

1 Eagle Island
Gilford, NH 03246

ph. 603 366-5008

3762 Harvard Acres
Cincinnati, Ohio 45227

ph. 513 271-1256

1993

Revised 1995

A Brief History
of the
Gilford
Fire-Rescue Department

by
Corning Benton

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♦ THE EARLY YEARS: 1914 — 1935 ♦

In the first quarter of this century, fire services were focused upon forest and field fires. The knapsack-tank Indian pump was a mainstay of outdoor fire fighting. A column of smoke by day and a flickering glow in the night sky were the alarm systems. In rural areas, where there were no hydrants, building fires consumed the structure, and all that could be done was to move the building's contents outside ahead of the flames.

Between 1914 and 1928, a few scraps of information in Gilford's Annual Reports show that the village owned fire equipment and that there was some organization of the people who fought fires and took care of the equipment.

The first mention of fire-fighting services is in the 1914¹ report. Fire Warden C.H. Gove was paid \$31.76 for payroll and \$25.00 for "stock and labor on fire wagon." The wagon is not mentioned again, but it may be part of the town's fire equipment, valued at \$100, mentioned in the 1927 and 1928 reports. This red chemical wagon with gold leaf designs had four wooden wheels with steel rims. Two soda-acid extinguishers rested on the wagon bed — the cylinders were 16" or 18" in diameter and about 10 feet long. There was 50 or a 100 feet of 1" black hose, and two roof ladders and some buckets lay on top of the cylinders. The rig was horse-drawn at first, and then Mr. Gove put a tongue on it so it could be drawn by a motor vehicle.

C.H. "Charlie" Gove, a village blacksmith², was involved with fire fighting from 1915 to close to the time of his death on Christmas, 1933³. He was Forest Fire Warden in 1914, 1929 - 1931, and probably during the years in between⁴. He was an inventive man, skilled in improvising tools for an unusual job⁵.

¹ 1914 information is in the Annual Report for the year ending 2-15-15.

² See Arthur Tilton's 8-2-94 remarks about Mr. Gove's character and business.

³ Annual Report for the year ending 1-31-34.

⁴ In the Annual Report for the year ending 1-31-28, the forest fire payroll of \$127.60 is paid to H. Thurlow Ames. Mr. Ames may have been Forest Fire Warden that year.

⁵ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-17-93.

Charlie Gove built the first Village fire truck in 1928. He mounted a 50 or 100 gallon soda-acid tank on the chassis of a 1926 Studebaker⁶ truck. This tank, when pressurized by breaking the acid container inside, fed a 1.5" hose that was carried on the truck. A box for several soda-acid upright extinguishers was also attached to the chassis. The truck cost \$520 — \$300 for the Studebaker, \$115 for Charlie Gove's labor, and \$105 for the tank⁷.

The Studebaker was not a good fire engine because it did not bring enough water to a fire and it had no pump⁸.

The Studebaker was stored on blocks in the Highway Department garage during winter. The water was drained from the soda-acid tanks so that they could not freeze. This practice was criticized one winter in the 1930's when the Laconia Fire Department was called to serve in place of the decommissioned Gilford vehicle at a major fire in the Village⁹.

A major problem in rural fire fighting is getting water to fight a fire. In the countryside, there are no hydrants, and large brooks and ponds are rare. Farm fire ponds have become frequent only since pumper fire trucks have become available. In the 1930's, Roy Page, the Village Highway Agent from 1929 to 1945, approached the water problem by using Village Highway Department dump trucks to bring water to the fire. Two second-hand oil tanks filled with water were mounted on wooden skids and stored on a ramp at the hillside¹⁰ opposite the Town Sheds. The water tanks were slid onto the dump trucks and driven to a fire.

⁶ Arthur Tilton believes that the truck was a Ford, Model T. Arthur Tilton 8-2-94.

⁷ Annual Report for the year ending 1/31/29. Arthur W. Spring, Laconia Fire Chief, was paid for the chemical tank.

⁸ Capt. Milo Bacon, personal communication to Corning Benton, 1993.

⁹ Capt. Milo Bacon 8-27-93.

¹⁰ Where 31 Potter Hill Road, Capt. Milo Bacon's home, is now. Capt. Milo Bacon 8-27-93.

◆ THE DEPARTMENT GROWS: 1936 — 1975 ◆

➤ A PART OF THE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

The Fire Department was a division of the Highway Department until 1948. There are several reasons for this. In the 1930's, Highway Agent Roy Page was interested in fire fighting and sponsored fire equipment made in the Highway Department Sheds. Heavy trucks are an important part of highway equipment and Highway Department men were qualified to drive a fire truck. During the day, most volunteers worked in Laconia and were unable to respond to Village fires. But Highway Department men worked within the Village boundaries and could be counted upon to respond¹¹.

➤ FIRE CHIEFS AND PERSONNEL

The first Fire Chief was Roy Page. He was elected to this position by the small group of men who put together the volunteer Fire Department in 1936¹², and he remained Chief for 19 years until 1955. When elected, he had been Highway Agent for 8 years and he continued in that position to 1945. He was adept at buying inexpensive used equipment that was then modified by himself and Milo Bacon to meet Highway and Fire Department needs¹³. He cooked for Fire Department social gatherings, serving up fine barbecued chicken and fish chowder¹⁴.

Gordon Langill¹⁵, who owned a ski and cabinet-making shop in the Village, was Fire Chief from 1955 to 1957. Harold Wilkinson was Chief in 1958.

¹¹ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-15-88 and 8-27-93.

¹² Roy Page is listed as Fire Chief only in the 1949-55 Annual Town Reports. But Milo Bacon's 1988 videotape interview suggests that Roy page was elected Fire Chief as soon as the volunteer Fire Department was formed in 1936 or shortly afterward.

¹³ Capt. Milo Bacon 8-17-93.

¹⁴ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-15-88.

¹⁵ Pronounced lan-GILL'. Rhymes with land - Jill'.

Almond¹⁶ "Red" Watson was Fire Chief for 9 years, from 1959 to 1968. It was at that time that Gilford began to grow rapidly. The number of fire department calls first exceeded 100 in 1963¹⁷.

Sherman Thompson was Fire Chief from 1968 to 1974.

The only paid employee of the Fire Department from 1936 to 1954 was Milo Bacon. In 1955, Almond "Red" Watson and Harold Wilkinson were added to the payroll. In 1956, there were more than 80 volunteers divided into 4 companies, and the Captains were Milo Bacon, Alden Cann, John Goddard, and Almond Watson. When the Route 11-A Fire Station opened in 1960, two full-time¹⁸ men, Harold Wilkinson and William Hayes worked opposite 24-hour shifts. By 1966, there were 5 full-time men. On the department roster in 1974 were 5 full-time men and 22 volunteers.

➤ BUDGETS AND CALLS

In 1936, the Fire Department budget was \$1,620. This was mostly payroll for Milo Bacon¹⁹. A decade later, in 1946, the budget was \$2,802.92. In 1964, the department spent \$21,185. The department expenses were \$80,218 in 1975.

The first year in which calls are listed in the Annual Reports is 1941, when there were 36²⁰ calls. There were 18 calls in 1942. In 1957, there were 46 fire calls, and, in 1958, there were 22 fires and 8 calls for mutual aid. The number of calls increased to 194 by 1975.

¹⁶ Pronounced AL' - mond. Rhymes with PAL' - mond, not ALL' - mond, the nut.

¹⁷ The increased demand for protective services was dramatic in the Police Department. The number of police service calls was 193 in 1964, 569 in 1965, and 1,746 in 1966.

¹⁸ They were called "permanent men" in the 1960 Annual Report.

¹⁹ Payrolls were actually listed under Roy Page's name in Report for the Year Ending 1-31-37.

²⁰ Annual Report for the Year Ending 1-31-42.

➤ FOREST FIRE WARDENS

Charlie Gove was Forest Fire Warden during some or all of the 17 years from 1914 to 1931²¹. There is no record of who was Warden between 1932 and 1941 — he may have been Roy Page. The Warden was Roy Page from 1942 to 1947 and Milo Bacon from 1948 to 1958. After that, the Fire Chief has been the Warden²², and the Warden has been called the Municipal Forest Fire Warden.

One of the Warden's duties is to pay the volunteer forest fire fighters. In 1940, the Annual Report lists 38 volunteers who were paid 40 cents an hour. The only job requirement was that the men be able-bodied, and all training was on the job²³. Indian knapsack pumps²⁴ that carry and spray water were the main weapon for fighting field and forest fires.

➤ THE WHITE FIRE TRUCK AND MILO BACON

A White fire truck equipped with a 500 gallon tank and a Maxim 500 gallon per minute pump was purchased in 1936 for \$7,000. The new truck had to be manned, housed, and maintained. Tank trucks had to be constructed and fire ponds were made to supply water to its then-powerful pump. Communications had to be devised to make sure that the truck and volunteers reached the fire in those critical first minutes after detection when the fire could be contained.

Milo Bacon, a 30 year old Village truck driver, was asked to operate the White truck and take 24-hour call six days of the week for a pay raise from \$18 to \$30 a week²⁵. His grandfather, Ahira, had been Village lamplighter and a constable. His father was a farmer and Village teamster. He was born in 1906 on a Governors Island dairy farm and, after his family moved to the Village, attended School No. 9 on Belknap Mountain Road. He is Gilford's first modern fireman, and he retired from the Fire Department with the rank of Captain in 1945 after 19 years of service.

²¹ In the Annual Report for the year ending 1-31-28, the forest fire payroll of \$127.60 is paid to H. Thurlow Ames. Mr. Ames may have been Forest Fire Warden that year. The Annual Report records are incomplete — the only years in which Mr. Gove is mentioned with regard to warden services are 1914, and 1929 - 1931.

²² Chief Michael Mooney 9-17-93.

²³ Capt. Milo Bacon. Personal communication. 1993.

²⁴ Indian pumps were inexpensive. In 1949, the Fire Department bought 12 pumps for \$7.55 apiece.

²⁵ Capt. Milo Bacon 8-27-93.

Fire fighting then was not a full-time job. Most of the time Milo Bacon maintained and drove Village road equipment. He learned welding, and he built up his own concrete products business²⁶ on Potter Hill Road.

Gilford was a small village with close ties between people. Milo Bacon's wife, Minnie, was Roy Page's daughter and future Fire Chief Harold Wilkinson was his brother-in-law.

➤ ALARMS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Urgent tolling of the Baptist Church bell²⁷ was the first village fire alarm, and the village paid to maintain the rope²⁸.

A New England Telephone and Telegraph red-telephone alarm system was installed in 1936 or 1937²⁹. Special red telephones and alarm bells were placed at the Village Fire Station on Potter Hill Road, at the Town Hall in the selectmen's office, in Roy Page's and Milo Bacon's homes, and at the substitute on-call person's home³⁰. Someone reporting a fire would first lift the telephone handpiece off the hook to reach the telephone operator. The operator then connected the person to the Gilford red phones. The alarm bells on all red phones rang at the same time, and the call people were thus able to answer and respond from several locations. This system was used until at least 1954³¹.

How did volunteers learn there was a fire? At first, it was the White truck's siren that alerted those within hearing. If a volunteer was too late to follow the truck, he would go to the station where the driver, before starting the engine, had paused to chalk his destination on a blackboard. Then, in 1957, general alarm sirens were installed at the Village and Glendale Fire Stations;

²⁶ Belknap Concrete Products.

²⁷ Adair Mulligan: *The Gunstock Parish: A History of Gilford, New Hampshire*. Phoenix, 1995.

²⁸ Arthur Tilton 8-2-94.

²⁹ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-17-93. The \$126 expense for "telephone alarm service" is listed for the first time in the Annual Report for the year ending 1/31/38, and this probably the same expense for which \$356.112 paid to New England Tel. & Tel. as listed in the 1954 Annual Report.

³⁰ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-17-93.

³¹ 1954 was the last year in which a payment to New England Tel. & Tel. was listed in the Annual Report.

these were used until 1983 or 1984, when all members of the Fire Department wore portable radios. The first radio equipment was bought in 1954 and, by 1966, as written in the Gilford Annual Report, "The Gilford Fire Department is fully radio equipped, having a base station, tone generator, five mobile units and a portable. In addition to this there are nineteen receivers and five speakers located in the homes of key personnel. The department is presently planning the relocation of its antenna and base station to the top of Mt. Belknap"

➤ FIRE-FIGHTING EQUIPMENT

Roy Page and Milo Bacon improvised three tank trucks after the White pumper-tanker truck was bought in 1936. First was a 500 gallon tank mounted on a Ford Model A truck chassis. This truck was inefficient because it was underpowered, the center of gravity was high, and the tank did not contain baffles to slow the surge of water from one side to the other in turns. Second was a 500 gallon tank fitted to a two or two and a half ton Brockway truck. This truck flew off the road into a boulder at Lake Shore Park and was damaged beyond repair. The third truck was built on a new 1949 Dodge chassis. A 500 gallon well-baffled tank was installed close to the frame to keep the center of gravity low. The pump was run off a power-assist in front. This Dodge was a good, efficient piece of equipment³² that remained in service for 23³³ years; it was so well balanced and powerful that Milo Bacon once drove it up the zigzag path under the single-chair ski lift to bring water to fire fighters on the top of Mt. Rowe³⁴.

➤ FIRE STATIONS

The first Village Fire Station was at the Highway Department Sheds on Potter Hill Road. This station served from 1936 to 1959. In 1941, the Milo Bacons bought and moved into Roy Page's house on 31 Potter Hill Road across the street from that Fire Station.

³² Capt. Milo Bacon 8-17-93.

³³ Capt. Milo Bacon's interview 9-15-88. This statement was made by Capt. Dick Ballou.

³⁴ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-15-88.

By the middle 1950's, most of Gilford's growth was taking place beyond the Village. Two new fire stations were planned to give a faster response to the whole town. The new Village Fire Station and Highway Garage was built on Route 11-A a short distance east of the Village center. The station was put in service in 1960 and still is used. Fire trucks occupied the ground floor and highway equipment was kept on the basement level. The Glendale Fire Station was completed in 1959. The boatyards in Glendale and Smith Coves and the Winnepesaukee shore area from Lake Shore Park to Governors Island were primarily served from Glendale.

➤ DRY HYDRANTS

From the 1930's to at least 1956, pressure was provided to the hydrants and houses in the Village from a small reservoir on the knoll above 31 Potter Hill Road. Milo Bacon and Red Watson inspected this reservoir daily to make sure it was full³⁵. Unfortunately, the pressure and water flow in the hydrants proved inadequate to supply the 500 gallon per minute pump in the 1936 White truck³⁶.

So, shortly after the White's purchase, Gunstock River was dammed at the Village to create a fire pond³⁷ next to the Village Store. When there was a fire in the Village, the White truck was driven to the edge of the pond and its suction hose and strainer were dipped into the water. This was a high draft for the White and the pump had to be primed with oil to get enough suction at first³⁸. It took time in winter to break a hole in the ice.

A dry hydrant is a permanent standpipe at such a pond. A suction hose can be quickly coupled to the hydrant, and, unless ground frost reaches deep, it is free of ice. Chief Page planned the installation of dry hydrants at key locations in the township, and this program has been continued by his successors. The first one was set up at the Gunstock River pond in the Village. There were 8 dry hydrants in 1966 and 15 by 1971.

³⁵ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-15-88.

³⁶ In such a case, the pumper can create a vacuum in domestic water lines, collapsing hot water heaters and boilers. Baacon 8-17-93. Mooney 9-10-93.

³⁷ The dam for the saw mill, where the Public Library is now, had disappeared. Capt. Milo Bacon 8-17-93.

³⁸ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-15-88.

➤ MUTUAL AID

At first, some towns were reluctant to allow their men and equipment to fight fires in other towns³⁹. Questions may have been raised about the use of taxpayers' money outside their towns and who was responsible if injuries occurred⁴⁰. In 1951, firemen met at Winnisquam to talk about mutual aid. Laconia Chief Merrill Sargent, Chief Roy Page, George Currier from Sanbornton, Al Clark from Gilmanston, and men from Belmont and Winnisquam attended⁴¹. Mutual assistance between communities in this region emerged from that meeting. The first mention of mutual aid in the Gilford Annual Reports was in 1958, when the Fire Department contributed \$6 to the Lakes Region Mutual Aid Association and formal town authorization for this was given in the statement that the "Fire Chief or senior [fire] engineer shall have the right to send fire apparatus to another town or city to assist at a fire." Subsequent calls for mutual aid were not frequent, there were 17 in 1966⁴².

