



# 175<sup>th</sup> *Anniversary*

1830 - 2005



*Harbour Grace  
Volunteer Fire Brigade*

# *The Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade*



*175 Years of Service and Dedication*

*1830 - 2005*

*This book is dedicated to the Volunteer Fire-Fighters  
who have given their time and talents to the  
Town of Harbour Grace  
and nearby communities.*

## *Introduction*

The early history was taken from a booklet by the late Ex-Chief, W.E. Parsons (deceased), newspaper articles by Robert Lynch, articles from The Telegram of 1944 and research by Harbour Grace Tourism & the Youth Employment Strategy - Skills Development Canada Participants.

On June 20<sup>th</sup> of this year Harbour Grace Tourism received approval for a Skills Development Project and on July 26<sup>th</sup> we had everything completed and off to print.

We are so pleased to be able to present this today.

Happy 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade.

## *Our Cover*

Early September of 2003 the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee spoke with Charlene Godden Garland about the possibility of doing a print for our celebration.

On October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2003 the committee commissioned Charlene to do a print of the 175 years, capturing the history of our brigade.

We are very proud to have the opportunity to display the print on our front cover.



*Charcoal Sketch Given by Ray Hayden (deceased)*  
*It reads "Without our volunteers we would only have our prayers."*

## *Firemen's Prayer*

When I am called to duty, God  
Wherever flames may rage  
Give me strength to save a life  
Whatever be its age.

Let me embrace a little child  
Before it is too late  
Or save an older person from  
The horror of that fate.

Enable me to be alert  
And hear the weakest shout,  
and quickly and efficiently  
To put the fire out.

I want to fill my calling  
To give the best in me,  
To guard my friend and neighbour  
And protect their property.

And, if, according to your will,  
I have to lose my life,  
Please bless, with your protecting hand,  
My family and my wife.

## *Acknowledgments*

This booklet was researched and developed by:  
Harbour Grace Tourism  
in partnership with  
Human Resources & Skills Development Canada  
under the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy

Four participants:

Stephen Ash  
Lisa Lynch  
Coordinator, Daphne Mercer  
Kristie Rogers  
&  
Cailey Beaucage



We would like to thank Dave Regular, Robert Lynch, Paul Snow, Paul Ash and all others for their help.

## *The 175th Volunteer Fire Brigade Committee*



Consists of (seated): Assistant Chief, Brian Dwyer (Secretary/History); Fire Chief, Paul Snow (Liaison); Chair, Dave Regular; Administrative Assistant, Daphne Mercer, standing from left to right, Robert Lynch (PR/Pictures); Philip Peddle (Treasurer); Ray Verge (Civic Reception); Keith Skinner (Parade); Lloyd Pike (Ecumenical Service); and Eric Hunt (Social/Entertainment).

In September of 2003, the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade was two years away from celebrating its' 175th anniversary. Firefighter, Dave Regular, a twenty-eight year veteran, volunteered to chair a committee to celebrate this occasion. Over the next month he selected members to sit on various committees needed to celebrate a three day event. A committee of ten were selected, along with Daphne Mercer (Harbour Grace Tourism - Town of Harbour Grace), and presented to the brigade executive for their approval.

All committee members were honoured to be asked to be part of the committee and they all feel that this brigade has much history and pride. Being the Oldest Volunteer Fire Brigade in the province, it was time to celebrate both. Over the next year they met every two months on Mondays. The second year they met every month and the last two months every week. All members have put endless hours of volunteer work to make this event a reality.

## *The Top of The Ladder Club Members*



### **Seated:**

Neville Garland, Charles Garland, Robert Noseworthy, John Pike (Deceased), Willis Regular, Lloyd Pike, William Doran

