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Ridgeway Fire Department marks 60 years of memories

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RIDGEWAY — Earl Canham remembers the summer day in 1951 when he and his brother-in-law were spraying orchards on their Road farm.

Looking toward Ridge Road they spotted smoke and knew something was wrong.

“We drove our equipment to the Ridge and found a house on fire,” said Canham.

As was customary with most rural areas, they had no fire company and relied on Medina, who had two men and a truck which carried little water.

“We started spraying the house with our sprayer until Medina arrived,” Canham said. “The house was a funny color afterwards, because we were spraying with lime and sulphur.”

Incidents like that were what prompted a few dedicated residents of the town of Ridgeway, including Canham, to form a volunteer company.

The company celebrated its 60th anniversary Saturday night at the annual Installation Dinner at Ridgeway Recreation Hall.

The fire company was formed in 1951 with Roger Plummer as the first chief; Edward Nowak, vice president; Francis Conley as secretary; Kenneth Rook, Charles Kreppeneck and William Baker as trustees.

No one remembers what they paid for their first fire truck, a used Dodge converted into a pumper.

Company President Charles Smith does know they paid more than \$400,000 for their newest piece of equipment, a pumper called 32.

The company’s first fire hall was on Route 104 in Ridgeway. By 1981, they had expanded a facility in Knowlesville to three bays at the recreation hall. They built their new facility at Route 104 and Horan Road in 1993, where they have room for all their equipment, a banquet facility and spacious grounds.

Several hundred residents and guests packed the recreation hall Saturday night for the celebration and installation of officers.

Master of ceremonies David Green introduced special guests, including three of the fire company's four 50-year plus members. Attendance were Lyle Caleb, Tom Dotts and David Wetherbee. Not able to attend was Richard Hess Jr.

Of the three charter members remaining, Charles Owen and Earl Canham were able to attend. Gary Ehrenreich of Medina was absent of ill health.

One guest, Judge Larry Sanderson, shared a story from his childhood memories of the fire company.

"I remember when Ridgeway had its first carnival and parade in 1951," Sanderson said. "My parents dressed me up in bib overalls, pipe and straw hat and I drove my John Deere pedal tractor in the parade."

Smith and second assistant chief Christopher Seefeldt conducted a memorial service in honor of deceased members. Two lost during the year were Greg Traxler in September and Lee Densen in January.

Two awards were presented by Smith. One — an honorary award for lifetime achievement - went to Robin Gardner, a past president. Smith said he led more committees than he could count. The President's Award went to J. Michael Kelly for service above and beyond the company. This includes mowing and landscaping the property, Smith said.

In addition to the charter and 50-year members, those recognized for years of membership were Jason Bessel, Jolene Bessel and Hansler, five years; Michael Woodward, 15 years; Ken McAdoo, 20 years; Cliff Barber, David Cleary and Don Palmer, 25 years; Luke Luckman and Edward Schutt, 30 years; David Ballard, 35 years; F. Michael Kelly and Charles Smith, 40 years; and Gary Kraatz, 45 years.

Donald Marchner received the Chief's Award from Jason Bessel. Of the fire company's 243 calls last year, Marchner responded to 100 of them.

"As a volunteer, it's my job to respond to these calls," Marchner said. "I'm retired now, so I'm always available."

Several volunteers received awards for hours of training, including Matthew Clayton, who was cited for Outstanding Leadership among York state firefighters.

Tracey Hendrick presented membership awards to Ladies Auxiliary members.

Recipients were Harriet Petrie, 42 years; Hendrick, Effie McAdoo and Krysta Waczak, 15 years; and Melissa Hansler and Regina Brewer, five years.

Brewer was named Auxiliary Member of the Year.

Fire company officers for 2012 were installed by David Green.

They are president, Charles Smith; vice president, Lyell Caleb; treasurer, William Allman; secretary, Kristin McAdoo; sergeant at arms, David Neischel; directors Katie Tuohey, one year, Rick Tuohey, two years and Francis Woodward, one year; fire chief, Patrick Keenan; assistant chief, Jason Bessel; second assistant chief, Christopher Seefeldt; and fire police captain, Larry Petrie.

Shirley Printup of East Shelby installed new officers of the Ladies Auxiliary.

They are president Regina Brewer; vice president, Melissa Hansler; treasurer, Donna Lockwood; secretary, Nickki Gerling; chaplain, David Meacham; trustees Harriet Petrie, Effie McAdoo and Tracey Hendrick; flag bearer, Michele Lockwood; and sergeant at arms, David



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