³⁹ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-15-88.

⁴⁰ Speculation. C. Benton.

⁴¹ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-15-88. Both Capt. Milo Bacon and Capt. Dick Ballou tried to reconstruct this meeting. The year and the meeting place in Winnisquam are not exactly known.

⁴² 1966 Annual Report.

➤ THE TRAINING CENTER AT LILLY POND

A fire school and training center at Lilly Pond was started in 1960⁴³. Water was drawn from a dry hydrant on the north shore. A "smoke house" was used to teach fire fighters how to breath and work close to fires. A ramp at the center was used to teach roof technique. A paragraph from the 1966 Annual Report, signed by Red Watson, reads, "The Gilford Fire Department is fortunate in having the Fire School at the Civil Defense Training Center at its disposal. Many of the monthly meetings incorporate training at the Center on extinguishing oil fires, etc. Interest has been shown to the point that many Gilford firemen are instructors at the Fire School here and at Meadowood in Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire." In 1969, after Red's death in 1968, the center was re-named, in his honor, The Almond "Red" Watson Civil Defense Training Center.

The Training Center was little used in the 1980's and was sold to the Laconia Sportsmen's Club in 1989.

⁴³

1960 Annual Report.

♦ A MULTIFUNCTIONAL DEPARTMENT: 1976 — THE PRESENT ♦

In the last quarter of this century, the scope of the Fire Department expanded, and demand for its services increased more rapidly than population growth. Medical aid has become the most frequent service and fires are rare. Fire-prevention inspections are widespread and the department teaches fire prevention and fire survival in schools. Much of fire fighters' time is spent in continuing education and training.

➤ CHIEFS AND PERSONNEL

John Trocchi, from the Concord Fire Department, was Fire Chief from 1975 to 1978. Michael Mooney moved from the Laconia Fire Department to become Chief in 1978. Training and education programs for personnel and prevention and education programs for the public have been widely developed by Chief Mooney.

There are 10 full-time and 23 volunteer members of the department. Two people are on call at the station 24 hours a day. Linda Morse, a former full-time member in 1988, was the first woman to join.

➤ BUDGETS AND CALLS

In 1978, the Fire Department answered 409 calls and its budget was \$108,000. Fourteen years later in 1992, there were 799 incidents and the department expenses were \$495,000.

The 1992 incidents fall into these categories:—

Requests for ambulance	353	44%
Calls for assistance ⁴⁴	95	12%
Motor vehicle accidents	80	10%
Fire alarms	72	9%
Miscellaneous emergencies	69	9%
Mutual aid assistance	53	7%
Chimney fires	19	2%
Grass/brush fires	19	2%
Vehicle fires	17	2%
False alarms	14	2%
Structure fires	8	1%

The 202 fire-related incidents (fire alarms, mutual aid assistance, chimney fires, grass/brush fires, vehicle fires, false alarms, and structure fires) are 25% of all incidents.

➤ MEDICAL AID

Fire Department emergency medical technician (EMT) service was first offered in 1976 and 94 EMT calls were logged⁴⁵. For many years, funeral homes owned ambulances and transported people with injuries or medical emergencies to a hospital. This became unprofitable and local ambulance companies, employing EMT's, arose to meet the need to transport sick people. Forest Park Ambulance Service, based in Laconia, served Gilford. To make the service profitable, communities served by the ambulance companies subsidized them, and the companies charged their patients. In the 1970's, Gilford paid Forest Park Ambulance Service about \$50,000 a year and the ambulance service billed the patient an additional \$100. Forest Park's service became unreliable, and Gilford people realized that the Fire Department on its own could provide dependable and economical EMT and ambulance service⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Examples of Calls For Assistance are pumping out flooded basements, 4-wheel drive transportation home of stranded citizens during blizzards, cleaning up gasoline spills at service stations, and replacing smoke detectors for the elderly. Chief Michael Mooney 9-10-93.

⁴⁵ 1976 Annual Report.

⁴⁶ The information in this paragraph is derived from Chief Michael Mooney's 9-10-93 interview.

In 1976, 1977, and most of 1978, the Fire Department EMT's responded to all medical aid calls and stabilized patients before they were transported by Forest Park Ambulance Service. After 11/15/78⁴⁷, the Fire Department itself has transported emergency patients from home or accident site to Lakes Region General Hospital.

About 44%⁴⁸ of the department's calls now are for medical aid. In 1990⁴⁹, the department was renamed the Gilford Fire-Rescue Department to reflect the importance of its medical services to the town.

➤ FIRE-RESCUE EQUIPMENT

The Fire-Rescue Department equipment inventory⁵⁰ in 1993 is as follows.

- 1966 Military Jeep forestry vehicle with a 250 gallon portable pump and a 250 gallon tank
- 1972 Maxim 1500 gallon pumper with a 500 gallon tank
- 1977 MonArc fire boat with a 500 gallon pump
- 1979 Maxim 1250 gallon pumper with a 1000 gallon tank
- 1983 Pierce 1250 gallon pumper with a 1000 gallon tank
- 1985 Yankee Coach rescue-ambulance
- 1988 Ranger 1250 gallon pumper with a 1250 gallon tank

The vehicles are garaged at the Route 11-A Fire Station buildings. The fire boat "Snuffer" is moored at the end of the east pier at Glendale Docks when Lake Winnepesaukee is ice-free.

➤ COMMUNICATIONS

Everyone on duty or on call carries a small tone-activated⁵¹ radio receiver. These radios are tuned to the Lakes Region Dispatch Center in the basement of the Belknap County Court House in

⁴⁷ 1978 Annual Report.

⁴⁸ 1992 Annual Report. 799 incidents of which 353 were "calls for ambulance."

⁴⁹ 1990 Annual Report.

⁵⁰ Chief Michael Mooney 9-10-93.

⁵¹ A unique sequence of tones is assigned to each fire department. A message from Central Dispatch to the Gilford Fire-Rescue Department is preceded by Gilford's tones and these tones activate Gilford's receivers but no

Laconia. The Dispatch Center antenna is on top of Mt. Belknap, which gives good coverage to all parts of Gilford. A base station radio at the Route 11-A Fire Station allows Gilford personnel to talk back and forth to each other using a separate channel at fires and other events. The general alarm sirens at the Route 11-A and Glendale Fire Stations were removed when superseded by this personal radio system about 1983⁵².

➤ QUALIFICATION AND EDUCATION

Department personnel meet at the Fire Station Wednesday evenings to take part in the training program. The training levels are Fire Fighter Level One, Fire Fighter Level Two, Career Level, Fire Fighter Level Three, and Officer. Many hours of training go into qualification. A Career Level fire fighter will have studied about 200 hours, for example. The training and mandated continuing education and experience for EMT's is equally rigorous⁵³.

➤ INSPECTION AND PREVENTION

All businesses in the town are inspected at six month intervals as part of the Fire Inspection Program. Establishments are checked to make sure that there are no fire hazards, that emergency signs and lights work, and that aisles and exits are not blocked.

The Home Safety Program is a voluntary program for the homeowner. Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are inspected. Families with children are taught the Home Fire Exit Drill, learning how to get out of a smoke-filled house at night.

Fire Safety and Prevention classes are held at the Elementary and High Schools. The children are taught how to avoid and deal with fires.

others. Tone-activation is useful because a person on duty does not have to monitor irrelevant talk.

⁵² Chief Michael Mooney 9-10-93.

⁵³ This paragraph is derived from the interview with Chief Michael Mooney 9-10-93.

➤ GLENDALE FIRE STATION ABANDONED

The Public Works Building northeast of the Route 11-A Fire Station was completed in 1979. The highway equipment garaged in the basement of the Fire Station was moved to the Public Works building and the fire equipment at Glendale was moved to the Route 11-A Fire Station basement. Glendale ceased to serve as a fire station because modern fire trucks are too wide and tall to fit inside⁵⁴.

➤ HYDRANTS — DRY AND WET

Nineteen dry hydrants are now in service.

The Fire-Rescue Department does not use the Village wet hydrants, which have been unsatisfactory for fire fighting since 1936 or before⁵⁵. Water for fighting fires in the Village must either be drawn from Gunstock River or tanked in by fire trucks.

An adequate hydrant system for the Village should supply at least 1,500 gallons per minute to a pumper truck. For example, construction of a 50,000 gallon reservoir tank on the mountain behind the Elementary School and installation of larger mains to distribute water to the Village would be a way to upgrade water-flow at the hydrants. This expensive project, whatever its final design, awaits the opportunity when it can be done at a reasonable cost. That time will probably be when sewer pipes are installed in the Village⁵⁶.

➤ CONCLUSION

Captain Milo Bacon said, when talking about fires before there was a fire department, that it was a matter of neighbors helping neighbors — people running to help move out the furniture

⁵⁴ Chief Michael Mooney 9-10-93

⁵⁵ Capt. Milo Bacon 9-15-88. 1966 Annual Report.

⁵⁶ Chief Michael Mooney 9-10-93.

and assist with the children. The same attitude of people helping each other is strong in the department today, but it not as simple to do as in the past. Gone are the days when the only physical requirement was to be able-bodied and most training was on the job.

The department began in 1936 when the White truck was purchased, Milo Bacon was employed to drive it, and Roy Page was named Chief. In the 57 years since then, what has changed?

- ♦ The mission of the department has shifted and enlarged. Medical assistance is now the commonest service given and structure fires are rare. Training, fire prevention, and public education are emphasized.
- ♦ The number of full-time employees has grown from one to ten.
- ♦ Training to become a full-time or volunteer fire fighter has become lengthy and complex.
- ♦ The department budget is 300 times larger⁵⁷.
- ♦ The number of fire trucks has increased to five. The modern trucks carry up to three times more water and pump it two or three times faster.
- ♦ A rescue-ambulance vehicle and a fire boat have been added to the equipment.
- ♦ The improvements in communications have been nothing short of miraculous. It's a long way from red phones and alarm bells to personal radios.
- ♦ Mutual aid has increased the fire-fighting effectiveness of the department.
- ♦ Dry hydrants have been installed at key points in the town.

What has not changed is that the Fire-Rescue Department's thoughtful men and women continue to do their best to serve the people of Gilford.



⁵⁷

\$1,620 in 1937 and \$495,000 in 1992.

♦ Appendix ♦

List of Fire-Rescue Department Vehicles

<u>Into Service</u>	<u>Out of Service</u>	<u>Model Year</u>	<u>Type of Equipment</u>	<u>Pump GPM</u>	<u>Tank Gals.</u>
1914?	1928	?	Fire Wagon	—	—
1928	1936	?	Studebaker chemical truck	—	100
1936	1959	1936	White pumper-tanker	500	500
1937	1940?	?	Ford Model A tanker	—	500
1940?	1948?	?	Brockway tanker	—	500
1949	1972	1949	Dodge tanker	?	500
1956	?	1956	Farrar pumper-tanker	?	?
1959	?	?	(Manufacturer ?) pumper-tanker	?	?
1963?	?	1963	(Manufacturer ?) tanker No. 3	?	?
1967	1986	?	Military Jeep forestry vehicle	none	none
1968?	?	1968	(Manufacturer ?) Engine No. 5	1500	?
1972	in use	1972	Maxim pumper-tanker	1500	500
1977	1985	1977	(Manufacturer ?) Rescue-Ambulance	—	—
1977	in use	1977	MonArc fire boat	500	—
1979	in use	1979	Maxim pumper-tanker	1250	1000
1983	in use	1983	Pierce pumper-tanker	1250	1000
1985	in use	1985	Yankee Coach Rescue-Ambulance	—	—
1986	in use	1966	Military Jeep forestry vehicle	250	250
1988	in use	1988	Ranger pumper-tanker	1250	1250

□ □ □

Review of Gilford's Annual Reports

Done at Gilford Public Library during the Summer of 1993
Corning Benton, reviewer

Year Ending 2/14/14

It is not clear who is the Fire Warden

Year Ending 2/15/15

Fire Warden

Paid C.H. Gove, payroll, for fire in Copp's pasture.

Expenses of the Forest Fire Warden, C.H. Gove \$31.76.

Miscellaneous bills

Paid C.H. Gove, stock and labor on fire wagon \$25.00.

Ahira H. Bacon, constable [Milo Bacon's grandfather]

Roll of Perfect Attendance

School No. 9 - Spring Term: Milo F. Bacon

Year Ending 1/31/27

Schedule of Town Property

Fire department, equipment \$100.00

Detail No. 6

Fire \$89.40.

Three Highway Agents listed, none of whom is Roy T. Page

Year Ending 1/31/28

Five Highway Agents listed, none of whom is Roy T. Page

H. Thurlow Ames, payroll, forest fire \$127.60.

No mention of C.H. Gove here.

Value of Fire Department equipment \$100

Detail No. 9 - Water Works

W.A. Gove, wiring for pump. [He may be the first of the Laconia Goves who are still electricians]

Year Ending 1/31/29

Highway Agent: Roy T. Page

Police Department, including care of tramps

Fire Department equipment \$600

C.H. Gove, services, fire warden

Detail No. 12

Boynton & Caferly, Studebaker machine \$300

C.H. Gove, labor 115

Arthur W. Spring, chemical tank 105

=====

\$520 [my calculations]

Year ending 1/31/30

1/14/30: Bertha Bacon married Herbert N. Hubbard
Harris bridge completed
Value of Fire Department equipment \$600
C.H. Gove, care & supplies \$16.00
Fire Department including forest fires \$52.15
C.H. Gove, forest fire \$36.15

Year ending 1/31/31

New bridge on Weirs Road completed \$5151
Police: Claude Foster \$11.00
Value of Fire Department equipment \$600
Fire Department including forest fires 242.02
Laconia \$66.00. C.H. Gove - Fire Warden Meeting \$15.75, C.H. Gove - care & supplies \$41.56. Truck repairs \$35.61.

Year ending 1/31/32

Weirs Road work continues
Police: Ted Nadeau \$3.50
Fire Department \$265.98
C.V. Henderson, extinguishers \$86.50. C.H. Gove: fire truck repairs \$27.88, forest fire \$9.00, services \$30.65. A.W. Spring: LeClaire fire \$87.20

Year ending 1/31/33

Police: Claude Foster \$5, H.E. Rowan \$5.
Fire Department \$171.03
A.W. Spring, Laconia Fire Department \$115. C.H. Gove: fire payrolls \$21.40, supplies \$14.63, care of extinguishers & truck \$20.00

Year ending 1/31/34

Fire Department \$348.10
Many expense items are assigned to the Highway Agent, Roy T. Page.
Charles H. Gove, a blacksmith, died 12/25/33.

Year ending 1/31/35

New problems are welfare relief and old age assistance.
Fire Department equipment value \$600.
Fire Department expenses \$298.78. R.T. Page is credited for many of the expenses. A fire at Lockes Island is the most expensive item.
6/4/34: John Milo Bacon is born, the son of Milo Franklin Bacon (truck driver) born in Gilford and Minnie Rae Page, born in Sanbornton.

Year Ending 1/31/36

Relief to aged and handicapped getting serious.
Police expenses are listed "Police Department, including care of tramps.
Police: Louis B. Monty and Herman E. Olson

Fire Department \$338.83.

Governors Island fire \$160

R.T. page handles the payroll

New equipment:

Arthur H. Blanchard Co., five knapsack pumps \$31.66 [verify this - my notes are not clear]

N.H. Forest Department. pump 22.50.

Year ending 1/31/37

Police: Herman E. Olsen is listed as the Chief of Police for the first time

Fire Department: \$1,620 - mostly R.T. Page, payrolls

Fire Department, equipment \$7,000.

Fire truck - long-term outstanding note of \$7,000

Year ending 1/31/38

Fire Department \$2,435.10 - mostly payroll through R.T. Page

Some expenses are for the "tank truck."

Telephone alarm service: \$126.00 - mentioned for the first time.

Year ending 1/31/39

Fire Department 2362.32

telephone service \$135.23

Year ending 1/31/40

Town Truck payroll is \$430.56 with \$23.33 going to Milo Bacon

Fire Department \$1,902.70

payroll: Milo Bacon \$1,110.22, Lawrence Sibley \$160.40. 38 others mentioned
- they are paid in increments of 40 cents.

New England Telephone & Telegraph \$153.60

Hannah M. Bacon died 1/9/40.

Year ending 1/31/41

Fire Department \$2,504.27

payroll \$2,178.95. M.F. Bacon \$1,563.63

New England. T. & T. services \$117.45.

