 gallons per minute. Pumping at just one half of its rated capacity, the tanker provides enough water to run

the pump for only 6 minutes! At that same rate, the new cistern at Sierra Antigua will give us 10 times that capacity, or nearly an hour of pumping. That could make the difference between being able to defend a house or not.

The Sierra Antigua cistern will truly be a fine addition to the growing number of fire cisterns in the district. This will be the fifth community-sized fire cistern to be installed in our district, adding greatly to the ability of Four Mile Fire Department to protect all of us in case of either home or wildland fire. In the future we hope that more of the communities

in our district can install fire cisterns that allow us to protect them better.

Hats off to the community and to all the folks that have donated or pledged donations. We especially appreciate the efforts of Marcy Welk and the time she spent in organizing and collecting donations. Many thanks to the Markowitzes for providing the cistern location, and to Buzz and Betsy Hunt, who opened their home to a long-winded fire chief who spoke of the need for a cistern. The Hunts put on a party to spread the word even further. Betsy then went on to help Marcy collect the much needed donations.

We all hope that the cistern will never be needed. But now these families can sleep a little bit easier knowing that when tragedy or Mother Nature strikes, they are just that much more prepared. Thanks again to these good and wise people.



An ABC (left) and a BC (center) fire extinguisher posing with an arrangement of dried flowers (right). Know where your fire extinguishers are and how to use them.



The label on your fire extinguisher tells you how to use it and on what kind of fires. Type "A" is for trash, wood, and paper; "B" is for liquids and grease; and "C" is for electrical fires. See picture above of an ABC and a BC ("kitchen") fire extinguisher.



Four Mile Fire Chief Bret Gibson

Smoke Detectors Save Lives!

by Bret Gibson, Four Mile Fire Chief

It's a sad story but true. She came from a nice home with two well-educated and loving parents. She died last night. She died in her bed. She died of smoke inhalation in the first ten minutes of the fire. Her parents woke up and were able to escape the fire and carried her out of the home. They tried as best they could to care for her, but she had died minutes before.

She has no name because there are too many to list. Every year over a hundred people die in house fires. They die in large part because they lacked simple safety training and they chose not to employ a simple and inexpensive—under \$25—smoke detector. Here is a question I hope never to have to ask the grieving parents: Was your smoke detector working?

Please review this fire prevention checklist. It could save your life and the lives of your loved ones.

- Have smoke detectors on every level of your home.
- Test smoke detectors every month.
- Practice fire escapes twice a year, and have a meeting place outside.

- Stay LOW in smoke.
- Call the Fire Department (911) early, and from a neighbor's house.
- Know how to use ABC fire extinguishers and have several of them in easy-to-get-to areas.
- **Stop, drop, and roll** when your clothing is on fire. (Practice this one, the kids love to watch you drop and roll)
- Cover grease fires in the pan. Never move a hot or flaming pan.
- Avoid overloaded electrical circuits; discard frayed extension cords.
- Space heaters need space. Keep at least three feet from all flammable things.
- If you think it's dangerous, it probably is—why risk it?

There is much more. Please take a few minutes each month to check smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and look for fire hazards. Think about fire-smart ideas, and discuss a family escape plan before you ever need it. The folks of the Four Mile Fire Department wish you the happiest and safest New Year; we stand ready to answer your questions or visit your home in order to make it a safer place.



Your smoke detector: Your friend. Check it every month to make sure it is working. One on every floor, right?

Those Who Stayed Home

by Bret Gibson, Four Mile Fire Chief

True heroes are oftentimes not the ones at the front of the scene, nor are they often recognized for what they do. Take, for example, those members of the Four Mile Fire Department who did not go to fight the Walker Ranch fire.

The Walker fire was a big and fast moving fire that required a lot of firefighters and engines to not only put the fire out but also to defend the many homes in that area. So why didn't we send all our troops and equipment to help fight it? Simple: The fire danger was just as great here in Four Mile! The woods were tinder dry and with the prevailing wind we had that day, a spot fire could easily have hit our district. Not only that, we still had the everyday threats of fire: the cigarette butt out the window, the spark from an exhaust pipe, and so many more. Medical emergencies have no regard for where or when they strike, so we needed to be ready for them in Four Mile as well.

Ready we were! With some of our people and trucks out on the Walker fire, the need to have our other firefighters even more ready and close to home was great. And stay they did. Many changed their plans; some took off work; others simply stayed closer to district. None of these folks will get parties thrown for them nor can they say "Yea, I was there," but to them we are grateful for the simple sacrifices they made.

To those who watched our backs while we helped out our neighbors, I say THANK YOU. Thank you to those who stayed home, for being prepared and letting your Chief have the peace of mind that all's well back home.

We publish two Newsletters a year. We'd like your suggestions about future topics or comments. Call Annette Dula, editor, 303-440-7056.

Thanks to these Newsletter contributors:

Bret Gibson, Peter Stoller, Dave Hustvedt, Jim Hubbard (Sugarloaf FPD), Mark Gross (layout), & Don Witte (production).



Four Mile FPD volunteers on the 1944 Ford field car (now the 4 Mile Parade Vehicle) in 1976. From left: Ed Cole, Steve Varlese, Peter Stoller, Sherry Cole, Fran Varlese.

District Service Record

Calls this year to date

Medical calls: 41
(8 life-threatening emergencies)

Fire calls: 20
including 3 wildland fires
and 4 mutual aid calls

Training Schedule

Training sessions are held at 7:00 p.m. at Station Two, in Salina.

• **Emergency Medical Services**

training sessions are held the second Thursday of each month.

• **Fire Fighting** training sessions are held the third Thursday of each month.

• **To volunteer** for any of the crews, or to find out more about how to join the fire department, please call one of the coordinators below:

Fire Chief Bret Gibson

303-444-0882

Lou Ann Shirley (Auxiliary)

303-442-4271

Dave Hustvedt (Medical)

303-442-2814

FOUR MILE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

87 Four Mile Canyon Drive

Boulder, Colorado 80302

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Please call Margaret Hansen (443-7659) if the name on the mailing label was not yours, if your address has changed, or if the newsletter was mailed to "Occupant".