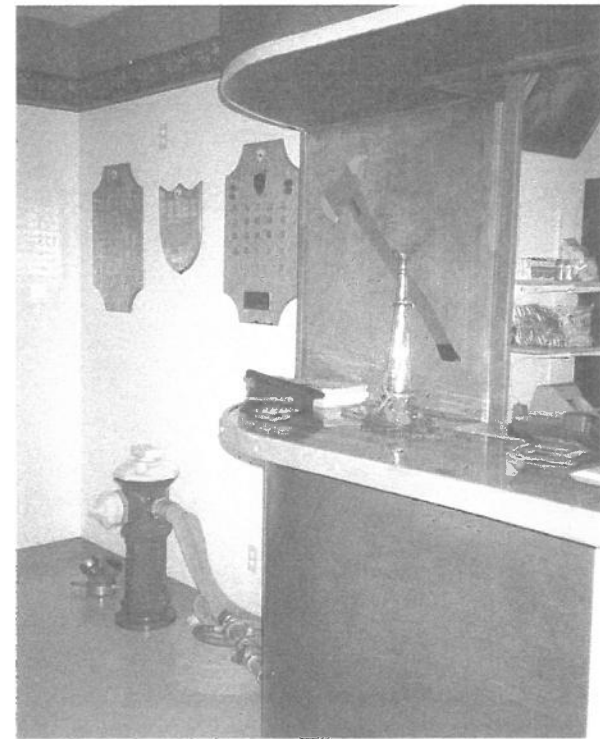
### **Standing:**

Roy Avery, Clyde Reynolds, Neville Sheppard, Charles Monks, Jack Noseworthy, Cyril White, Bill Oke, Edgar Snow, Bill Kennedy

### **Missing from photo:**

Tom Mahaney, Ed Taylor, Bill Peddle, Tom Snow Jr., Gerard Thomey, Rendell Babb, and Albert (Bud) Chafe

## *Board of Directors - Hydrant Club*



### *Chair Person*

Maureen Maher

### *Secretary*

Lloyd Pike

### *Members:*

Lee Rogers, Jamie Pike, Chief Paul Snow, William Kennedy, Edgar Snow, Philomena Taylor, Janice Dwyer, Vicky Laing

## *175th Anniversary Choir Members*

Lloyd Pike, Roy Avery, William Doran, Keith Skinner, Patricia Regular, Marie Skinner, Robert Lynch, Charles Rogers, Brian Dwyer, Lee Rogers, Janice Dwyer, Alf Dove, Yvonne Dove, Cyril White, Madonna Lynch, Choir Director, Brenda Hunt

## *Ladies Auxiliary Members 2004/2005*



**Sitting:** President - Madonna Lynch, Vice President - Cathy Hunt,  
**Standing:** Secretary - Yvonne Dove, Treasurer - Jackie Luffman

### **MEMBERS:**

Maureen Snow  
Marie Skinner  
Tammy Davis  
Alexis Green  
Maureen Maher  
Beverly Crocker  
Patricia Regular  
Joanne Taylor  
Sandra Noseworthy  
Barbara Ann Verge

Terri Sheppard  
Frances Rogers  
Gail Guilfoyle  
Lisa French  
Kelley Peddle  
Mary Sheppard  
Natalie Verge  
Jennifer Sullivan  
Philomena Taylor

Rae Barnes  
Joanne Archibald  
Renee Ryan  
Pam Baker  
Gladys Moriarity  
Vicky Laing  
Janice Dwyer  
Peggy Hearn  
Brenda Hunt

## *Junior Members of the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade*



### **Standing:**

Ray Verge (Junior Directory), Andrew Archibald (Crew Chief),  
Ryan Wrice, Tommy Lynch, Stephen Ash, Billy Lewis, Matthew Janes,  
Chris Rossiter (Crew Chief), Lee Rogers (Assistant Junior Director),  
Jamie Pike (Assistant Junior Director)

### **Seated:**

Adam Sheppard (Assistant Chief), Brad Hunt (Chief), Mark Snow  
(Secretary/Treasurer)

Missing from photo: Andrew Dove

## *The Early History of the Brigade*

In the early days of Harbour Grace and during the time of great companies such as Ridley's, Munn's, Danson's and others, the owners and officials of these companies were imbued with great sense of civic pride and contributed time and effort to the layout and well being of the town. After the fire of 1816 realizing that with the growth of the community the hazard of fire increased, this group formed a Fire Company in 1830 and delegated certain employees to respond to scenes of fire.

The first Harbour Grace Fire Company was organized in 1830 and under the British Act III, Chapter IV, in 1832 under His Majesty William IV (The Sailor King) members were given the status of naval reservists. In 1841, the wardens and captains applied under this Act to the magistrate for permission to levy a tax at the rate of six-pence in the pound (2 1/2%) on appraised rentals on all buildings within the boundaries, for the more efficient operation of the Fire Company.