New equipment: Williams Motor Co., fire truck \$300. [Ask MFB about this]

Year ending 1/31/42

Town Roads payroll: \$105.70 to M.F. Bacon, \$74.05 to Frank Bacon.

Roy T. Page is Forest Fire Warden.

Fire Department equipment \$7,000.

Fire Department \$2,216.40

Milo Bacon \$1,625.00.

36 total calls.

The Report of the Gilford Fire Department is signed by O.C. Page, Clerk

Year ending 1/31/43

Police: Herman Olsen \$706.56, Sylvio Morin \$3.50.

Fire Department \$2,352.78
Milo Bacon \$1,972.10
knapsack pumps \$69.
American LaFrance, foamite
Total calls 18. 1 death. Property destroyed \$2,300.

Year ending 1/31/44

Police \$684.33.
Fire Department \$2,276.90.
Milo Bacon \$1,926.40.

1945 Annual Report

Roads: \$87.67 to M. Bacon
Highways & Bridges: \$47.60 to M. Bacon for gravel.
Forest Fire Warden: R.T. Page.
no forest fires
Fire Department \$2,368.63.
Milo Bacon \$1,997.00.

1946 Annual Report

New Highway Agent is Howard A. Roberts.
Public Beach: Milo Bacon - electric welding
Trucks: do.
Fire Department \$2,802.92
Milo Bacon \$1,942.60.
telephone \$\$138.35

1947 Annual Report

Arthur Tilton, Moderator of Town Meeting.
General expense: M. Bacon, welding \$609.16
Gravel: M. Bacon \$57.60.
Fire Department \$4,912.97
M. Bacon \$2,220.00
payroll \$1,604.55
McDuff Marine \$44.80.

1948 Annual Report

Report of Forest Fire Warden submitted by Thos. J. King, District Fire Chief, and
Milo Bacon, Forest Fire Warden.
Chief of the Fire Department is Roy T. Page - first time this appears.
Fire Engineers: Ray C. Watson & Augustine S. Francis.
Fire Department \$4,500
Milo Bacon \$2,538.84.

1949 Annual Report

Town Roads: Milo Bacon \$137.32.
Fire Chief: Roy T. Page.

Fire Engineers: Ray Watson, Augustine Francis.

Forest Fire Warden: Milo Bacon.

10 fires burned 48 1/2 acres.

Fire Department \$6,618.49

Milo Bacon \$2,967.20

Frank Dill, Inc. - pump and drench \$979.26 [ask MFB about this]

12 knapsack pumps \$90.60.

1950 Annual Report

Chief of Police: Herman Olsen.

Fire Chief: Roy Page.

Fire Engineers: Ray Watson, Augustine Francis.

Fire Department

Milo Bacon \$2,920.20

payroll: town fires - \$272.70, town forest fires - \$936.38.

1951 Annual Report

Police Chief: Sylvio Morin

Town Roads: Milo Bacon - welding \$219.14 & gravel \$224.10.

Fire Chief/Engineers: same.

Forest Fire Warden: Milo Bacon

1 fire burning 1/10 acre.

Fire Department

Milo Bacon \$2,954.20

McDuff Marine \$17.50. About this level of payments for years.

\$4,000 appropriated for fire truck.

Value of Fire Department equipment increased to \$9,000.

Gilford Beach: Ray Bacon, attendant \$233

1952 Annual Report

Moderator: Arthur Tilton.

Police Chief: S. Morin.

Fire Chief/Engineers: same

Fire Department: \$5,194.63

Milo Bacon \$2,794.40.

Forest Fire Warden: M. Bacon

2 forest fires burning 58 1/4 acres.

1953 Annual Report

Forest fires: Thomas King is District Fire Chief. 30 towns in this district.

Two-way radio: \$520 planned in the budget for 1954.

Fire Department \$3,639.35

Milo Bacon \$2,817.18.

1954 Annual Report

Police Chief: Sylvio Morin followed by Asa Stickney after 4/30/54.

Fire Chief: Roy Page.

Fire Engineers: Ray Watson, Harold Wilkinson.
 Fire Department \$3,114.50
 \$2,528.78 to Milo Bacon.
 New England Tel. & Tel. \$356.12.
 Two-way radio \$521.68
 2 forest fires burning 1 1/2 acres.

1955 Annual Report

Police Chief: Charles Burditt
 Fire Chief: Gordon Langill.
 Fire Engineers: Harold Wilkinson, Carl Dolloff, Willis Hoyt.
 Fire Department \$8,403.15
 \$2,578 to Almond Watson
 \$2,065 to Milo Bacon
 \$1,365 to Harold Wilkinson
 Highway: Milo Bacon \$279
 Arthur Tilton, police \$127.50

1956 Annual Report

Police Chief: Charles Burditt
 Fire Chief: Gordon Langill
 Fire Engineers: Wilkinson, Hoyt
 Fire Department \$29,877
 Almond Watson, salary \$3510
 H. Wilkinson, do. \$1690
 M. Bacon, do. \$1690
 Farrar fire truck for Glendale \$18, 915.
 Gilford Fire Department has 90 men divided into 4 companies.

Table of Organization (Milo Bacon 8/27/93 says this never existed - just made up for the annual report):--

Tanker No. 1

Capt. Milo Bacon
 1st Lt. James Stamps
 2nd Lt. Roger Lindsay

Tanker No. 2

Capt. Alden Cann
 1st Lt. Elverton Whitney
 2nd Lt. Augustus Pitou

Engine No. 1

Capt. Almond Watson
 1st Lt. Martin Hall
 2nd Lt. Robert Wilkinson

Engine No. 2

Capt John Goddard
 1st Lt. Earl Stone
 Drivers: Fritz Raabe, Edward
 Needham, & Dale Smith

1957 Annual Report

Arthur Rothafel, Moderator.
 Fire Engineers: Willis Hoyt, John Goddard, Jr.
 Forest Fire Warden: M. Bacon

New fire station proposed in the town warrant.

New fire truck proposed in the town warrant \$18,000 - it was delivered for use at Glendale.

Value of fire equipment \$33,000.

Fire Department \$13,493

Watson, salary \$3380

M Bacon, do. 1755

Wilkinson, do. 1755

46 fire calls.

General alarm sirens installed at Glendale and Gilford Village stations.

Glendale station is under construction.

Highway: Milo Bacon - gravel \$39

1958 Annual Report

Fire Chief: Harold Wilkinson.

Fire Engineers: unchanged.

Forest Fire Warden: Milo Bacon.

New fire station proposed in town warrant.

Fire Chief or senior engineer shall have the right to send fire apparatus to another town or city to assist at a fire.

The White 500 GPM pumper now is 23 years old [1935, therefore]

Village water works needs to keep up pressure at hydrants.

Fire department \$11,543

\$6.00 to Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association.

22 fires & 8 Mutual Aids.

Wright, Sara S.: Land & buildings \$9,000 (Eagle Island).

Glendale Wharves & parking area: M. Bacon \$3,158.

1959 Annual Report

Fire Chief: Almond Watson.

Fire Engineers: unchanged.

Forest Fire Warden: A. Watson

Glendale Fire Station has been constructed @ cost of \$40,000.

Value of fire equipment \$45,000.

New pumper-tanker truck \$20,000.

Fire Department \$11,794

A. Watson, salary 5,031

H. Wilkinson, do. 1,850

M. Bacon, do. 574

36 alarms

Weeks Farm fire mentioned in the report.

General: M. Bacon - culvert pipe

1960 Annual Report

Fire Chief: Watson

Fire Engineers: Hoyt, Goddard.

Route 11A Fire Station completed @ cost of \$65,000.

Moved into the new station with 24-hour coverage - The two permanent men are

H. Wilkinson & Wm. Hayes - they work opposite 24-hour shifts.
Brook dammed @ village to make a fire pond.
Work being done to construct a Fire School and Training Center @ Lilly Pond.
M. Bacon not salaried nor mentioned in fire department report.
Fire Department \$16,041.
56 alarms
M. Bacon supplying cement products to Highway Department.

1961 Annual Report

District Fire Chief: Gerald Hight
Fire Department \$17,973
36 fires.

1962 Annual Report

New dry hydrant @ village brook
Fire Department \$20,493
Highway: M. Bacon - culvert - \$145

1963 Annual Report

Forest fire threat worse in 60 years.
Temporary fire school @ Lilly Pond.
Fire Department \$19,052
New England Tel. and Tel. \$452.
102 alarms.
Highway: M.F. Bacon - culvert, welding, cement - \$674.

1964 Annual Report

Police service calls: 193.
Fire Chief: A. Watson
Fire Engineers: Hoyt, Goddard, Langill
Lilly pond fire school in action.
Forests worse than 1963. 8 forest fires burned 55 acres.
Fire Department \$21,185.
87 alarms.
Highway: M. Bacon - culvert \$1,052.

1965 Annual Report

Police Chief: Adolph Favale
Police service calls: 569.
Fire Department inventory \$21,700
Fire Department budget \$22,189.
100 calls.
Highway: M. Bacon - culvert - \$\$755.

1966 Annual Report

Police Chief: Charles Reynolds
Police service calls: 1,746.
calls in 1964: 193

calls in 1965: 569

Trustee of Trust Funds: M. Bacon - from 1966 - at least 1993

Fire Chief: Almond Watson

Fire Engineers: Willis Hoyt, Gordon Langill, Fred Shurbert

Fire Department \$26,907. Employees not named.

80 calls

Photocopy of 1966 report in my D-ring notebook

Highway: M. Bacon - culvert & catch basin - \$549

1967 Annual Report

Fire Engineers: Ronald Hook, Fred Shubert (sic.), Robert Clifford.

Gordon Langill moved to Florida.

Fire Department \$33,517.

70 calls

1968 Annual Report

Police budget \$61,374.

Almond "Red" Watson died 5-24-68. This town report is dedicated to his memory.

Fire Chief: Sherman Thompson.

Full-time fire fighters are Deputy Chief Allan Whitney, Captain Seely White, Captain Richard Ballou.

Now are 4 fire trucks with the 1968 purchase of 1500 gallon pumper-tanker. In addition, there is a 4 x 4 surplus weapons carrier converted to a forest fire vehicle.

Fire Department \$36,019

70 calls.

Highway: M. Bacon - culvert pipe - \$244.

1969 Annual Report

The center on 11-C renamed Almond "Red" Watson Civil Defense Training Center. This is on Lilly Pond.

Flex-Alarm system installed - a monitor @ the Village Station signals trouble when connected with a fire or smoke detector in a building.

Forest Fire Warden: Sherman Thompson

Fire Department \$41,419

88 calls.

1970 Annual Report

Fire Chief: Sherman Thompson

Fire Engineers: R. Hook, F. Shurbert, R. Clifford

Department of Public Works created incorporating Town Engineer, Town Buildings, Dump, Cemeteries, Water Works, Highway, Health, Street Lighting, Glendale Wharves, & Parking Lots.

Fire Department \$48,784

137 calls

Names are no longer mentioned in Detail Reports.

1971 Annual Report

Moderator Harry Prescott replaced by Peter Millham.

15 dry hydrants now.
Fire Department \$53,944
112 calls

1972 Annual Report

Fire Engineers: Lawrence Guild, II, R. Hook, Fred Sherbert (sic.)
Fire Department equipment inventory \$116,500
Fire Department \$59,080
138 calls

1973 Annual Report

Fire Department \$67,169
161 calls

1974 Annual Report

Gilford Village Historic District Commission established in 1973.
5 permanent force & 22 call men (the call force)
156 calls

1975 Annual Report

New Fire Chief: John Trocchi of Concord
Chief Thompson elected early retirement after 22 years of service.
Fire Engineers: Guild, Hook, Neil Flaherty
Developers of Gunstock went bankrupt causing problems about plowing their private roads.
Fire Department \$80,218.
194 calls. One death by fire.

1976 Annual Report

EMT service added to fire department services
302 calls - the increase is due to 94 Emergency Medical Technician calls.

1977 Annual Report

Police Chief: Cheney went to Laconia. New Chief is Ken Carew.
Gilford Board of Fire Engineers
Chairman, Ron Hook
Arthur Stern
Robert Weeks
John Trocchi, Chief

The Board of Fire Engineers has recommended that in 1978 the Gilford Fire Department assume primary responsibility for the transport of emergency patients to Lakes Region General Hospital.

Equipment:

♦Engine No. 1	1959	♦Tanker No. 3	1963
♦Engine No. 2	1972	♦Brush No. 6	1970 4-wheel drive
♦Engine No. 5	1968	♦Rescue No. 1	1977 rescue/ambulance
♦Fire Boat No. 1	1977 MonArc 23.5' boat with 500 GPM pump.		

Fire boat acquired.

373 calls.

Town offered Jewett property at Glendale - turned down

1978 Annual Report

New Gilford Police Chief is Gene Blake. He mentions the painful and agonizing reorganization of the Police Department.

Board of Fire Engineers:

Arthur Stern, Chairman; Ron Hook; Maurice Paradise

Engine No. 1 is destroyed in an accident. \$80,000 is voted for another.

Gilford Fire Department provides emergency transport ambulance service

Prior to 11/15/78, your Fire Department had been responding to all medical aid calls, stabilizing the patients and readying them for transportation by a private ambulance company. After this date, Gilford Fire Department transports patients itself.

Fire Department \$108,000

409 calls.

Gilford Public Works Building built for \$200,000.

1979 Annual Report

Fire Chief: Michael Mooney

Bought Engine No. 1, a 1979 1000 gallon 1250 GPM pumper/tanker

481 calls.

Sewage pumping station built at Glendale

1980 Annual Report

Biggest increase in calls is from problems with wood stoves and chimney fires.

Two men now on each shift.

533 calls.

1981 Annual Report

535 calls

Governors Island bridge completed

1982 Annual Report

Police Chief Blake died ae. 53 (tragedy). James Martel is Acting Chief.

535 calls

IBM System 23 computer for the town.

1983 Annual Report

Police Chief: James Martel

New fire truck

566 calls

1984 Annual Report

579 calls

1985 Annual Report

800 calls

1986 Annual Report

814 calls

1987 Annual Report

New Police Chief: Evans Juris

867 calls

1988 Annual Report

Fire Chief: M. Mooney

Board of Fire Engineers: Frank Mello, Chair; Peter Sawyer; Jay Clough

875 calls including 344 medical emergencies.

Move to new Town Hall

Librarian: Diane Mitten

1989 Annual Report

810 calls

1990 Annual Report

Name changed to "Gilford Fire-Rescue Department."

743 incidents

1991 Annual Report

845 incidents

1992 Annual Report

Police Department \$683,000

Gilford Municipal Fire Warden and Fire Chief: Michael Mooney

Fire Prevention Program

Fire Safety Program @ the elementary school. Three students honored this year.

Fire Inspection Program

Goal is to attain & maintain fire-safe conditions in all public, commercial & mercantile buildings in Gilford.

Home Safety Evaluations

heating systems, wood stoves, general fire safety

Gilford Fire-Rescue Department \$612,000 (\$495,000 is correct / Chief Mooney 9/93)

799 incidents;--

Requests for ambulance	353
Calls for assistance	95
Motor vehicle accidents	80
Fire alarms	72
Miscellaneous emergencies	69
Mutual aid assistance	53
Chimney fires	19
Grass/brush fires	19
Vehicle fires	17
False alarms	14
Structure fires	8



Video Tape Interview of Capt. Milo Bacon

The original videotape is owned by Capt. Milo Bacon

**Gilford Capt. Dick Ballou, Interviewer &
Laconia Deputy Chief Steve Allen, Videographer**

22 Potter Hill Road, Gilford, NH

September 15, 1988

Edited Interview — Corning Benton, Transcriber

Today is Thursday, September 15, 1988. It is a beautiful day out. A little bit overcast; the temperature is about 55°. And we're over here in Gilford, New Hampshire, at the home of Milo Bacon. And the reason that we're here today is to have a chat with our good friend Milo and talk about a little bit of Gilford's past.

I'll tell them of some things that happened in the years gone by.

I guess I was thinking that probably one of the best places to start was that you could tell us about just the early years of Milo Bacon in Gilford.

I do remember Gilford residents deciding that they had to have a piece of fire equipment to protect the coming growth of the town. So they appropriated, probably \$7,000, which was a tidy good sum for the town then to raise and bought a brand new truck, which was a piece of good equipment in that era. The truck arrived and there was no one to drive it, and professional people were hard then to come by. So the town decided to pick somebody in town who had driven a truck before to drive the fire truck. That happened to be me. I didn't know what I was getting into exactly because I had never really seen a fire truck up close before. But the man from the company that sold us the equipment came and demonstrated it well and gave lessons to the driver. And so I learned to pump water with it — draft water from the nearby brook in the village there, which was a tidy little rift⁵⁸.

