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brightest moments and members since the turn of the century. Elderly, middle-aged and boyish men of the same families sometimes appear side by side. In later photos the older faces begin to disappear or show up at the sidelines, out of uniform.

Men shake their heads and laugh thinking back on some of the more memorable retirement parties. Retirees frequently show up at house meetings and social gatherings and retell old-time stories of heroism that become part of the department's collective memory and the pride of everyone.

Joe "Ducky" Perry and Phil Alexander, captain Warren Alexander's uncle, both showed up at a recent informal gathering of the house. Both retired, their services to the department together add up to nearly 90 years.

Louis Silva, an active member, is now in his 47th year with the department. At a casual meeting of the house a few weeks ago he noticed the newspaper lining tucked underneath the sweatband of his fireman's cap had begun to come loose.

He pulled it out and unrolled a September 30, 1952 issue of a Boston daily. The headline was "Ike denies Adlai lunch bid." Apparently Silva had decided one day 27 years ago that something had to be done about that loose cap, never of course imagining the roars of laughter its reappearance would ignite nearly three decades later.

The loyalties in the department and particularly within each house is also extended to the men's feelings for their equipment. Through some lack of vigilance, Perry said, the town many years ago sold its old steamer, the horse-driven predecessor of the fire truck, to the fire museum in Edaville. A modern convenience during the late 1800s, the steamer is so named because water pressure from the hoses is created from steam. Coal fires heated the water.

In a showdown held during the early 1930s, the steamer, named the J.D. Hilliard after a old-time member of the board of engineers, outpumped a new gasoline-driven American LaFrance, one of the first to force the steamers from the fire houses and into the museums.

For its last show of bravado, the J.D. Hilliard sent a stream of water over Town Hall as the men applauded while the La France fell far short of the old-timer.

Determined not to lose another comrade to an out-of-town showroom, a group of men today are refurbishing the former Number 4 truck on the ground floor of the Commercial Street headquarters. They hope to have it decked out in parade condition for the Fourth of July.

Although the steamers were horse-drawn, the volunteers would often grab the shafts and begin hauling the vehicle themselves to get an edge on time until the horses could be brought from the barn.

Silva remembers hearing his father and grandfather tell stories of "old man Charlie DeRiggs's" horses, two heavy beasts housed behind Bangs Street. He said when the whistles on the cold storage buildings blew, DeRiggs would harness the horses, lead them from the barn, slap them on the rump and watch them trot straight over to Pumper 5 on Anthony Street like a pair of yoked homing pigeons.

The men themselves pulled the "hand tubs," mid-nineteenth century vehicles used before the invention of the steamers. Manpower also provided pressure for the hoses. Up to 20 men would line up on either side of the hand tub and work like a double pair of pistons gone berserk.

Despite the informal term given to these wheezing old boats, each had its own name such as the Washington, the Franklin, or the Ulysses. Old-time equipment also included the forerunners of hydrants, which were cistern wells dug at several places throughout town.

The motherlode of emergency water supplies, used for

more than 100 years by Provincetown firemen is, of course, the bay. Pumps are rated on their ability to draft or suck water from sources below sea level, said Joe Andrews engineer for Pumper 1.

He said one competition in the yearly muster is a "hook-up drill", in which trucks stationed at the end and mid-point of MacMillan Pier and on Commercial Street relay water through a series of hoses. This technique, he said, would be used to battle a Commercial Street conflagration combined with the added disadvantage of a low tide.

Andrews said this method was used to fight the 1961 fire which gutted the Monument Fish Wharf at the location of the former Sklaroff's Wharf. He said the department lost the building but saved the wharf because the men could only attack the blaze from the front.

To prevent salt corrosion, he said, equipment must be thoroughly flushed after the men draft bay water.

The water relay system is a technical illustration of the cooperation the department as a whole practices. Competition is a matter of territorial prerogative and a

way for the separate houses to hone their skills.

Their combined years of experience and reputation for life-saving responsiveness has given the men a sense of independence and self-sufficiency, a common quality among many town departments.

Former Town Manager Gardner Benson about four years ago disrupted the fire-fighting fiefdom by refusing to reappoint two long-time members to the board of engineers, the department's governing body. It led to his downfall and the recall of the selectmen who supported him. Some of the engineers that Benson did reappoint refused to accept as a form of protest, and for a year an interim board partially composed of younger members took over.

The disruption of morale was so intense that Benson the following year returned most of the long-time members of the board to their positions. He chose the hard road to learning about the solidarity that forms the backbone of the department's line of succession. Members say the hard feelings of those days are now smoothed over.