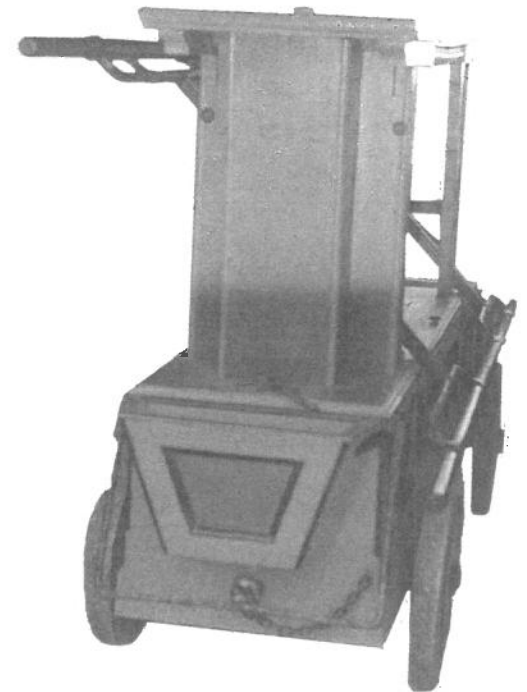
On September 5th, 1860 citizens met and formed what is now known as the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade. The first director or Fire Chief was John Hayward. The Brigade consists of a first director, three second directors, one for each section of the town, east, central and west end, three lieutenants, nozzle or branchmen and sixteen other volunteers who manned hydrants, ladders, and other duties assigned by officers. They used wooden buckets which when filled were passed from hand to hand. Next in march of progress was the acquirement of the four wheeled rig to which two rows of buckets and ladders were attached. The men were provided with helmets. This rig was hauled by the men to the scene of the fire, sometimes over long distances. In 1863 the old Medlock was acquired and this was thought to be a great step forward. It held a manual pumping machine which pumped water from the harbour and from wells. It was built by Hall & Sons in Oldham, England and cost 200 pounds. Punton and Munn imported the machine.

On July 22, 1862, members of the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade came out in their blue uniforms and, headed by a band, formed the procession and marched carrying boats on their backs to Lady Lake, or Lady Pond as it is better known to the older folk, to hold the town's first regatta, now the second oldest sporting event in North America.

A description of the uniforms and the procession to the lake reads: "it was a red Garibaldi shirt with green velvet facings pants with red stripes down the side and a cap like that worn by the soldiers of the Federal Army during the Civil War. Each officer had his own insignia; for instance, the Treasurer wore the keys, and the Secretary quill, etc. It was a picturesque and splendid uniform that was used for special occasions."

It must have been a colorful sight for those spectators who lined the route or followed the procession all the way to the waters of beautiful Lady Lake, where the grounds and numerous tents were decorated with buntings and flags that fluttered in the summer breeze.

In the early racing regattas the Silver Trumpet was used on Regatta Day as a microphone would be used today. Until this trumpet came onto the scene, regatta organizers did not have any means of contacting the boat crews other than by yelling and gesturing from the lakeside. The trumpet enabled the races to run much more smoothly and professionally.





**R. T. Parsons & W.E. Parsons with the Silver Trumpet (circa 1932)**

The Silver Trumpet was donated around 1890 to Joseph Godden by Edward Phelan of Vancouver. Phelan was a copper by trade, who had formerly lived and worked with Garland's Ltd., one of the larger firms in Harbour Grace at that time. Phelan later moved to Vancouver where he retired and sent the trumpet to the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Company for their use.

Through the years, the Silver Trumpet was the subject of many interesting stories.

After reviewing the minutes of the Harbour Grace Fire Brigade, it was noted that due to fiscal restraints in the early 1900s the membership decided to gain money for their organization by melting the trumpet and selling the silver. Luckily, for unknown reasons, this action was not carried out and this part of their heritage remains intact.

Another section of the Fire Brigade's minutes indicates that the trumpet was misplaced for a number of years and had been packaged for shipping to parts unknown. The membership at that time requested that the trumpet be returned and it now remains the property of the present fire brigade.

Today the trumpet is used at the annual general meeting of the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade. At this meeting there election of officers and as a symbolic gesture the Silver Trumpet is passed from the outgoing chief to the newly elected chief. The picture above shows Mr. R.T. Parsons & Mr. W.E. Parsons with the Silver Trumpet (circa 1932).

In earlier days the members of the Brigade were notified that their assistance was needed by hearing it though word of mouth. In 1869



the first fire bell was installed in Harbour Grace. There were three bells, one at the foot of Victoria Street, one near Cochrane Street west of where Hotel Harbour Grace is now located, and the third at Brown's Hill on Water Street in the west end of town. After the fire of 1944 these were done away with and an electric siren was installed, operated at first from Telephone Central and because of no service between midnight and 8:00 a.m the control switch was then installed in the RCMP Headquarters, later to be

replaced in a private home, with telephone service, enhanced by the dial system, proving to be a boom in expediting response to the alarm by the firemen.