Now, that must have been about 1936?

That was 1936, and I don't remember exactly the date that the truck arrived.

And that must have been the old White that people talk about.

⁵⁸

Rift. A shallow or rocky place in a stream.

That was a brand new White truck with a Maxim pump — 500 gallon pumper. With 1,500 feet of 1.5 inch hose, and 500 feet of 2.5 inch hose, with suction hose and strainers and everything we had to have. And there was a booster tank with a small amount of water to carry on it.

People should know that the old Fire Station and also the Town Garage was just across the street from your house on Potter Hill Road.

That is right. The Highway Department had a great deal to do with the Fire Department at that time. We were dependent on the road crew a great deal because there was almost no help in the daytime. Everybody was working. Men were working in Laconia in the shops there. All we had was for help was the few road crew.

You were alone fighting fires at first.

And if somebody had a fire, how did they notify you that there was a fire?

We had a telephone system for that. I had a phone right in my house, right at the head of my bed, and there was phones scattered around — at the Fire Station, and one in the Town Hall, because I had other duties that I had to perform beside just being a fireman at that time. You must remember that the town was so small that they had to utilize the manpower, which included me, to help support the cost of having fire equipment in a very small town. We were the only town in the neighborhood that had a permanent man on call for years.

That was something that a lot of communities didn't have.

They envied us in having that.

So, someone would call the number.

The call was just a ring on the fire line. We had no dispatcher or anything like that.

For a few years, we had just that truck. But we had an organized fire department soon. We had a little meeting and organized a little volunteer fire department. The Road Agent⁵⁹ was elected Chief of the Fire Department and he headed up the thing. He realized very quickly that, in order to be able to be effective with our new truck, we had to have

⁵⁹ Roy Page.

water, which we didn't have in any great amount in that truck. So, the first thing to do was to try to get some way of carrying water to the fires. Eventually, We bought an old chassis, we put a tank on it, and we put a pump beside it and carried water to the fires.

Do you remember what that chassis was? Was it a Ford ...

I think it was a Model A. An old, used Model A. We got out of the Model T — we had a Model A. But it didn't have the power to get us around and it was very top-heavy because the tank mounted on it didn't have baffles . All in all, we were glad to get something better.

You still had the White.

Yes. The White was our ...

The White was the primary piece of equipment and then you had a Model A that was a tank truck.

Right.

And the Model A carried — how much water, do you think it carried?

500 gallons.

When you got a call on the telephone, and someone said that they had a fire, how would you notify everybody else that there was a problem?

That was quite a problem. Immediately, when I got a call, I would start the siren on the front of the White truck as I was going out of the village, and I would keep it going until I got to the fire. The volunteers would hear it and follow me. In the daytime, this was not much use anyway because few volunteers were in town.

My good wife had to be a fireman, too. She was a great help to me ...

You said that the Road Agent was the first Chief?

Yes.

What was his name?

Roy Page. He happened to be my father-in-law. He was a great organizer of the mutual aid ...

Now Roy Page, he was the Road Agent. Didn't he live over on Luscombe Circle?

No, Roy lived right here⁶⁰ for a while, until I bought this place⁶¹. Then, he moved up out of the village a short ways into another home. In later years, he bought nearer Laconia, out where the Laconia bypass is.

Right, I was thinking that he was over on Luscombe Circle, over near where the Maple Grove Cottages are.

Nope, I don't think so, Dick. When he first came to Gilford, he lived up at the top of Gunstock Hill.

OK. Where were you born?

I was born on Governors Island, if you please, at a creamery there. My father worked there for a caretaker of the farm. It was a farm then, not a resort. A few years later, we moved into the village here for a short time and then, later, my father bought a farm up near Arthur Week's place on Belknap Mountain Road, and I was there all my growing-up years until I married.

Went to school?

I went to school, to the grade school, in Gilford. And I got one year and I started the second year in high school. And then I went to work in the woods.

So, the grade school in Gilford — was that old School House No. 11 down there?

Yes, but I went to No. 9 up under the mountain on the Belknap Mountain Road there.

How many other school houses were there?

⁶⁰ 22 Potter Hill Road.

⁶¹ In 1941.

Oh, there were a dozen or more. Yes, they was scattered all over the town, Dick.

Do you remember where they were?

There was one at Lilly Pond and one on what is Cherry Valley Road now. They had to have them every couple miles or so . . .

No busses.

No, children walked if they got to school. When I got to high school, I drove a horse and wagon to Laconia. If you got through grade school in Laconia, if you were lucky, you got a chance to go to Laconia High School.

Which was the Laconia Academy. Am I right?

It was down on Academy Street.

Where the Court House is now.

Yes. In that area there.

They used to call it Academy Square.

I think so.

Because I can remember my mother saying that's where she went to school.

Oh, it was fun, those days. Lot of work, though.

Because my father had gone to Bowman Street to the seventh grade. We could move on to the Fire Department. You had the White, and you had the tank truck. And Roy Page was the Road Agent and they made Roy Page the Chief.

They did.

Milo Bacon was a Captain.

Well, yes. I guess so. But I never considered myself that — I was the driver of the truck. I had to know how to handle the truck, and the rest of it I left to the others. They had

to learn how to lay hose and so on and so forth. We had a fireman, I believe he came out of New York, who lived here in the village for a short while. They called him Ray Sheffner. And a very good man, but it wasn't a success — he couldn't cope with us natives here and he soon left. But he did help in some way — we learned something from him.

Now, today buildings catch on fire and firemen go in the building because they've got this sophisticated breathing equipment. You didn't do that back then ...

We had nothing of that. You must remember that all the town could afford to give us then was one piece of equipment. These tank trucks — Mr. Page, the Road Agent and Chief — he had to almost single handedly get this stuff, put it together and we had to make do with whatever we could at that time. The town did not appropriate money for any more equipment for many, many years. Remember, I was on fire call here for nineteen years. It was '55 when I gave up the job.

So from 1936 to 1955, you worked right here at Belknap Concrete Products⁶² ...

No, the first five years that I was fireman, which was from '36 to '41, I was renting a place in the village about a half a mile from the Fire Station. That wasn't quite handy for a man who had to be on call 24 hours a day for almost seven days a week. It was a problem at night to get over here quick enough to get hold of the truck and get started. I can remember my wife starting the car for me and doing little things like that so that I could get there.

When I bought the place that I presently own, that made it a little easier.

I didn't do anything in the concrete business for several years — it was in the late '40's when I started to do something.

There was no retirement or any inducement for me to stay with the Fire Department, so I began to search for ways to better myself. There was no raise either, no incentive.

Do you know how much they paid you?

Yes, I was paid a flat \$30 a week. I went from an \$18 a week paycheck to a \$30 a week pay. And that stayed the same; there was no raise. You must remember that inflation hadn't started at that time and everything was almost on the same level year after year. There was no way of getting more money. The town began to grow. The Highway

⁶² Belknap Concrete Products was Milo Bacon's company located just in back of his house at 22 Potter Hill Road.

Department bought trucks and got what they wanted, because there was more demand for roads and things. But, the Fire Department stayed a one-man fire department and never was there any talk of expanding. I guess I wasn't pushy enough.

I don't think you give yourself enough credit for the things that got done — I wanted to talk about those things.

You made all of the equipment that they had. I know that there were a lot of reducers that were made from 1.5 inch to 2.5 inch. I remember you telling me that you made a lot of those things — there were different appliances that they used for — if this building was on fire, you put this water curtain in between the two buildings.

You find things that you need and you try to get them.

We had a lot of interest in the Fire Department at that time. In fact, I'm almost certain that this siren, the better siren, that we put on the White, was donated by our old age suppers. The firemen used to put on things to earn money. We got stuff ourselves without asking the town. This is the way it was run. It was a kind of a family thing for several years.

Do you remember who came up with the idea of writing on a blackboard in the station where the fire was?

I do remember that we finally decided that we'd better do something to help the firemen who were trying to get to us and who had missed the truck when it went by, and they had no way of knowing where we had gone — where I had gone.

So you decided ...

Yes, we dreamed up the idea of a piece of chalk and a blackboard. Went back to school!

So a call would come in and you'd take the information and write it on the blackboard.

Sure. And you tried to do it as fast as you could because you wanted to get there. You know this better than I do, the first few minutes of a fire, are the most important.

We only know it because you taught us.

Yes. And, especially, when you don't have an awful lot of equipment to back you up, you must be there first. That's the important thing. And get there safely.

Yes. I remember Red Watson telling me, Milo, that, in the winter time, you didn't run the old White, that it was put up on blocks.

No. No, that is not true. I think they're a little mixed up there. Red was great; he was a good man.

Before we got this White truck, before '36, we had a man who was Forest Fire Warden. He really wasn't a fireman or he never was classified as such. But he did have a shop⁶³, and he had the only place in town. There was nothing here at the Gilford Sheds, which was later the Fire Station. There was nothing at that time there that could house anything at all. So he had — I guess he did it himself — he cut an old Studebaker chassis and put a few chemicals on it and a chemical tank. In fact, we had it here for a little while at the Town Sheds before we got the new truck. He had that piece of equipment and, in the winter time, put it up on blocks. And it wasn't available, of course. It wasn't really a piece of fire equipment, it was more or less of a forest fire truck. You might say it was really worthless for most cases.

We got some publicity, some bad publicity, in the paper, once, about that. Because we had a fire, an occasion where we could have used any piece of equipment in town, and our equipment was up on blocks and the wheels were off of the back — it was out of service. We rectified that when we got this new \$7,000 piece of modern equipment.

You don't remember what his name was, do you?

Yes, Charles Gove. Charlie Gove. He was Charlie Gove's grandfather, who was Charlie Gove the electrician, whom everybody knew.

So Charlie Gove, who's over here buried in the Pine Grove Cemetery ...

I believe so.

His grandfather was the fellow who made that chemical wagon.

That is right. He had made the only piece of fire equipment that the town had at all. It all had to start, you know.

⁶³

Blacksmith shop.

There's no set pattern as far as this conversation goes. Here's some people that you can talk about if I mention their names. Harold Wilkinson.

Yes. Harold Wilkinson was my brother-in-law. He married my sister. And Harold was a good man, and he was one of the firemen. And he became Chief for a short time — it was a transition from, I think, Gordon Langill. You must have records of this.

Gordon Langill was another I was going to ask you about before we drifted away from Harold Wilkinson. I heard a story once about the old White, Harold Wilkinson, and Lake Shore Park. If you ran into Lake Shore Park today, maybe a quarter of a mile into the entrance, there's this gigantic boulder. And I had heard a story about how they had gone into Lake Shore Park and didn't make the turn and went right into the boulder with the old White.

It wasn't the White. You're partly right here, most of your story is right. Except it was the Brockway, it wasn't the White.

What can you tell me about that?

We never got into an accident with the White. After all, remember that was my baby. And, thank the Lord, that never got into a serious accident. In fact, I refused to go some places with it.

I'm glad I got that straight ...

And it really did mean the end of the Brockway. By the way, I was at that fire — we were fighting a forest fire then.

I remember the incident. I think he was in the wrong place when he went in there. I think he should have gone to the right instead of to the left. He went into Lake Shore Park itself, and the fire was really in a field across from the Park. We had quite a bad grass fire going there.

But he was trying to help. And it wasn't Harold himself — I believe it was his son ...

Bob Wilkerson.

It was Bob. It was Robert. But that's neither here nor there. The guy was trying and doing his best.

You're right. How did you come about the Brockway, do you remember?

Yes, that was a large truck. I don't remember how we happened to get it. Roy Page, again, got hold of that some way. He was great at that. If he ever heard about any piece of equipment that he could put together to make more fire equipment — make us more effective, he would get it. And we were looking for a truck heavier than that old Ford that I told you about.

The Model T.

The Model A. We went from the Model A to the Brockway. That had to be built there, at the shed, at the Fire Station. I was the guy that knew something about blacksmithing and we hadn't got to welding then. But I did a lot of blacksmith work. And so, I helped put together that truck. We made a fairly decent-looking truck out of it, building the body. We had the chassis, that's all, to start with. We bought the old chassis. The Brockway was a heavy truck. I remember it was a two-ton or two-ton and a half truck — it was a good heavy truck.

But the truth of the matter is that you did the majority of the work because ...

Well, I had to, you see. I had not much to do. You must remember, when the town was small, fires were few and far between. I didn't have that much equipment to take care of, so there were other things had to be done. I was kind of a jack of all trades.

But I can remember you telling me last year at Old Home Day the things that you did to make the equipment for that Brockway.

We had Indian tanks to put on it. ... Just got hold of some pieces of timber. It was crude but it was effective. Once you got it together, it was usable and at a very small cost as far as the town was concerned.

So you had the Brockway and the White and ...

The Brockway — we lost the Brockway, you see, down there.

Then, the town was growing a little and had a little more money and so the town went next to a Dodge. That was when we bought that Dodge with a regular pump in the power take-off.

It was a power take-off pump? It was a 1949 Dodge, is that correct?

I think you're right.

I remember driving it.

That was a good piece of equipment. I had a little more experience in mounting these tanks — so, instead of putting the tank on top of these timbers as was done with the Ford Model A and the Brockway, we set the tank down. In previous trucks, the water and that heavy load was up on the tops of these timbers; In the Dodge, it was down between the rear wheels more and it made us very much more effective on the turns and everything. We had more stability with it. I liked that piece of equipment. That was my pride and joy at that time. I helped put that together and I was more satisfied with that than anything else we ever did. ...

Well, I think it's important that people know that that 1949 dodge was used as Engine 4 in Gilford until 1972.

I'm glad to hear that.

How many years is that? 23? For 23 years it was used out of that Central Fire Station in Gilford, which we'll talk about that later. But 23 years, and it could have lasted another 23 years.

That was a wonderful truck.

It always started.

That's right. It was a good truck for starting. And it was powered. It had all kinds of power.

I had a bad fire at one time down at the Recreation Area — the Belknap Area — and we had occasion when we had to go clear to the top of the mountain — by that tramway⁶⁴, that first tramway they put in there.

OK, Rowe Mountain.

⁶⁴

Single-chair ski lift.

Rowe Mountain. And, you know what it was, we had to keep going crisscross there ...

The ski trail.

Yes. But you could make it with a piece of equipment if it was 4-wheel drive or something like that. But we didn't have 4-wheel drive. But I had that Dodge truck and I wanted to get water up there. And I remember going up that grade and it was so steep that the rear wheels once in a while would slip and I'd lose my footing — but she'd get hold of her footing again and I kept on going. We made it with that thing. And I had more confidence in that truck.

It was a wonderful piece of equipment.

It was very well balanced.

And it went to a lot of fires in Gilford.

And, by the way, we put more baffles in that too. ... We had learned by experience how to improve the tank — it wasn't like the modern trucks today. In that era, it was a good piece of equipment.

We need to touch on the Whitneys a little bit. There was Elverton Whitney and he had two sons, Allen and Steve. We know about Allen and Steve and all the things they have done over the years. But Allan's father, Elverton, he ran the store in the village.

Yes.

I remember a story that Allen told me about his father being on the back of a piece of fire equipment — I can't remember which one it was; it might have been the White or the Brockway — and he fell off. Can you remember that?

Yes. You see, I was on call for 24 hours, but my son, John, had got old enough to drive ...

John Bacon.

John Bacon. And John — I trusted John to know something about fire equipment too — and he had watched me. So, for some reason or other, I was off, I had left to go somewhere, and John was here on call. Just a fill-in for a short time. And he had to go to the fire

when a call came. And he picked up some men — picked up Elverton Whitney with some others. And they were going up through the village, and I guess John kind of let out the clutch and his foot was pretty heavy on the throttle. Of course any young boy would like to show off. Yes, I heard about that.

Nobody got hurt..

No, thank God they didn't. And it's one of the things that happens, you know, when you're not fully equipped to take care of situations.

Do you remember when they put water through the village? In other words, I know that today, if we go out here, there's fire hydrants in the village.

Yes.

We know that you can't get any water out of those fire hydrants for fire fighting, but do you remember when they ...