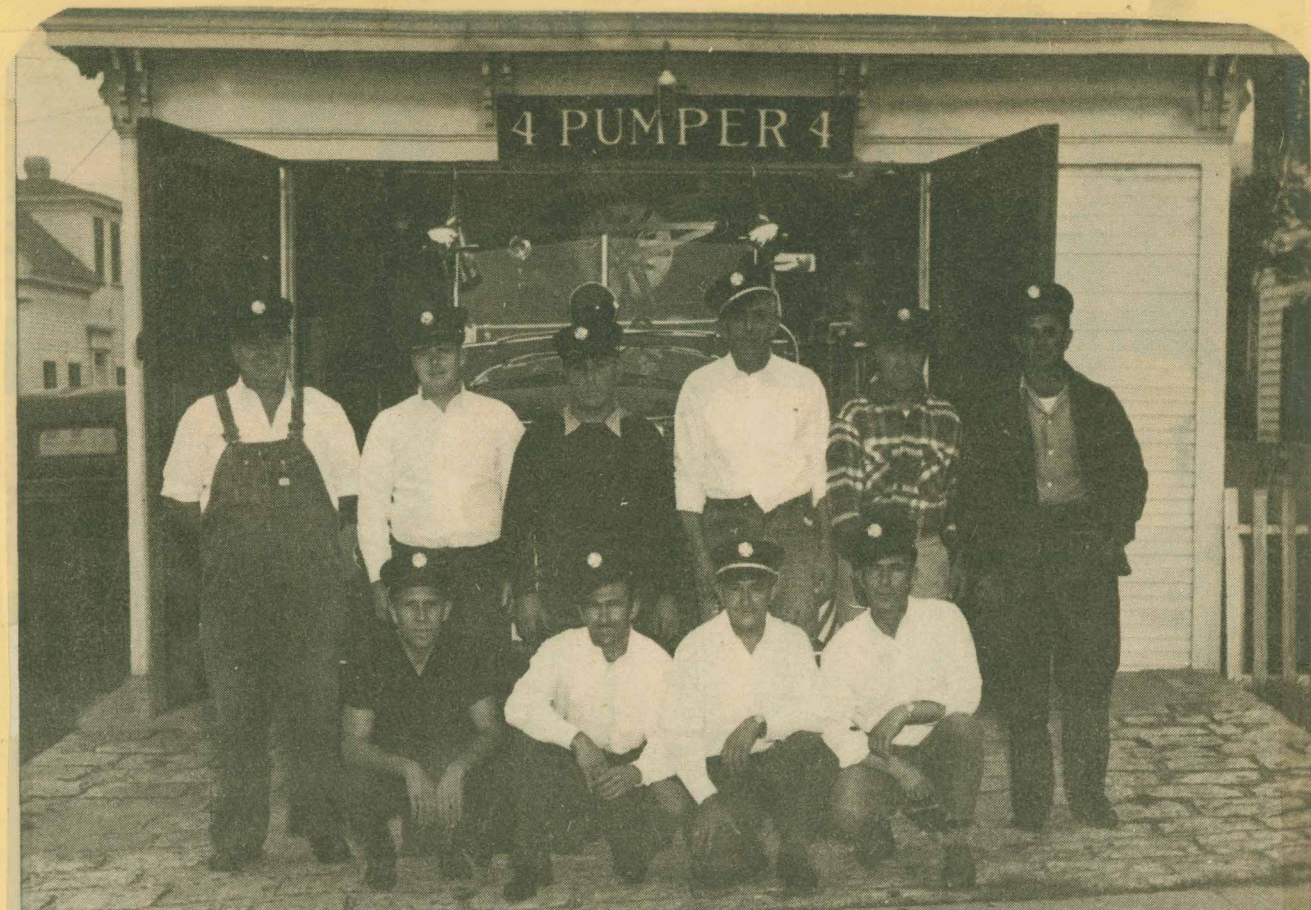
The interim board, concerned primarily with keeping the department together, even made one swipe at a break from tradition which was soundly quashed a year later. The board directed two new fire engines, then on order, to be painted a blazing "lime yellow," said Wayne Perry, a member from that time.

He said the company building the engines sold the board on the then-current theory that the yellow color was scientifically proved to be more visible and thus more safe.

A year later when the traditional board returned to power it directed the company, then in the process of finishing the machines, to repaint them only color fire engines should be.

Perry said the last vestiges of the lime yellow can be seen today only by lifting the hoods and peering into the underbellies of the two trucks.

**Tradition.**



Front row, left to right: Fred De Avila, John Alexander, Warren Alexander, Joseph Dutra. Back row: James Nelson, Thomas Turner, Phillip Alexander, Arthur Silva, Joseph Perry, Louis Silva.