Three wheel carriages were added to the equipment shortly after the acquisition of the Medlock and were housed in sheds built for this purpose in the east and west end. Each of these were equipped with eight lengths of 2" hose with open nozzle and three way Hydrant Head with shut-off valves which were standard equipment in each carriage. The central equipment was housed in a provincially owned building situated on Bannerman



Street where it is still housed today. This building was officially opened and passed over to the Brigade on November 4, 1909 by the then Governor, Sir Ralph Williams, and the Premier, Sir Edward Morris. It also provided offices for the Newfoundland Constabulary of that time and other government agencies as well.

## *The Fire Brigade Today*

The brigade currently has 40 members that are on a volunteer status 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is governed by an executive consisting of the fire chief, assistant chief, five crew chiefs, secretary, treasurer and the manager of the Hydrant Club. In 1977 the brigade welcomed both the Ladies Auxiliary and the Junior Brigade to its ranks and the retired members of the Brigade have formed the Top of The Ladder Club. These three additions to the brigade family remain very active today.



Apart from its designated emergency services, the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade plays a very important role within its community. The membership organizes the town's annual Santa Claus parade. The members are also responsible for Fire Prevention Week activities, Peter Easton Days, Pumpkin Patrols on Halloween, and Guy Fawkes Night Patrols. Firefighters provide traffic control and first aid for the annual Blueberry Run, and the second oldest sporting event in North



America, the annual Harbour Grace Regatta.

They provide first aid training for the Sea Cadets, badge work for the Girl Guides, teach a workshop on vol-

unteer fire service for workplace safety to Level 2 students over a two-day period and teach the Gateway Fire Prevention program to the elementary schools.



The brigade organizes the annual fall fair parade and hosts a Booth at the week-long fair. At Christmas time the brigade is called

upon to help with the tree lighting ceremonies and on New Year's Day are responsible for family fireworks at the town's park and host the children and parents at the Hydrant Club afterwards for a hot lunch.

The Brigade runs approximately 65-70 calls per year and conducts 20-30 inspections per year.

They also provide rescue services for 18 communities along 110 kilometers of highway. The membership is trained in high angle rescue, cold water rescue and vehicle extrication. It conducts regular weekly practices and monthly meetings throughout the year for an estimated 3,000 personnel hours annually.



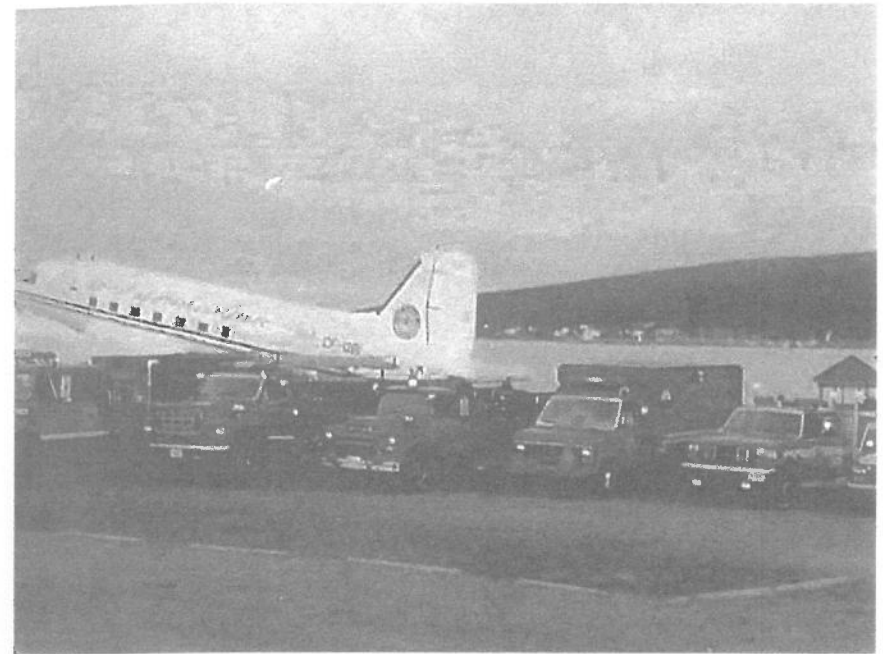
The Brigade presently has the following apparatus: a 1999 pumper housing an 840-lgpm pump supplied by a 1,000-gal. water tank and a computer-controlled injection system for Class A Foam, a 1982 pumper with a 840-lgpm and 500-gal. water tank, a 1985 cube van storing equipment for the old water rescue and high angle rescue teams, as well as SCBAs and extra air cylinders, a 1992 rescue vehi-

cle housing the hydraulic rescue system, a generator with lighting system, air bags, absorbents and two sets of SCBA, a 1993 utility pickup, and a 14 foot Zodiac.