No, I don't remember just the date. Ray Watson's family, the Jacksons, I believe, had a great deal to do about putting our first hydrant system through here — laying the water line. But, Dick, that wasn't very satisfactory because, if you tried to pull water from those hydrants — the water pressure was so low in the hydrants — we didn't have much of a system — there was only a reservoir up above that went down to the hydrants so there was no big pressure in the hydrants. So, when you put a pumper on there — put a 500 gallon pumper on there and started to draft water — you just couldn't do it because you would collapse people's hot water tanks. You'd put a vacuum in the lines — you'd draw all the water. It wasn't equipped right. So, we didn't use that much.

That reservoir was out behind here.

The reservoir was up beyond my house, where I live now, upon a little knoll here.

You don't remember what year they put it in, though?

The reservoir was in there when I moved here. That was another duty, you had to keep the reservoir full of water and check that every day. Even Red Watson had to do that when he got here on the job in '56.

Well, we can talk about that now, if you want. Almond⁶⁵ Watson.

Now, I want to speak about Allan Whitney.

Allen Whitney. Allen Whitney, yes. Go ahead, I'm sorry.

I told you before that help was very scarce in the daytime. Very scarce. And what can one man do with a piece of equipment without at least somebody with him at the scene? Allen — I guess he liked the fire equipment, that kind of work. And so I began to train him a little bit — I'd pick him up in the Village and he'd go with me. He wasn't very old then. I knew I might get criticized for it, and I did. But that little rascal would know exactly what to do. We'd get to a fire, and I would get out and start the pump. I didn't have to tell him what to do. He would get up and grab that nozzle on the booster line. They were small fires, of course. But he knew exactly what to do. He was better than any man who didn't know — who wasn't really familiar with it. He'd wait out there when he heard the fire whistle, the siren — he'd wait out there to be picked up. And I did pick him up and I took him. He lived up here on the corner behind the Grange Hall. And I got very much attached to him. I got criticized for taking him because they were afraid of insurance — what might happen to him. Which, of course, was true.

I'm glad you mentioned him again. Elverton Whitney, of course, had Stan and Allan, and Allen went on to work for the Fire Department for 25 years full-time anyways, and he was the Deputy Fire Chief, well-respected in the community, always did a wonderful job. And I think it is important for people to know that Stan was on that call for most of the years and you could always depend on Stan to show up, to drive a piece of equipment to the fire and help out.

That's right. And Ray Watson had a great deal to do with the Fire Department, too.

And Ray Watson who lived in the village ...

Yes.

Was one that ...

He was Fire Engineer for several years. Worked under Roy Page.

Gordon Langill⁶⁵. Will you talk about Gordon Langill?

⁶⁵ Pronounced al'-mond, rhymes with pal'-pond. Almond "Red" Watson.
⁶⁶ Pronounced Lan-gill', Rhymes with man-jill'.

Gordon Langill was a great guy in the Fire Department. Very interesting. And he went on to be Chief. I remember Gordon running a ski shop up there in the village where Peter Sawyer now owns. And in that barn of his, they had a lot of ski manufacturing equipment. And Gordon hired one or two men, including Gus Pitou⁶⁷. Walker Reed, I believe, worked there, too. Walker Reed is a skilled cabinet maker. And so, getting back to the Fire Department, what we're talking about here, when that truck went past his shop, I was very pleased because his two men would come along and help. They weren't so pleased — but they couldn't hardly refuse to leave their work and go. So, I picked up a little help right there. And that was right on the way out of the village. Thanks to Gordon, there was a little extra help there. And he went on to be Chief. Gordon went to all the mutual aid meetings and everything.

Who would have been the Chief when that mutual aid was getting started?

Roy Page. Mutual aid started down in Winnisquam. The first meeting — I went to it. And there were a few of the chiefs of the local fire departments who met there.

Merrill Sargent⁶⁸.

Merrill Sargent was one of them. And there was somebody from Sanbornton — can't remember his name, but I can see him now.

It wasn't George Currier?

Yes, I think it was. George Currier and Merrill Sargent and Roy Page and a man from Belmont. I think those — and someone from Winnisquam.

Does the name Al Clark ring a bell — from Gilmanton?

No.

OK.

But he could have been there. There was a group of men who knew that they should do something - because, before that, there was no authorization — you had no authority and some towns or cities were very reluctant about going out of their own territory to help. That was their reason for forming this mutual aid.

⁶⁷ Cabinet maker and father of Penny Pitou, an Olympic silver-medal winning skier.
⁶⁸ Laconia Fire Chief.

It was in Winnisquam, that first meeting, and you were there. Do you remember where the meeting was held?

I think it was at the fire station there. I remember the building, and I think it was the fire station. It could have been some hall.

What year do you think that was?

I would love to tell you, but I can't.

Does 1951 sound like it?

It could have been, Dick. It could have been around in that era. When it first started, there was an agreement. But they really had to put it together — they didn't know really what they were up to or how far they could go with it. But they were in hopes that it would work.

Do you remember when you got your first radios?

I didn't have any equipment like that. All we had was the telephone system. Forest fires — the forest fire chief, the district chief — they had some of that equipment — remember?

We finally got ourselves first aid equipment and somebody came and trained us — I think McAllister ...

McAllister, yeh.

McAllister — he came over and gave us a lot of lessons there trying to get us familiar with it after we bought it. There again was something that took thought from the interested people in the Fire Department. It was scouting around and getting enough money to buy equipment.

We talked about Gordon Langill and, of course, Gordon Langill was the Chief. And we talked about Ray Watson. We didn't talk about Fred Shurbert.

Fred wasn't in our little group here that we had.

He might have been later on, then.

He was later. He came into it later, when Red was Chief.

When we first started the Fire Department in 1936, we weren't that much organized. ... We did have a clerk. He was Roy's brother, Otto. I wish we could get hold of some of those records; I know he kept some records of the first few years because he used to read the minutes of the meetings.

When did you get done as the driver?

1955.

And who replaced you?

Red Watson. I took Red down and introduced him to the fire truck and we went down and pumped some water down there — things like that. We had a few sessions together, and then Red took over. It was quite simple.

Red had to sleep in the station, didn't he?

No, nobody ever slept in the station here, except some of the road crew when they worked late hours ...

You might want to mention the badge. We are going to see [on the video tape] a flash of the badge. That badge that we put on the screen here — what can you tell us about that? Do you remember when it was that you got it, who gave it to you?

Well, probably, it was through the Chief — he thought that I earned it, I guess. I had to be at all the fires and somebody had to act because the Chief wasn't there in many, many times. Someone had to head up the group, and so I consented to be a Captain.

Yes. And everyone I've ever talked to said you were one of the best ones they ever had.

Well, I don't know about that. It depends upon who you talk with. I don't like giving orders. I'd rather do it myself and let people follow and do what they can. Sometimes you have to help them a little bit.

We were going to talk about Milo Bacon, the Forest Fire Warden in Gilford.

Well, for many years, my father in-law was the Forest Fire Warden. He had to pick that up along with his other duties, you see. But, after a while, I took it over. I had to make out the permits for blueberry burning and everything. The Forest Fire Warden at that time was kind of a busy little job in town because there were numerous fires — some of them mysterious — that got started. And so it required quite a bit of paper work.

Can you remember the biggest fire you ever had?

Yes, I can. I can remember the worst fire that I ever got into. One afternoon we were called down to Pine Mountain, right near the Recreation Area — up in back of the Arlberg Inn. There's a hill there — I guess they call it Pine Mountain. We called it that anyway. And that fire got started in the late afternoon — early part of the night. When we got down there, it was way up on the side of the mountain. There was no way in the world you could get any piece of equipment anywhere near it. So we knew we had problems. We had big problems — the wind was blowing. So, we got in the area with our tank trucks. You couldn't lay any line of hose there because there was no water anywhere near it. There was no sense in trying to do it. It had to be fought with Indian pumps. And a large group of men. So, we called in right away for help and the District Chief even came; Tom King came. We called in every department around that could get in on it.

And that fire kept spreading. We had a fire in one place, and the first thing we knew, remotely from there, there was another fire. We never figured out whether we had some help⁶⁹ in those fires or what was going on. But we knew one thing, we had a bad mess. And so we kept calling in help. And, as the night went on, help kept arriving. I stayed down there for a while with Tom King, and then that was about all I could stand — I had to get up into the fire with the men on the fire line. And we fought fire there through the night. And the only way that we really controlled it was the fact it went over the top of the mountain down the other side. And when it dropped over the other side, we realized we had a chance then. So we all went in there with our pack pumps and everything, and we did stop it. We were able to stop it before it got down towards Alton where it was headed. There was one place in there where I was with a group of men, small group of men ...

I don't want to interrupt you, but Allan Whitney tells me the story about how — was it you and Allen Whitney who had to dig a hole in the ground and pull your coats over your heads because the fire burned over you?

69

Help from an arsonist.

Well, pretty near that way. Allen was there and there was another volunteer man with me.

I remember one of the things that was very humorous about it. This young lad that had lugged a knapsack pump all the way up there to the top of the mountain with the hopes, of course, that he was going to be able to use it when he got there. Well, we were so desperately in need of water at that time, at that particular point, that I had to take it from him, because I knew that if I put the water on with a spray, it would be more effective than it would be just pumping it out. And we had to do that, and I had to take that water away from him. And I can see the look on his face there when I took his knapsack pump. And that was one of the things — I hated to do that.

Do you remember who he was?

No, I don't, and I never did know his name. But he was a young lad trying to help.

Do you remember how many days you were down there?

No, it wasn't the days that mattered, it was the intensity of the fire.

And the terrain.

And the terrain. We had to keep men on the next day. I believe it was two days before we actually got the thing completely out. But the fire was under control the next morning. And I came home and, I remember, Tom King came home with me, and I was pretty near done in. I went back to bed and I remember things were whirling around and I think I came pretty near to having a slight attack. I didn't want to go through that again. I put my heart and soul into it.

Yup. You'd work awful hard. Do you remember what year that was?

It was in the '40's.

Was it around the time of all the big forest fires in the area?

Yes, there was a lot of forest fires going around at that time. We were having big problems with ...

Was that when they burned half of Maine down? Did you go over to the Maine - Rochester area?

No.

I'll tell you about a fire that we did go to — do you remember the Alton Bay Campground burning? We were down in that one as help — it was in Alton — wasn't in our town. We got in and we come very near to getting trapped in there — there was fire all around us.

You remember what happened?

I remember that why we got trapped in there or very close to being trapped was because one of the main lines — there were big pumpers down at the lake there pumping water out. There were large 6 inch lines — they were the biggest lines that were available then. They had them T-ed off to smaller lines. And one of the big lines broke, and, for a little while there, we were without water. That's when we had to scout around and to get out of there. We took most of the line and just got out of that area. That was when Ray Watson and Allen, no, it was Stanley who was with me.

Ray Watson and Stan Whitney.

And Ray Watson and Stan Whitney was with us at that time. And I don't know whether the boy⁷⁰ was on that truck. I remember flying down there. I remember that truck had no cab on it.

The White had no cab.

The White had no cab. We were out in the open in all the weather.

If it was raining, you got wet.

If it was raining, you got wet. If it was cold, you put on a fur coat, which was kept in the basket there. That was the only protection. You could throw that on and go.

Did you every carry brandy in the glove compartment?

No, I can't remember of anything like that. There might have been some around, but I wasn't very much for that. Besides, driving, you couldn't have anything like that.

No conversation would yet be complete without talking about Bob Weeks.

No. Bob came into the picture really after I had given up the job. Yes, he would go to the fires like everybody else. All the volunteers, if there were any around, they would go. Bob was very active. He was a great guy.

Do you remember when they built the first dam in the village? To put water on the left-hand side⁷¹ of the bridge.

We had to do that very shortly after we got the truck. You see, that was about the only place, or one of the few places, where we could draft water with that White truck. And that was a high draft, too. Your pump had to be in good condition. Of course, you primed your pump with oil every time in order to draw water that way.

So, years ago the road came down through the village and then turned at the village store and turned left again. Alright?

Yes.

And turned left again, and, of course, went down where Tannery Hill Road is ...

Yes.

And would have gone down where the fire station is now.

Yes.

And then that was the bridge.

There was a bridge there. But it was narrow. It was a narrow bridge. And it wasn't quite as high as it is now. They widened it and brought it up a little higher.

When they put the new road in.

When they put the new road in. Right.

⁷¹

Southwest, upstream.

I couldn't remember that, Milo.

You see, they had to to get up Lockes Hill. There was a road up to Lockes Hill. But that was it — there was no road going through there. We went around the store, as you say, and out by Doc Hoyt's little building.

And then it went across the river there.

Right.

The Gunstock River there.

Right. It went to the bridge there.

So, the first time you ever dammed up the Gunstock River — you don't know what year that was?

Well, it had several dams. We would lose them sometimes — the winter would cause trouble. The biggest trouble was breaking the ice to get into the pond. We had to resort to tank trucks to carry water to the fire — one of the things that we had to pay more attention to than anything else — we found that out very quickly.

The City of Laconia — Chief Spring bought those 1949 Maxims, Engine 2 and Engine 5. And I remember a story: there was a fire up on the White Oaks Road — go ahead.

Yes. We didn't get a call to go to this fire, but, as you say, there was a fire on the White Oaks Road. Somebody saw it and reported in a fire to us. They didn't say just where, but they said approximately Gunstock Hill. Well, we got up Gunstock Hill and we saw it wasn't on the Gunstock Hill, it was over on the next hill on the White Oaks Road. But rather than to go back — we had a few men — and just to let them fight their own fire — we decided, "Let's go!" We could see it was in the country — it wasn't a city fire — it was out on a farm — rural — so we kept on going. And we got there before Laconia Fire made it. And we went right to work, putting out the fire. And when Laconia came, we said, "Well, if you want us to leave." No, no, they didn't want us to leave. They were glad to see us. And so we put the fire out. Well, I think that made quite an impression on Laconia because they saw how effective a tank of water was. We were hoping that that would work.

[telephone call interruption]

I think it did work. Let's see, where were we? We were talking about the White Oaks Road.

We were talking about that fire on the White Oaks Road and ...

Do you remember whose fire it was, I mean ...

No. The fire had advanced quite a bit because we could see it from a distance. I think we did quite a job at stopping that fire. Didn't get a chance to spread to any other buildings.

John Weeks, he had quite a few barn fires.

John Weeks had a bad fire there. That was a bad fire when they lost that barn.

Did he have two barn fires — one when you were the Chief and one when Red was the Chief?

When I was Captain. Yes, we did.

What was probably the worst building fire that you ever went to?

Well, one of the hardest fires to fight was the Hubbard barn that burned.

Where Pheasant Ridge Country Club ...

Where Pheasant Ridge Country Club now is. Not necessarily because of the fire itself, but because it was way into the night, one of the coldest nights of the winter. And we were having a lot of trouble keeping the lines from freezing. And trying to run a pump at that little pond that they had out there was really quite a feat. My wife and Mrs. Whitney, Mrs. Elverton Whitney, came to our rescue, I remember. And were we glad to see them with hot coffee and donuts and sandwiches.

Allen's mother, Madeline.

Madeline Whitney.

Madeline Whitney.

And Minnie Bacon.

And Minnie Bacon. ... So, the Hubbard fire was a cold night.

Well, you asked me about what was one of the worst fires. It was because of the cold and the conditions around that made it one of the hardest fires to be in.

What was probably the largest? I'll tell you the most terrible fire was the George Hoyt⁷² farm ...

On Morril Street.

Yes. That was a very heartbreaking fire. That was early in the Fire Department. That was when we didn't have tanks that were effective at all. I pulled in there with the White truck when it was almost new. I had, of course, 500 gallons, but that didn't last any length of time. The barn was going. What we were trying to do — we weren't trying to save the barn — we knew we couldn't save the barn. But we were trying to save the rest of the buildings, because they were all attached right around to the house. There was plenty of help but no water. Somebody discovered a cesspool out at the back there — I guess where they drained the sink water. And they got into that — and they brought that, pails of it, for me to put into the tank, into that pump, so that we could keep a little water going. That water was almost like mud — they actually were scooping it up. And they wanted me to put it into the truck. Of course, I knew what it was going to do to that pump, you know.

Jam it up.

Of course it would. It was going to ruin it. I held out for a minute or so there. The Chief came along, and he knew that the pump would be damaged, but he said, "Milo, there are too many people watching." So, immediately after that fire, the pump had to go back down and be all re-fixed. It⁷³ was the thing to do, of course.

You were in a tough position. What did they do years ago when a kid went through the ice — how did you go out to get him?

I don't remember of ever having to do that. I remember of a drowning down in Lake Shore Park. And I remember a motorcycle disaster down by Lincoln Park.

⁷² I'm not certain that "Hoyt" is correct.

⁷³ Chief Page's decision to pump muddy water.

Lincoln Park down on Old Lake Shore Road?

The Old Lake Shore where Lincoln Park is. A fellow burned up in a motorcycle there. I remember going down to that. Somehow there was a nurse that came along and she knew what to do to try to save him. He was gone but she knew what to do. Those were tough situations because I didn't know what to do. You know, what can you do? I had no training — wasn't skilled enough to do that. And down at the drowning, again there was someone who knew how to try to bring people back with resuscitation. I had not much experience. But I got the equipment there. Here it is! And somebody can come and use it. It's sad to hit those scenes.

Did they call you when people got lost?

No, I don't remember of anything like that, Dick, happening.

Well, they must have called you if they had a cat in a tree.

Oh, yes. I got a lot of foolish calls at night. The most disturbing was somebody getting a little happy, you know, with their parties, and then calling me — calling on that fire line. When you're sound asleep and to be waked up like that, you know, somebody's silly. At the time, I was furious. I can laugh about it now. And the wife didn't appreciate that, either. And I knew well enough who it was — but what are you going to do about it?

Today, someone gets in a car, and of course I know they go a lot faster in a car today than they did back then. But they smash into a tree, the car folds up like an accordion, and it's quite a job to get them out. Did you get involved in any of that?

No, we didn't. In the first place, remember, back then there weren't that many cars. Secondly, I guess they were made a little rugged — they didn't fold up like they do now, perhaps. And thirdly, I just don't think it ever happened to them.

There was some nice things that happened, you know. We had picnics and we had suppers that were put on right in this little Fire Station. We pulled out the fire trucks, and got the dishes out of the little cupboards that we had there, and set up until we had one or two tables. Someone would get some fish down in the lake and we'd have a chowder. And I'm going to tell you they were something! And this Chief, my father-in-law — he loved to use his expertise, whatever you want to call it, his knowledge of cooking. He was a pretty good cook, and he could put together a chowder. And we had several of those fish chowders. And we had chicken, barbecued chicken the poultry men furnished to us. And then, of

course, down to the lake — we would always, once in the season, get together there. So, there were many nice things that came out — and then we had our fireman's ball every year with the crystal ball and the famous ...

Where did you have them?

Some of the first ones were held in the Town Hall here that is now being abandoned. That was our Town Hall and that was where we could have something like that. We had some famous bands that came there.

Tommy Dorsey or ...

Well, it could have been. It took quite a little bit of money to get them to come in here. But it was great and we just had some fine times. And then, later on, at Gunstock Acres — we used to go down there.

The Gunstock Area over to the ski lodge.

Over to the ski lodge. We really had several nice balls there. One of the fun things ...

Well, it must have been a sad day for history to move on but probably a good day when they left here, the old Potter Hill Road Station, and went over to Route 11-A.

There were things that happened here at the old station, which was where I'm looking at now. They decided to put a large siren there, right on the top of the building, so that the town people, the men in town, could get warning. At first it was going to be up on a hill away from my place, and then they finally decided that we would just put it on the Fire Station. Well, the Fire Station, as you know, was very, very close to my house here. And you can just imagine what was like when they started to blow that thing. I didn't need any telephone here, as far as a warning was concerned! I was very happy when that siren went out of here when they built the new Fire Station. I was very happy because my place wasn't going to be worth much with that siren here. Well, we had to go through that tear-up, you know. That was there when they were beginning to enlarge, beginning to put more equipment ...

You never had a fire boat?

No. We did have to go out on island fires, but we always rented something there⁷⁴. Somebody had a ...

⁷⁴

Shirley Burns, of Welch Island and Belmont, was taught by her father to leave the key in their boat's igni-

From Jack Goodhue?

Or Jack Goodhue usually had a boat there that we could get. Yes, I remember going to a few island fires. They used the portable pumps, the Indian pumps.

And, you know, they still do it the same way today.

Well, how else are you going to get at it?

Portable pumps.

What else are you going to do? There's no other way of getting out there with any large piece of equipment. You have to do it the old-fashioned way — the hard way. It was getting out there that was one of the problems, you know. You didn't always have the best of weather going out there.

Well, OK. We'll wrap this thing up. I want to thank Steve Allen, the Deputy Fire Chief of Laconia, for bringing this piece of equipment⁷⁵ along. And I want to thank you, Milo Bacon, for taking the time to go back in history and preserve something that I think is an important thing for everybody to know.

Well, I want to say that I'm very happy to have lived long enough — 81 years old — to be able to enjoy sitting down with you and reminiscing.

Thank you, Milo.

And, Dick, I think this is a good time to wrap this up and call it a day.

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tion when tied up at Glendale, so that firemen could jump in and rush off to an island fire. This was a universal custom at the time. Personal communication. C. Benton

⁷⁵ Video camera with sound recording — a camcorder.

Interview of Capt. Milo Bacon

At 31 Potter Hill Road, Gilford, NH

August 27, 1993

You were born, Mr. Bacon, in Gilford, were you?

Yes.

Where in Gilford were you born?

On Governors Island. My folks worked on a large farm on the island.

Was that the farm that Dave Sturrock eventually moved into?

The same farm buildings, yes. But when my father worked there the island was owned by a very wealthy man who hired a caretaker to run the whole farm operation, which was quite a large dairy with buildings for the boss farmer and hired hands.

Governors Island was cleared at that time?

Partly--enough to make many large fields and pastures for the animals and of course the mansion.

How many head of cattle would have been there?

I don't know much about that. But one thing I remember--my mother once told me about my falling down a flight of stairs when we lived there, but I was much too plump and healthy to have been hurt much.

When you went to school, did you live on Governors Island?

No, I wasn't old enough--much too young. My first school was number nine on the Hoyt Road. The town then had a small cluster of these schools to accommodate children that lived in homes that were scattered all over Gilford.

Do you remember where these schools were? I think one was on the Intervale.

Yes, and also in Gilford Village, on Liberty Hill, at Lilly Pond, in East Gilford near the Gunstock Recreation Area, another near the Ames Farm, and also one near the town line at the Weirs on 11-B.

This would mean individual teachers who would be responsible ...?

Yes, that meant an individual teacher who took all grades to high school.

How many grades where there? Were all the grades in the Belknap Mountain School that you attended?

Yes, all the grades. There were only 14 or 15 children in the whole school most of the time.

What were the school hours then?

Nine to twelve and one to four with 15 minutes recess in both sessions. When I got a little older, I took on the job of janitor--getting to school early to start a fire in the large box stove, sweeping and dusting, and shoveling snow if it was necessary in the winter.

What was the inside of the school like?

Strictly one room with a teacher's desk, seats for the scholars, a large blackboard, and one large box stove funnel running the whole length of the room to a chimney on the other side--and, of course, books, paper, pencils, and supplies.

Could you put jackets on the funnel to dry or was that too hot?

Oh, no jackets on the funnel. The teacher would never allow that to happen. There was a small entry way as you went into the schoolroom and it provided a place to hang clothes and rubbers--and there was a water pail and dipper for drinking.

And in the fall and spring would the windows be opened if it was a hot day? And were the windows moveable?

Yes, the bottom sash would be opened if necessary for different kinds of weather.

Were the schools keyed to agriculture in that if the children were needed to help bring in the hay, for example, school would start a little later?

Generally speaking, children were not disturbed for such work while attending school.

What sort of games did you play at recess?

We played hop-scotch, hide and seek, tag, and climbed gray birches in the woods nearby to the very top until they would bend almost to the ground, and then jump off--great fun. The reason for using these small trees was because they would bend easily but never break. Hit the stick was another game we played by hitting a stick propped beside a tree or any object with another stick. I almost hurt another boy once with this game. He was standing too close to me when I swung at the stick. He had a black eye for a few days and you can bet I wasn't very popular with him for a while.

Was it any problem to maintain discipline? Did everybody respect the teacher?

Teachers in those days had full charge of their pupils. If necessary, a ruler was used--and in one extreme case, a whip was used. But this was done only with the involved parents' full knowledge of a serious behavior problem. My sister was involved in a case that I recall. The teacher had to seriously discipline one boy in particular who was still in school even though he was almost a grown man.

The teachers were all ladies ... were they?

Yes, in our school most were women. But after I left school a gentleman teacher was hired and he taught for several years. He boarded at my folks house and I became well acquainted with him.

Everybody walked to school?

Yes, they did. Roads were not plowed in the winter as today, but children didn't mind that too much--after all they were walking. The teacher probably had the most difficulty getting to school.

Did they roll or plow?

Some of the roads were rolled then, and of course in the spring thaws you had problems.

What sort of problems would that cause in the spring?

Well, the rollers would keep packing layers of snow from the different storms as the winter progressed. In some places, there would accumulate quite a depth of packed snow which was almost as hard as ice. But unfortunately in the spring thaw, trouble came. Horse teams of any kind couldn't use these so-called roads because of the depth of the snow. Eventually, when the snow softened more, men could get out their shovels and the roads could be cleared again.

Did they use a form of plow on the roads that weren't rolled?

I remember my father working for the town making some sort of road in the winter. He used a team of oxen and a set of logging sleds with a log chained under each of the front runners. It didn't make much of a road, but at least it opened a way to reach isolated farms in our rugged Belknap Mountain area. People could at least get milk, butter and eggs to the market, and buy another stock of groceries. This was not an easy way to live by any means, especially in the winter.

Did everyone convert their carts to runners with the first storm?

Yes, sleighs instead of wagons and heavy sleds instead of carts for the work horses or oxen. There were no automobiles yet. My folks had a Democrat wagon.

What is a Democrat wagon?

Just one type of standard transportation at the time. Perhaps you might compare it to a Ford or Chevrolet in later years.

How were the roads made? For example, now we have bituminous on top of fine stone and coarse stone and so forth.

No, blacktop roads were very rare in Gilford at that time. The roads then consisted mostly of very sandy top soil and clay with sometimes a large rock or two. Clay made the roads quite dusty when it was dry and slippery when it was wet.

The clay used--was it the same clay now used for bricks?

Yes. It helped on sandy spots in the summer, but in the winter it would cause problems by holding water which would freeze creating bumps which later washed out pieces of the road during a thaw. Later, when blacktop was beginning to be used, this clay base had to be dug out and replaced with a stone and gravel base before applying a bituminous top.

Where did the clay come from?

Clay could be found in many places on the sides of the roads, often in a small knoll, in several parts of the town. There happened to be one near my folks' house on Belknap Mountain Road. It was cut off long ago in order to widen the road.

It's amazing and it's sad isn't it--how things like that get totally obliterated. When was it that they started black-topping the roads?

I don't know exactly, but I started working for the town in 1927 or 1928, and believe me there were a lot of dirt roads all over town then. And we were busy in early spring trying to make the roads passable--hauling gravel to fill mud holes and ruts. At that time, the town had a very small budget for highway work, and therefore a lot of very poor roads. Maybe the total population of the town might have been 600 people.

How did people get their produce--was it Laconia that the produce went to?

Laconia was the only city near to our little agricultural town. People would then buy most of their needs in Laconia.

And then things would be shipped by rail if they needed to be?

Yes. For one thing, blueberries were shipped out, and sometimes lumber in the early years. We had one railroad station located on land now owned by B. Mae's Inn where 11 and 11-B cross by Sawyer's Dairy Bar. Lumber was shipped from there. Also, there were ice houses in that area, near what is now the town beach.

Thanks, that's interesting. At the public beach there was a large ice house?

There was a large commercial ice company.

Opposite where Fay's Boat Yard is?

Yes, on the opposite side of the boat yard at the time. Built near the beach, large ice houses stored harvested ice which, in warm weather, was loaded into freight cars and shipped out--several cars at a time. Then there was a large demand for ice in Boston and surrounding towns. This business provided work for local labor at a time in the winter when jobs were needed. Ice was harvested from Lake Winnepesaukee and Lilly Pond as well.

I can remember the last ice house. I think it was in Lakeport, close to where the Mt. Washington was launched.

Yes, the last ice house was in Lakeport near Barton's Cabins, on Route 3 which goes through Laconia. I don't think the Mt. Washington was launched near there.

What was the first main road that came in here. Was it 11?

Yes. Route 11 came through the Lilly Pond and Glendale sections. And 11-A branched off at Gilford Avenue, went past Gilford and on to Alton. Both routes have changed in parts. The Route 11-A in the village was poorly laid out at first, making a letter S around the village store and then immediately another turn down a hill called Tannery Hill, now called Tannery Lane. A new road in later years eliminated the curves, the hill and two bridges.

That's interesting. There's a blind ending road down by the State Highway Department close to the Laconia bypass that seems to point as though it came up to Gilford. Was that part of it?

No. This probably is the road leading to the Liberty and Cotton Hill sections of town. You turn left beyond Gilford West on to Liberty and Cotton Hills.

Tell me what you can remember about the tannery.

I don't remember much--a building mostly rotted away and places where I imagined there might have been vats used for tanning hides--at one time a little business place. Of course there was a sawmill about where the Gilford Public Library now is.

No, I didn't know that.

I was told in the Spring when there was plenty of water, this sawmill was equipped by using water power from a dam that was built. It was possible to get enough power to run a

sawmill for at least part of the year until the brook got low. I was told when winter came, the pond was sometimes used as a skating rink for children and grownups as well.

Do you know when the sawmill was finished?

No, this all happened before my time. I do remember something else though. It was going around with my Grandfather Bacon⁷⁶ lighting street lamps in the village--six of them. The lamps were lit with kerosene. I can see him now--walking with his little ladder to reach the big globes on top of the eight-foot high lamps--with his kit of supplies. A very pretty sight for a small boy--especially in winter.

It must have been really pretty. Could you tell me something about your business? I know that you were in sand, gravel and concrete.

Well, to begin with, I must tell you what happened while being a fireman. After taking the job in 1936 as the fireman on call for Gilford, I had no idea what that would lead to. As the years went by, I found myself doing blacksmith work for the Highway Department. That meant repairing road drags, sharpening picks, and, later, electric welding--doing most of this work in a building close to the town barn. Also, I made culverts for the highway department, again with the fire bells close by. With all of this extra work, I found myself being a general handyman as well as the town fireman. This led into a small business of my own. I started very modestly with very little equipment, and without even a suitable building to make concrete products. But as the business grew, I built a building and spent many successful years making Belknap Concrete Products. Probably the most important benefit from all those years as a fireman was learning a trade that was helpful to me when I started out on my own. This story is not meant to sound bitter, but is meant to tell people of today about bygone years and just what it was like for a person with only a grade school education to make a living.

Getting back to the fireman's job, I did sleep at home at night, but with a set of bells at the side of the bed and of course a red fire phone.

You had a red phone in your house and bells?

Yes, it was my Job to get to the fire truck and alert anyone I could--but always to get to that fire as soon as possible with the fire truck.

I went through the Town Reports and there was fire equipment valued at \$600.00 in 1930 and on for about seven years before the White Engine.

Maybe I can tell you something about that piece of equipment. It was never meant for anything but forest and grass fires, but it was stored in the Highway garage until the White Engine was bought in 1936. When it arrived at the garage it was an old Studebaker chassis with chemicals, a 50 gallon tank with hose mounted in back of the driver's seat, four other soda and acid chemicals you could pick up and carry, and a few other forest fire fighting tools. Oh yes, this was all started by a man named Charles Gove, a blacksmith and jack of all trades. He assembled all of this in his shop, and, in that he was the town forest fire warden, he was the only protection Gilford had. He housed it in a shed in the summer, and in the winter months with no heat available and there being no need for forest fire equipment, he jacked up the wheels and put it away until spring. Gilford had no fire protection at all. One winter during that time, there was a house fire on the Hoyt Road. The Drouin family was living there at the time. Of course the story about the fire in the Citizen the next day stated that Gilford's fire truck was up on jacks for the winter. That continued until 1936.

Did you pay Laconia for their services?

Yes, I'm sure Laconia got paid something.

I noticed Mr. Gove's name because he was Forest Fire Warden in the early years and I know that you were Forest Fire Warden eventually.

Yes, I took an appointment as Gilford's Forest Fire Warden.

And could you tell me how a Forest Fire Warden is appointed and what his duties are?