Also in the brigade's apparatus inventory is their 1956 Pumper #1, restored to showroom condition and used for displays and parades.

This is a big change from only having buckets and ladders.

**Below - #2 & #1 Fire Trucks**



**Trucks shown by the Spirit of Harbour Grace**



**Rescue #2**



**The Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade provides  
an Annual Fire Brigade Scholarship valued at \$500.  
Tara Snow (Winner 2004)**

### *Scholarship Winners (Since 1983)*

1983	Kim Noseworthy
1984	Kim Gosse
1985	Catherine White
1986	Stephen Hunt
1987	James Garland
1988	Edward Oke
1989	Denise Reynolds
1990	Charlene Godden
1991	Ian Peddle
1992	Jeff Garland
1993	Greg Godden
1994	Kim Maher
1995	No Recipient
1996	Deanna Skinner
1997	Amanda Day
1998	Daniel Reynolds
1999	Steven Hearn
2000	Adam Regular
2001	Stephanie Martin
2002	Kevin Dove
2003	Tommy Snow
2004	Tara Snow

## *Cold Water Rescue*

The project started due to the increase in water related incidents, particularly involving large volume of marine traffic in our harbour. The Project was designed to help meet the resources available from Canadian Coast guard.

### **Equipment Includes:**

- 6 Dry cold water emersion suits
- C/W fins, mask, snorkel, flashlight, harness
- 12 floater suits (shore tender)
- Ice rescue board
- 2 hypothermic bags
- Floating stokes basket
- 14' inflatable boat, 20Hp. Motor & trailer

Funding for the project came from the National Rescue Secretariat (NIF) and the Brigade.



**Cold Water Rescue Team During Practice**

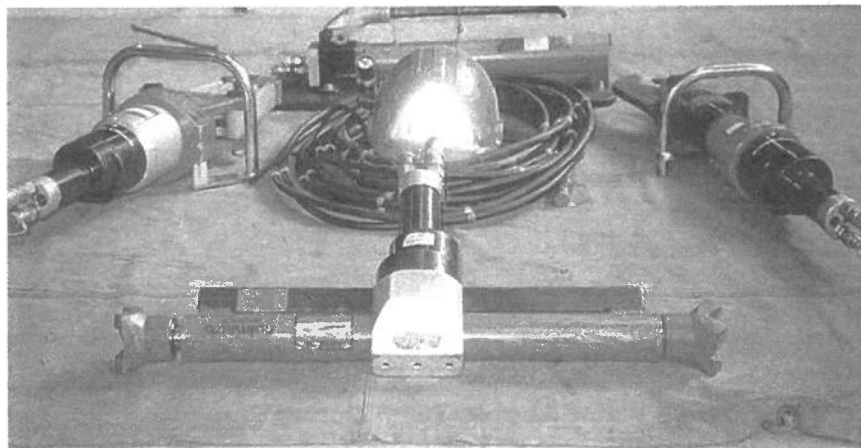
## *Jaws Of Life (Heavy Hydraulics)*

Project started due to increase in motor vehicle accidents. The only equipment we had consisted of a port-a-power kit similar to what a mechanic would use, and hand tools. The closest heavy hydraulic set was in Holyrood or Clarendville. The project was designed to cover the area in-between.

### Equipment Included:

- 1992 Ford F350 4x4 crew cab rescue truck (able to take full crew in all weather conditions)
- Holmatro heavy hydraulics (pump, spreader, cutter ram, pull chains, & ACC.)
- Paratech (high pressure air bags)
- 5000 watt generator
- 4 - 100 watt flood lights
- cut off saw
- spill containment kit
- First Aid & oxygen equipment

The project was made possible through funding from Emergency Measures Organization (JEPP) Town of Harbour Grace and the Brigade.



The membership donates \$500 to the Trinity Conception Placentia Annual Telethon (15 consecutive years).



On Easter Saturday, crews are slotted into place for the Muscular Dystrophy Boot Drive, raising approximately \$1,000 for the fire fighters' charity of choice.



Along with all of this the brigade still finds the time to fundraise \$5,000 each year, through steak and eggs breakfasts and take-out teas to honor their commitment on a loan for it's 1999 pumper.



Flowers for the Ladies

## *Firefighters help young girl waiting for heart surgery (May 13, 2003)*

Cassandra Richards is waiting to travel to Ottawa for heart surgery.

The three-year-old Tilton girl was chosen by winning teams in the annual mens' and ladies' dart tournaments as the "charity of their choice."

The Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade hosted the winning teams from both tournaments, along with Cassandra and her family, during their May dinner meeting.

Following the dinner, the Richards family accepted a contribution of \$1,374 to help off-set Cassandra's trip. Some \$1,250 was raised from the dart tournament registration, while \$124 was donated by the firefighters who tended the bar for the two events.



Standing (L-R) Stephen Sullivan, Chris Noseworthy, Cory Laing, Pete Moriarity, David Green, Hubert Pike, David Earle, Charles Archibald, Lee Rogers, William Ryan, Shawn Baker, Keith Skinner, Wade Luffman, Rick Davis, and Gerard Quinlan.

Seated (L-R) Brian Dwyer, Pat Hearn, Dave Regular, Eric Hunt, Casandra Richards, PJ Coombs, Charles Rogers, and Bill Hunt.

## *Peter Easton*

Peter Easton, known in his own time by such titles as The Pirate Admiral and The Great Easton has been a legend in Newfoundland for over three and a half centuries. He emerges as one of the greatest seamen of all times, continuing the skills of an Admiral and a general, and a man, moreover of complete independence, who did not hesitate to stand on equal terms with various head of state, including even the King of England himself.

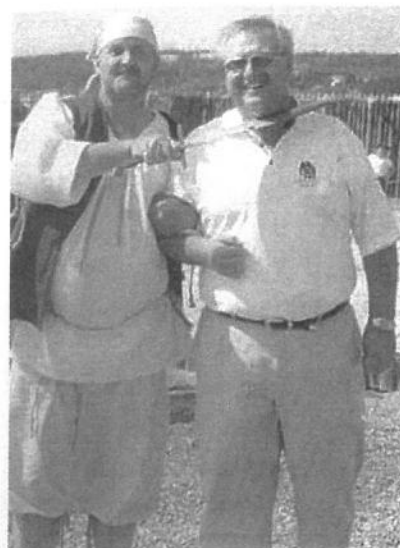
He arrived in Harbour Grace just as the spring ice was melting and was moving off the coast. He fortified Harbour Grace and used it as his base to plunder the Spanish Plate Fleet returning to Spain, laden with gold and other treasures.



**Edgar Snow as Peter Easton on Pirate Day.**



**Charles Rogers taking over the town during Pirate Day 2002, seen here wearing the Mayor's Chain of Office.**



**Pirate, Eric Hunt captures MHA, George Sweeny.**



**Pirate Jack Noseworthy, Captain Gilbert Pike (the late John Pike), Princess Sheila NaGeira (Betty Pike), Witness (Sandra Noseworthy), Peter Easton (William Kennedy) on the first Peter Easton Day 1983.**

*The Fire of 1944 -  
Taken from The Telegram Aug. 18, 1944*

**Business Section of Harbour Grace  
Destroyed by Fire in 1944**

The following account of the devastating fire in Harbour Grace of August 17, 1944 is taken from The Telegram from the next day. It also forcibly illustrates the differences in the Harbour Grace of August 1944 and the Harbour Grace of today. In the three years order has emerged from the chaos and determination is evident which threatens to make the little second city a reality.

A fire that broke out about 1:30 p.m. yesterday at Parsons Jam Factory developed into a conflagration which wiped out practically the whole business section of Harbour Grace leaving 125 families homeless and causing property loss of approximately 4 million dollars, besides leaving the town without a food supply and causing loss of employment to hundreds of shop and factory hands.

**Scene of Desolation**

This morning along Water Street east of McKay's Boot and Shoe Factory towards the R.C. Cathedral, a distance of about one mile, a scene of utter desolation presented itself. All along the south side of the street particularly could be seen ruins of wooden buildings, black and broken fronts of stone or brick buildings, giant chimneys, a tangle of telephone and telegraph wires, smashed fences, a little of glass and other debris with thousands of feet of hose which the firemen were using on the smouldering ruins.

**Winds Fans Flames**

A strong westerly wind was blowing at the time and the fire got quickly out of control approaching Babb's premises adjoining where a number of gasoline casks exploded and accelerated the blaze.