First, it is usually someone who is already in the Fire Department. He is appointed, and because he is responsible for handling sums of money, he is sworn into the office by the town clerk. His duties are, among other things, issuing burning permits, keeping records of all expenditures of forest fires, and of course taking charge of all forest fires in the town. He also collects and pays bills, and is always under the supervision of a state district chief located in Concord.

When did the Forest Fire Warden start as an office in New Hampshire? Do you recall?

Probably there were always wardens or men who acted as wardens. Gilford had a lot of land covered with woods in those days.

Was the Fire Department then part of the Highway agent's responsibility?

Well, it so happened in our town that the Road Agent as he was called, was also the Fire Chief--a very close relative of mine, my father-in-law, Roy Page. For a while he was the town's Forest Fire Warden. After that, I became Forest Fire Warden.

Could you tell me about him [Roy Page]? He sounds like an interesting man.

Well he was an interesting man. He had foresight in dealing with water problems in rural areas--where water was scarce and none could be found--and you had to stand helpless without water and watch a fire burn. He had the idea of carrying water with trucks. He found old, discarded 500 gallon oil tanks; placed skids under them and kept them on a bank near the fire station on land that I now own. These tanks could then be slid onto any available town truck along with a small portable pump. To my knowledge, this was the first approach to hauling water to a fire. Soon, a second-hand Model A Ford was equipped with a tank filled with 500 gallons of water, a portable pump, and a few Indian Forest Fire pumps. After other trucks and experimenting with making an efficient tank truck, the town bought a brand new Dodge. That piece of equipment was built by us. We kept the tank of water very low between the rear wheels and more baffles in the tank itself and a power take-off pump. We now had an excellent piece of equipment.

Did that navigate the roads in winter?

Yes, all the trucks had chains on them. Getting back to Roy Page, he had a great deal to do with starting Mutual Aid. Along with his knowledge of carrying water by trucks to fires, he also felt the importance of one town helping another. With a few meetings with other local town fire chiefs, an organization was formed and named Mutual Aid, and we can see what that does for people today. Gilford had brooks and small ponds, but no way to get the water from these sources fast. So Chief Roy Page was able to get money from the town to install hydrants, and this speeded up getting water to the fires. In my mind, Roy Page probably did more in his time than most people realize--not only in improving the fire fighting equipment for this town, but for the whole Lakes Region.

He sounds like a wonderful person. Between the Fire and the Police Departments, what sort of relationship or linkage or cooperation was there in those times?

They worked together I'm sure.

What can you tell me about Herman Olsen?

Yes, well Herman Olsen was Chief of Police for a while, then Charles Burdett, and others that I don't remember. Years ago, though, I think my Grandfather was the town constable.

What was his name?

Ahira Bacon.

One of the things I wondered about was why there was an official Police Chief who was Mr. Olsen and who was so called in the Town Report in 1937, and there was not a Fire Chief--Mr. Page--until 11 years later in 1948. Was there a reason for the slow development of the official position of Fire Chief?

In 1936 when the Gilford Fire Department was born, we had no chief or anybody to drive the truck. Mr. Page, being the town Road Agent, acted as our chief until elected in 1948. Olsen had been Police Chief long before that.

Did people call you Chief when you were the principal employee?

Never. I took the name of Captain after a while.

So it was really wonderful that you were able to live right near to where the equipment was kept.

Yes. I bought this place in 1941, five years after taking the job.

When the town purchased the fire truck in 1936, how did that change the way fires were fought in Gilford?

Well, for one thing everybody knew that Gilford had an honest to goodness piece of fire fighting equipment and a driver to get the truck to fires. I had trouble finding volunteers in the daytime, but it surprised me sometimes how many would show up.

Was there a siren in the center of town?

At first, only a siren on each fire truck. But very soon, a large siren was bought and placed on top of the fire station section of the town sheds.

Did you have fire alarm boxes?

No, not in Gilford in those days--only a red phone system.

When did the fire tower on top of Belknap Mountain--when was that built?

The fire tower on Belknap Mountain--I do not know--long before my time.

How did they communicate?

When a fire was spotted, a call came to the Gilford Fire Department and we would be on our way.

In 1938, I see in the town bills--bills appearing on the order of \$130 to \$140 from New England Telephone for the telephone fire alarm system. And what was that?

I assume these orders were monthly bills for service like we all pay.

Could you tell me about call men--what sort of system of call men did you have? I noticed in some years there'd be many--as in 1940 for example--in addition to you and Mr. Lawrence Sibley, there were 38 other people who received pay.

I think you are referring to one of the forest fires in that year. Pay was given to all men who were called to fight these kinds of fires. The Pine Mountain fire near the Arlberg Inn was one of my bad experiences as fire warden. It was spotted late one afternoon and it was days before we could leave it as cold out.

Did people go through qualification as they do now to become fire department call people--or just somebody who was willing and able?

We took any man who was able-bodied and willing to help.

It looks like they got paid 40 cents an hour.

For work on forest fires the pay was 40 cents an hour for years.

Take a year--in 1943, there were 18 calls to the fire department--and now we're up to 799 this last year.

My only answer is a very fast growing town. New homes being built every year. That makes for a much larger department and many more calls for the fire department to respond--roads being built that never existed before.

Gunstock Acres?

We now have Gunstock Acres, Collins Heights and many, many more new sections of Gilford.

How did the positions of Fire Engineers come about? What need did they serve?

The board of Fire Engineers consisted of three men to oversee the department itself. This came about as the town and fire department were growing rapidly as the years went on.

Ray Watson was a Fire Engineer from 1948 to 1954. Is he the same person as Red Watson?

No, Ray and Red Watson were two different men. Ray was a Fire Engineer; Red Watson took the job as Fireman when I quit the job in 1955.

I've got him as Fire Chief in 1959, Wilkinson in 1958, and Langill in 1955.

We had a rapid change in Fire Chiefs until finally Red Watson took over as driver and Chief.

Could you tell me a little bit about Mr. Langill--Gordon Langill?

He was my neighbor--a fine friend. He was Chief of the Fire Department for a short while. He even was a call man--my substitute one evening a week for a while. He also had a small ski shop near the fire station.

Did he?

I mention this because it proved to be a handy place to get a man to go with me on the truck to fires in daytime hours.

What about Mr. Wilkinson?

Harold Wilkinson was my sister's husband and also a very close neighbor. Harold was Fire Chief for a short while and later was elected as one of the Engineers.

At one time in the town reports, they have the 1956 roster for Tanker Number 1 with yourself as Captain, and then Mr. Stamps and Mr. Lindsay.

That date had to be after I gave up the job. Red Watson was then in charge of the trucks. I then was assigned with Mr. Stamps and Mr. Lindsay to drive Tanker Number 1 which was the Dodge tank truck as volunteer men--to go to fires if we were available.

Finally to end this rambling--by trying to remember a bit of my past life with the Gilford Fire Department (and before), I do hope that in some way it will help those people who are working very hard to gather a history of Gilford.

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Gilford Fire Chief Michael Mooney

Gilford Fire Station, Route 11-A, Gilford, New Hampshire

September 10, 1993

♦ Edited Interview — Corning Benton, Interviewer ♦

Chief Mooney, what's the inventory of vehicles in the Fire Department now?

Right now we have four pumper-tankers, one ambulance, one heavy-duty rescue truck, one forestry truck, one fire boat, one pickup truck, and two department cars.

Could you give me the dates of purchase and the factors (like a 500 gallon tanker) of the four trucks?

The oldest one is a '72 Maxim - that's a 1500 gallon pumper, and it carries 500 gallons of water. The next one would be a '79 Maxim - it's a 1250 pumper with 1000 gallons of water. And the next one is a '83 Pierce with a 1250 pump and a 1000 gallons of water. And the newest one is a '88 Ranger that carries 1250 gallons of water and has a 1250 pump.

Thank you. What is the forest fire vehicle?

It's a surplus army jeep. We've got a 250 gallon tank on it with 250 portable pump.

Do you have a pump on the fire boat?

Yes, we do - a 500 gallon permanent pump.

How many employees does the Fire Department have and how is it organized?

We're at ten full-time and twenty-three volunteers. We have two people on shift 24 hours a day seven days a week. And from 8 to 5 from Monday through Friday there's four of us on duty with myself, and the Deputy Chief and one of us is on call every weekend.

Do you have a company organization, like they had in the past?

No, we don't any more. We used to and it didn't seem to work out. ... the volunteers all had ... one company with a call-company lieutenant.

Could you tell me about how these people are trained?

We have a continuous training program. Every Wednesday night we have some type of training. One Wednesday night we'll have fire training. Another Wednesday night it'll be medical training. And then, the third Wednesday night it'll be whatever ... a combination of both. And on the first Wednesday of every month there's our Association Meeting.

They have to meet state standards. In other words, once they come on, they have to go to the hospital for a physical - to make sure that they are capable for the job. Then after that we start training them in house, and we send them to various schools around the state. And, after a year, they have to be trained to at least Fire Fighter Level 1.

Our goal is to train everyone, we hope, this year to Career Level Fire Fighter, which is state law. Anyone that works full time has to meet that requirement.

About how many hours training does this require?

A couple hundred hours to get to Career Level.

You mentioned something I didn't understand: "Five Fire Level" - that's one below Career Level?

No, that's two below Career - the training levels go Fire Fighter Level 1, and then it's Fire Fighter Level 2, and Career Level, and then Fire Fighter Level 3, and then Officer.

Thank you. Are there any women in the department?

Yes, we have. They're all volunteers. We have two right now. We had a full-time one four, about five, years ago.

Was she the first one?

Yes.

Do you recall her name?

Linda Morse.

What is the role of the Town Forest Fire Warden?

The role of the Town Forest Fire Warden. He has to issue all burning permits or control all burning permits, the issuance of them. He has the authority to stop open burning when it gets too dry. There's the responsibility of training all the deputy forest fire wardens. And he's responsible to go out and look at timber cuts when people are cutting - in a logging operation, he has to go out and make sure the brush isn't piled too high, too close to other people's properties. And, if they are using skidders and they're crossing brooks, they have to make sure there's bridges built so they're not polluting the streams. ...

Of course, he's in charge of all, any, forest fires that occur. If the fire chief in a town isn't the forest fire warden, which sometimes he is not, and there's a forest fire - the forest fire warden's in charge, not the fire chief.

Am I right in believing that, since 1968 with Gilford Chief Thompson, that the Town Forest Fire Warden has been the Police Chief?

Never. It's always been the Fire Chief.

I meant Fire Chief.

It's always been the Fire Chief. Since Red Watson was Chief - he's always been the Warden - ever since Red Watson.

What's the relation between the state and the town, when it comes to fighting forest or field fires?

The town can request any assistance from the state that they need. And it's up to the Forestry Department to come in and they usually send a District Chief. But the Warden is still in charge.

The District Chief comes in and just assesses whatever the Forest Fire Warden wants. If he needs more manpower, if he needs equipment, if he needs helicopters, or whatever - he goes to the District Chief and the District Chief gets it OK'd in Concord - but the Forest Fire Warden is still in charge.

And that brings me to the next question, what does the District Chief do?

The District Chief ... our District Chief covers from Manchester to Tilton, so he has quite an area. But it's up to him to come around and see if we need any kind of equipment,

we might need supplies for our burning permits, or come in and assist us on fires if we have any. He may help with training. And he's just mostly a coordinator between the town and the state.

How many towns are in this district?

In this district? I couldn't tell you. It's changed - it changes almost weekly. Because what they're trying to do is ... state budgets. When somebody retires, they're not replacing them - so they're expanding the District Chiefs' districts.

What is the name of this district?

This is District 2.

Changing the subject, how many dry hydrants are there now?

Nineteen.

Where is the pressure tank or the reservoir for Gilford?

Well, they just changed that in the last two, three, years. It used to be right here behind the fire station. But they drove some new wells over here and I don't believe there's a storage tank any more - it's just pressurized all the time. So, I'm not really sure. Wayne Snow'd have to tell you how that works because it's not the way it used to be - it's all been changed. And the hydrants in the village - there's no water - we don't use those hydrants at all.

How do you get water for a fire in the village?

We either have to tank it in or we draw it out of the brook at the storage - at the dry hydrant. Plus, we have three dry hydrants up at the corner now of Wilson Road that we can draw from.

Well, my next question is "Is the hydrant and water-main system of the village adequate now?"

No, it's not. ... the only thing the water system in the village can be used for is domestic water - you could never use it for fire fighting.

Is there a plan for improving it?

We've talked about it. When they had the problems with the water system ... three or four years ago, we talked about putting a big 50,000 gallon tank up behind the elementary school - up on the side of the mountain - have it gravity-feed, and that would have been plenty of water. But it was so expensive that - I don't believe there'll ever be anything done until they put sewage in - when they put sewage in, then they may talk about water.

Milo Bacon mentioned that if you attached a pumper to a hydrant where the piping system, the pressure, was inadequate, that you could collapse hot water heaters in houses.

That's right. If you were pulling draft, a vacuum, on a hydrant ... the water's got to come from someplace. And, like he says, it collapses hot water heaters and boilers and everything else. That's why we don't use any of those in the village.

Thank you. How are radio communications set up?

All of our radio communications go through Lakes Region Fire Dispatch at the court house in Laconia. Of course, the transmitter is up here on Belknap Mountain. All emergency calls go into the Dispatch Center in Laconia. We are alerted by a tone activation - all the people in the department have a pager with tone activation ...

Could you explain tone activation to me?

OK, you've heard mine just go off a minute ago.

I've got a scanner, too, and I don't understand it.

See, you don't have to listen to this radio all the time. If you leave it like that, you don't have to hear anything until it's a Gilford call - and it automatically opens this thing up.

You mean, the radio responds to the tone?

Right. There's a tone code. Every town has a different code. And when there is a Gilford call, the Gilford tone code is transmitted from the mountain and it opens these radios up. This one, I can shut it off and turn it on [loud tone]. That's what happens. Now, that'll stay on until you reset it. And then, you don't hear any more until it's Gilford again.

All of our radio transmissions ... go through Belknap tower to the Dispatch Center. We do have a base radio here we can use to talk back and forth ...

And the Dispatch Center is in the court house in Laconia?

Right - the basement in the court house. And the transmissions go from wherever we are - on a portable radio or a mobile radio - when we transmit, it goes directly to the tower. And from the tower, it goes to the Dispatch Center by telephone line.

Thanks. Does each volunteer have one of these tone alert radios too?

Yes, they do.

Who pays for this system?

The town pays for it. The pagers cost about \$360 apiece. It initially was quite an investment. But they last ... we only have to replace them about every fifteen years. You put about two a year in the budget, and replace them.

Thank you. How has the growth of medical aid and patient transportation service affected the department?

Well, it affected it tremendously back when we took it over. When we took it over in either '77 or '78, I'm not sure which, there was only one man on a shift. And when we'd get called to a medical call, if it was at night or weekends, you'd have to depend on a volunteer or the Chief or a Deputy Chief meeting you at the scene to help transport, because you have to have two people to run the ambulance. We ran it that way until 1980.

I became Chief in '79, and I went to the town and requested that they hire three more people, initially to run the ambulance service because the calls we were having ... roughly 200 to 250 calls a year with just the ambulance. And it was putting such a strain on the volunteers that we had to have two men on the shift to run the ambulance service. And the town agreed and we hired three more people. And the calls kept increasing and increasing and then the Garcia Act came out - you can only work so many hours a week and then you had to pay overtime, which has affected us.

That was a federal ...

That's a federal law, right. That anybody who worked over 40 hours a week - you had to pay them time and a half. Except a supervisor. The fire service and police service had been effective at 40 hours a week, but you can only work so many hours a month. And the way we were working, we were working 56 hours a week. And so we were going over the amount allowed by the federal government.

So we figured out what it would cost for the overtime and what it would cost to hire another shift. It was cheaper to hire another two people - and put on four shifts instead of three - so that's what we did; we hired two more people and put on another shift. Now they work 42 hours a week.

What is the extent of cross-training between the fire-fighting capabilities and the medical-aid capabilities of your people?

Probably 75% of the training is medical and the other 25% is fire - except for new recruits.

Not all the volunteers are medically trained. With volunteers, the training is extensive and to be a volunteer and to become an EMT - you're talking over 200 hours just to take the course, and then you have to take so many hours of training every year, and you have to go on so many calls a year in order to get re-certified every two years.

So, for the volunteers, it's a hard job just being an EMT. You have to really put in a lot of time. Because even full-time people have to put in a lot of time. And, I have, luckily, full-time people that are really dedicated to medical service. And I have one full-time and one volunteer that can administer i.v.'s in the field, which is almost up to the level of paramedic. And we got some more people that, I think, are going to do that.