**Assistance Sent**

Requests for assistance for the local firemen who were fighting the blaze with only three lines of hose were sent from St. John's and Carbonear. Immediately Sergt. Baker from Central Fire Hall with a number of police with two pumps, 4,000 feet of hose and other equipment were dispatched to the scene. They were followed by a crew of auxiliary firemen from the East End Station in charge of Commander Ryan with one pump and 1,000 feet of hose. The sixty four miles separating St. John's from Harbour Grace were covered quickly, but when firemen arrived the whole Water Street appeared to be in an inferno. The high winds having blown flankers and starting so many separate outbreaks that it was difficult to determine the best spot to tackle first.

After the firemen left St. John's the Chief of Police contacted Capt. Hope of the Royal Canadian Navy and asked for assistance. The Natural Resources Department was also contacted. Capt. Hope readily dispatched two crews of sailors with two pumps and hose and the Natural Resources sent out two pumps and equipment from Whitbourne. The Carbonear Fire Brigade with all of their equipment rushed to the scene as soon as they received the call for assistance. The crew of a Canadian Naval vessel as well as hundreds of people from adjacent settlements assisted the stricken people to make fire breakers by cutting down trees, demolishing fences, etc., and carrying water in every conceivable container to quench flankers. Fortunately the Harbour Grace Water Co. had a good supply of water available for the firemen and about 6:00 p.m. the blaze was brought under control.

**Fire Crosses Street**

The fire in its mad course crossed Water Street several times by starting dwelling houses as well as shops and stores on each side of the street. Flankers were driven almost a half a mile before the wind had caused the United Church to catch fire. Flankers had fell on St. Paul's but the Church unlike the United church was saved.

## **Supplies of Food**

A pall of smoke was hanging over the stricken city up to 1:00 p.m. today and firefighters were still at work quenching smouldering embers.

The most urgent need at this time is food for the 125 families who lost everything they owned. Amongst the first to come to their rescue was Capt. Hope, Chief of Staff at the R.C.N. this morning he dispatched 15,000 lbs of food in a convoy of three trucks accompanied by a number of officers. The supplies consisted of 450 loaves of bread, 450 tins of soup, 75 sacks of potatoes and a variety of tinned goods. The convoy arrived about noon and a citizens committee headed by Alfred Simmons met in the C. of E. Institute and made arrangements for its distribution from the Y.M.C.A. Center. The supplies sent are considered sufficient enough to tide the people over enough until their stocks arrive.

The Canadian and American Red Cross organizations from St. John's are rendering assistance dispatching their trucks there this morning.

The fire crews from the St. John's began reeling up their hoses about noon and returned to headquarters early this afternoon.

## **Eyewitness Account**

The following eyewitness account of Harbour Grace after the fire was broad, set over VONF last night by Lieut. Stuart Keale, R.C.N.V.R., Chief Public Relations Officer for the Royal Canadian Navy in Newfoundland.

"I have first returned to St. John's from Harbour Grace scene of yesterday's devastating fire. This picturesque and historic community, almost 350 years old and famed as the jumping off spot for the West to East solo flights of James Morison and Amelia Earhart, has seen a lot of fire in its day. Historians say they number about ten dating from the one in 1696 when the town was first burned by the French. It is doubtful whether any of the previous fires wreaked a toll of destruc-

tion as devastating as this one which stretches out over half a mile long on the waterfront yesterday afternoon."

"Citizens of Harbour Grace told me that the damage would run in the neighborhood of \$750,000 and other estimates ranged up to 2.5 million dollars. Lieut. Charles W. Spinnev, R.C.N.V.R. the naval fire marshal, said today that a specific count of business establishments and homes lost totaled 72. An authority said that the appearance on business establishments on the waterfront would average very low-somewhere he thought around 15 percent. Thirty-six families lost their homes in the holocaust including one family with 11 children."

## **Navy Sends Food**

"We left St. John's for Harbour Grace early this morning with food convoy sent forward in three big trucks by Captain G.H. Hogan O.H.E., R.C.N. Chief of the Naval Staff in Newfoundland."

"We got our first glimpse of the stricken community when we turned a high bend in the road three miles off was Harbour Grace still smouldering. A blue haze hung over the town but up through the center of it pictured the twin steeples of the Roman Catholic Cathedral in a rather reminiscent of the dome of St. Paul's rising out of the blitz bombing of London."

"As we drove in, a scene of terrible destruction met our eyes gaunt, bellow shells of brick buildings silhouetted against the sky, and bits of chimneys pointed stubby, charred fingers to the heavens."