So we're increasing the level of what we're doing yearly, so it's working out well. But training for the medical is extensive because the state comes out with new regulations all the time. ... there's that law that you're not supposed to come out with regulations unless they pay for it, but it doesn't seem to be happening. Now you got to keep up with it and ... a lot of our budget is overtime and it's for training, training the full-time people.

Thank you. How, over the last twenty years, did the emergency medical technician call service become a part of the fire department? Why didn't it become part of the health department or police department?

It used to be private - the ambulance service was run by funeral homes years ago. And it got to be so busy that the funeral homes, they weren't making any money. There was no money in transporting patients. So, they went to the city Laconia and said we're not going to do it any more.

That's when they went out and had a contract with Forest Park Ambulance Service and, of course, they had to subsidize them - and they were paying them something like \$200,000 a year just as subsidy. Plus, the people were paying that were using the service. In other words, if you got transported, it was costing you \$100 plus the city of Laconia was paying \$200,000, the town of Gilford was paying like \$50,000, and the town of Belmont was paying the same to subsidize.

So, when we started having problems with Forest Park's service, we started looking at the costs, and we felt that we could operate our own ambulance ... ourselves. Because the people felt, "Well, the fire fighters are already there - we're paying them anyways - why not have them run the ambulance service?"

The police department is not the same. I mean, they're on the road all the time. They're out patrolling all the time. But when fire fighters aren't fighting a fire ... they're here at the station working on equipment and whatever.

So the feeling was, "As long as we've got the fire fighters anyways, why not let them run the ambulance service - even if it does cost a little bit more money." And that's really how it got into the fire department.

It's worked out well.

It's worked out well.

Our first reaction was, "Let the hospital run the ambulance service - why should the towns run it when the undertakers got out of it?" But the hospital wasn't interested in it at all. Because ... it's not a money-making proposition. You can't make money.

The only way private ambulance services can make money is by doing transports. And what I mean by a transport - if someone has to go from the nursing home to the hospital - that's not an emergency. And they charge by the mile ... quite a bit of money. If you have to get transferred from Laconia to Hanover by ambulance, the private ambulance services do that. The only thing we respond to is emergency calls. We don't do any non-emergency calls.

So that's why Stuart's Ambulance ... can make money ... by doing the transports. But if they couldn't do transports, they couldn't make money in the ambulance business.

Thanks. How has the continuing growth of the town affected fire and rescue services?

The continued growth is affecting us ... we have a very rigorous inspection program - fire prevention program in this department. And it has showed over the years - at least the last five years of it's paid off. Our fires have reduced almost 50% as far as structure fires go. And we feel it is because of the fire prevention program that we're conducting in the schools and throughout the town.

The growth - for example, the growth over there at the new Rich's Plaza. Now part of that's in Laconia and part of it is in Gilford. It's increased our calls, there's no question about it. This new industrial park they're talking about now is going to increase our calls - you can't help it - just by false alarms. Every time you have an alarm, you don't know it's false until you get there. So that means people have to come in from outside and we have to pay time and a half or whatever, so it really has an effect on the department.

Do each of these industrial complexes have an alarm system that's wired into here?

Yes, they do. They're wired right into the Dispatch Center directly.

In Laconia.

Yes.

Why, over the years, has the focus of fire services changed from fire fighting to fire prevention?

Well, the economy, basically. When I first came into the Laconia department in 1968 - you would come in at 7 o'clock in the morning and you would check out your truck, sweep the floors, and that's all you did the rest of the day. And you'd sit around and play cards and just work for the fire department.

This went on ... until the early 1970's then I came over here (I got started in Laconia) - came over to Gilford. And it was getting to be a frequent thing - people saying "You all the time don't do anything but play cards and just wait for fires." And then we started saying, "Well, let's change our image plus we should start teaching people about fires." And that's when we started going out and ... (we used to do only Fire Prevention Week). But, since I've

been Chief, we started the public education in schools and that's an ongoing thing year 'round. Every single week we have someone over there putting on some type of class for the schools.

Is this both high school and elementary school?

It's always been the elementary school, and this year we're going to start in the high school. It's going to be something new this year.

In the town records it mentioned that two children got awards last year. What did they get awards for?

One of them ... got off the bus on his way home from school and saw smoke coming from a building and knew exactly what to do. And the other one woke up in the middle of the night and the smoke detectors were going off in the house. And ... [she] got the whole family up, got them outside, and did exactly what she was taught in school. So, it paid off ... in two incidents.

Marvelous. What is the Fire Inspection Program and What is the Home Safety Evaluation Program?

The Fire Inspection Program is - we go out and inspect every business in the town twice a year, every six months. And what we do is go in and make sure that the emergency lights are working, the exit signs are on, the heating systems are not blocked, the aisles in stores are wide enough so that people can get out, and the exits aren't blocked.

The Home Safety Program is a voluntary program for the home owner. They just can call us up and say, "... we'd like to have a home safety check." And we visit their homes and we ... make sure they've got smoke detectors in the right places and make sure they're working. They should have fire extinguishers near the exits. We teach them how to do a home fire exit drill at night when the kids are asleep, and we tell them that they should practice it. And we set the drill up for them with the kids starting in their beds, and we talk about when the kids should or should not try to get out of their rooms. We teach the precautions to use when cooking with grease and stuff like that Just whatever the homeowner wants.

Thank you. What is the relationship between the Gilford Fire-Rescue Department and the Fire School and Training Center at Lilly Pond?

The Fire School and Training Center at Lilly Pond is no more. The Red Watson Training Center - the only thing that's left there is the smoke tower. The building itself was sold to the Belknap County Sportsman's Association.

When was that?

I'd say four years ago. We still use the training grounds, but the building is no longer. The Mutual Aid has been using the upstairs at the Glendale fire station for fire training. But as far as fire school, the only thing they have now is fire-fighter 1, fire-fighter 2, and 3-level classes that they put on year 'round. But they don't have an annual fire school and all like we used to.

Where do people get trained in a smoky and fiery environment?

We use that building that's over there at Lilly Pond ... we call it the smoke house. That concrete building there is what we use. But that's all that's left of the Red Watson Training Center.

By the way, they're building us a brand-new fire academy at Concord. It's under construction right now. We've been fighting for that for twelve years. We finally got it approved and its under construction right now. So, we'll have all kinds of buildings down there to use - that's what was needed.

Maybe this next question is incorrect. Why was the Glendale fire station abandoned?

Two reasons.

The downstairs was not large enough. The equipment got too big - it couldn't get inside the station. It was too high, too wide, and we just couldn't fit it inside the station. None of my trucks would fit in that station now, except the forestry truck.

Plus the fact that the Sewer Department and Sign Department needed a place to go. And so they moved to Glendale after the new highway garage was built.

The highway garage used to be in the basement level of the present fire station on Route 11-A. When the new highway garage was built, we parked the equipment that had been at Glendale downstairs here.

We still use the upstairs at Glendale for training.

Does the general alarm still work?

No, we don't have any sirens at all.

When did they stop?

I'd say they stopped probably in '83 or '84.

Was this because everybody had a radio pager?

Yes.

Are wood stove and chimney fires still they problem they were right after the oil embargo in the late '70's?

No. No, we used to have probably 60 - 70 chimney fires a season. Now, we're not even having 10. And I think there's two reasons for it. The price of oil has gone down - people aren't burning as much wood. And they've come up with some new, more efficient oil burners ... you can heat a home for \$200 - \$300 a year, which is cheaper than wood. And the other thing is just awareness - people having their chimneys cleaned and then being more aware of the dangers of it.

Thank you. Some littler questions at the end. As listed in the annual report, what are "calls for assistance."

"Calls for assistance" would be, for example, during the hurricane last year basements flooded and we'd go and pump them out. During the snow storm, last year's blizzard, we were transporting people ... that got stuck at the bottom of Liberty Hill and needed to get home - we'd take the 4-wheel drive, pick them up, take them up there. Another example is just going out and replacing smoke detectors for the elderly. They'll call up and say, "My smoke detector is beeping." So we'll go up, put a new battery in it for them. Standing by for a gas spill - a car gets over-filled with gas and leaks and it's in the parking lot at the plaza and it's spilling over and people call, so we have to go and stand by and put stuff on the spilled gas. Things like that.

Thank you. You answered the next question, there is no history of the fire department.

We're working on it.

Are there any photographs available?

**Yes, we have a lot of photographs and I believe Captain Beland has most of them
Maybe over in the trophy case, too. And Kathy has some.**

I'll just put a note in my report that there are.

Yeah, we've got plenty of photographs. We've got all kinds.

What's the correct name of the hand-operated pump when you have the knapsack arrangement on ...

Indian pump.

Indian pump. Is there a generic term, like hand-operated slide pump?

No, that's what it has always been called.

There was a fire officer named Ballou ...

Dick Ballou.

Dick. Is he still here?

No, he retired in '87.

☐ ☐ ☐

Capt. Milo Bacon

31 Potter Hill Road on 9-17-93
Notes after an Informal Conversation

The first general alarm siren for the village was on the fender of the 1937 White fire truck. Milo would start the siren when he started the fire truck's engine, and in this way the town would learn that there was a fire. A blackboard was installed at the Village Fire Station so that the call men, who did not know where the fire was or who had not been able to get ready in time to follow the sound of the fire truck siren, could learn the location of the fire. Milo would chalk up the location after hanging up the red phone but before starting the fire engine.

The tank on Charlie Gove's Studebaker truck was either 50 or 100 gallons in capacity. It was like a soda-acid extinguisher -- you tipped something over to pressurize it. The tank supplied a red 1 1/2" hose with a nozzle.

The red phone telephone alarm system started in 1936. You would dial "O" for Operator to report a fire. She would then connect the caller to the Gilford red phone system. This would cause the alarm bells over each the red phone to ring and the phone would be answered by the person on call. The red phones with alarm bells were located at the Village Fire Station on Potter Hill Road, at the head of Milo Bacon's bed, at Milo Bacon's concrete works, in the home of the substitute on-call person, at the Town Hall in the selectmen's office, and in the chief's house [verify that this is Roy Page's house].

Before this, one called for assistance using the ordinary telephone system.

A fire in the past - the fire-fighting strategy was to move out property. The idea was that a Neighbor Helped His Neighbor - you would run to their assistance.

Chief Spring of Laconia. There were three men upstairs at a fire. He gave an order to "Get half the men out of there!"

Charles "Charlie" Gove was a very inventive man. He made many tools and wheelbarrows. You would tell him what you wanted as a tool, or just what you wanted something you did not know what it was to do, and he would make it. "You would tell him what you wanted, and he would do it."

There were no training requirements to be a town or forest fire fighter. All you had to be was able-bodied and willing.

□ □ □

Chief Michael Mooney
December 3, 1993
Telephone Conversation Notes

1977 rescue-ambulance is not the one in current use — it was the first one bought. Its manufacturer not known right now. It was traded out of service when the 1985 vehicle was bought.

Current rescue-ambulance vehicle is 1985 Yankee Coach.

Current forestry vehicle is a Military Jeep. Into service in 1986. Manufactured 1966. This replaced Brush No. 6.

Brush No. 6 was the same as the Weapons Carrier 4x4. This vehicle was in service back to 1967. It was a military jeep. Year of manufacture is not known. It had neither a water tank nor a pump. It carried Indian tanks, rakes, and shovels.

□ □ □

Capt. Milo Bacon

22 Potter Hill Road, Gilford, N.H.

Telephone Interview Notes. December 18, 1994

Milo is very pleased with the video tape of the 1942 Gilford Old Home Day parade⁷⁷. It was quite a sight to see the White truck again. It was Milo's daughter Patricia who, with Roy Page, was on the front seat of the White truck. Son John and his wife were with Milo when he first ran the tape. John and Milo recognized Police Chief Olsen with two other men. The man on the back was probably Stanley Whitney -- Allen was too young then to be the one. The older one on top could have been Elvin Whitney, but Milo is not at all sure of that.

Milo did not recognize any of the Laconia equipment on the video of the 1945 V-J parade in Laconia. He was sure that Chief Spring was there too. Laconia did have a hand pumper -- they usually put it in a parade. There were men on each side of such a hand pumper.

Gilford never had a hand pumper.

Milo has no information at all about Gilford's "fire wagon" mentioned in the 1915 town report. Milo was driving a truck for the Village and working on the roads in the Twenties -- and he heard nothing about a wagon.

Roy Page was the one who sparked interest in fire fighting, even before the White truck was bought.

Milo's grandfather Ahira was the first Bacon to come to Gilford. He came from Vermont. His wife, Hannah, was a Munsey and she came from Gilford. Ahira had a garden and chickens and a cow, but farming was not his primary line of work. He was in retirement when Milo was a small child and knew him. He worked for people and did odd jobs. Ahira and Hannah were very religious people. Really Christian people. Very nice people.

Milo's father was born in Gilford. When he was young, he lived up under the mountain at Ahira and Hannah's where Arthur Weeks' place is. His wife was Dora, and her maiden name was Wilkerson -- only distantly related to the Wilkerson who was a member of the Fire Department. Dora was born in Gilford on 11-B, close to Governors Island near the Laconia town line. Dora's

⁷⁷ Made by John DeSilva from his father's 8mm. movie.

mother ran a boarding house there. He was a teamster and he had a small farm. His work was driving teams for people and a lumber company. Worked thus in lumbering operations on the mountain. Milo has been told that he was a very good teamster and Milo, himself, knows this is so because he remembers seeing him at work. The company he worked for furnished the mules and the rig.

□ □ □

Arthur Tilton

284 Old Lake Shore Road, Gilford, N.H.

Interview Excerpts

August 2, 1994

Charlie Gove was a big, stout, red-faced, blustering man. You would think he was going to blow up and burst. He was very excitable — but he would calm right back down again. He was very determined to the point of being just plain damn stubborn.

His blacksmith shop was a unique business, and he did a lot of fancy, fine smithing. There were two or three people around who built wagons and sleighs — and Charlie Gove and his two helpers used to do the iron work. He was a good man fitting shoes for horses. And one of the men who worked for him was an excellent man for shoeing. The most impressive of Charlie Gove's enterprises was building horse-drawn sidewalk plows. He made up the pattern for the plows — I'm not certain whether the design was all his, or whether he just improved on it. But he made the foolish things and shipped them all over the United States as far west as Chicago. There was a V-plow on the front end, and on the left-hand side the V was straight — it came straight back. On the right-hand side it was pivoted so that it would open or close the plowed area. It was operated by a big hardwood horn beam⁷⁸ lever to ratchet the plow — to open the plow, and then you pinned it.

He was the first what would be called the Town Fire Engineer. He was Fire Warden. He kept a fire truck owned by the Village, a Model T Ford, not a Studebaker. He stored the Model T in his barn. In the fall of the year, just before it would freeze, he'd jack the fire truck up, let the water out of it, let the air out of the tires, and it sat there until it warmed up the next spring. So, don't plan on having a fire after the first hard freeze!

The town fire wagon that preceded the fire truck was a chemical wagon. It was a horse-drawn rig at first. Later, Charles put a tongue on it and hitched it behind the Model T Ford. It had two cylinders 16 or 18 inches in diameter — they were pointed on one end and concave on the other. I don't remember how much water they held. They were soda-acid extinguishers — that was one of the reasons they blocked up the fire truck, so that they wouldn't freeze. That was the

⁷⁸ A very tight-grained wood sometimes called iron wood. It is scarce, but can be found on the back of Mt. Rowe down to the Hatch pasture. Its bark is about the same color as white ash. A lot of farmers would use it for stakes or for pry-bars. It was used for pick handles and peavies. The hired man would wear out before the horn beam handle would !

sole means of fire protection. It was good for chimney fires in the village and for a mile or so around the village. They had 50 or 100 feet of 1 inch black hose. Two short roof ladders were fitted in on top of the cylinders and there were some buckets. It was painted red with a smidgen of gold leafing. It seems to me that they bought it up in Meredith. The overall length of the cylinders was about 10 feet, and the wheelbase about 8 feet. It had wood wheels with steel rims like a Concord wagon.

How did you get hold of Charlie Gove when there was a fire? Ring the Baptist Church bell! The town paid to maintain the bell rope—they were supposed to change the rope every year.

Roy Page was a very likable and highly respected individual. He was slow and deliberate. He was a good road agent and he was an excellent man with the Fire Department. I liked Roy very much. He came from Gilmanton and died in Gilford. He and my father were cousins.