"It reminded me vividly of Plymouth on a somewhat smaller scale of course. Here it seemed that seven or eight blocks were laid waste. In Plymouth it had been whole sections of a city. But now its smouldering ruins, the dropping wires and the citizens of the town ferreting through the debris in the attempt to salvage some of their personal objects. A bunch of small boys were digging in the stiff warm ashes of a grocery store and came up with a can of beans. One of them went out to the jetty, borrowed a can-opener and began to eat them right there with a chip of log as a spoon. In Plymouth, it has been man-made destruction. In Harbour Grace, it was Nature, and the black

embers served as a grim reminder of the terrible destructive power of natural forces once unleashed."

### **Isolated Ruin**

"In some ways, it was a very curious fire. And the strangest thing of all was to see the United Church, a block away from the real of the ruins, completely razed while buildings around it remained unharmed. I chatted with the padre of the Church, the big handsome Rev. W.H. McCabe, and he explained the seeming mystery. A stray spark had blown across the Cable Office, Simmon's, Godden's, Tapp's, Melise's and Heath's and caught in the corner of the shingled roof. In five minutes both the church and the parsonage were blazing. I asked the Rev. McCabe what he planned to do about his Sunday Services. "We will carry on in another building," he said."

It was almost incredible, too, to drive down Water Street and see a neat bungalow standing fresh and erect in the midst of all this destruction. It was the home of Mrs. Ross and except for a few broken windows it was perfectly intact. It was a wonderful advertisement for the patented roofing which was used in the construction of the house. We had set out from St. John's with several thousand pounds of food, but we learned that food was not the most pressing problem of the moment. Contrary to popular opinion there were not a lot of vacant homes in the Harbour Grace area and the 36 families rendered homeless by the fire and in immediate need of accommodation. When we arrived a citizen committee was already formed and was meeting in the Church of England institute. It was headed by E.D. Freeman and included J.W. Watts as secretary, F.D. Barrett as treasurer and host Rev. J.W. O'Neil, Bishop of Harbour Grace, Rev. McCabe, Alf Simmons, S.W. Moores, E.L. Oke, S.L. Sheppard and F.G. Archibald as committee members. They predicted it would take at least a couple of weeks to get squared away on the housing problem.

### **Red Cross Help**

Already some person had erected tents in handy fields. The road

sides were stacked with furniture and bedding. I saw one fair-haired young girl attempting to carry a bed spring down the street while her brother struggled manfully with a chest of drawers. At another street I saw an amazing conglomeration of bedsprings, chairs, clothes, screens, pots, towels, a baby's crib, a sewing machine, a dozen eggs in a bowl, a tin of peanuts and incredibly a game of Chinese Checkers.

Miss Mona Wilson and her Canadian Red Cross girls arrived from St. John's this afternoon with a load of goods which were really welcome. These included about 3,000 pieces of clothing, to accommodate all sizes in veterans down to babies, a lot of layettes toilet articles, blankets and so on.

As the afternoon wore on the problem of food for those whose shelves had been wiped clean by the blaze came in for attention and the lads of the R.C.N. who had stayed up until early hours this morning to pack the supplies, began unloading. Academy Hall was made headquarters of distribution. The Navy unloaded 480 tins of beef, 750 lbs of potatoes, 750 loaves of bread, 70 lbs of butter, 500 lbs of sugar, 75 tins of peaches and pears, 24 lbs of chocolate, 25 lbs of tea and a lot of fresh and canned vegetables. It was estimated that this would provide at least 500 meals. Most of the Town's ration cards went up in flames presenting another difficult administration problem.

By 4 o'clock this afternoon the citizens of Harbour Grace seemed to be taking the disaster very much in their stride. Just about that time a fire bell was heard in the distance, a breeze had sprung up and some feared that the still smouldering fires broken out again. One old gentleman, with a long moustache and a face that smacked of the sea, started to run and then stopped short, turning to me with a smile, "What am I running for?" he asked, "It can't have anything to do with me. I was wiped out — — —-burnt and everything.

He was wiped out — — —-but still he could make a joke of it.

### **Three Navy Shifts**

As a matter of fact, there was a slight outbreak about midnight but was brought under control. The fire authorities are taking no chances. The navy is standing by with one of the two portable pumpers which it dispatched to the scene yesterday. Lieutenant Spinney, the Navy's Fire Chief, looked very tired when we talked with him this afternoon. Like a lot of others, he had worked all night. As a matter of fact shifts of naval firefighters have gone to Harbour Grace. The first one was replaced at 5:00 a.m. today and the second was relieved at supper-time tonight.

"Some of the coal in Simmons' plant on Water Street was still smouldering this evening. Only two houses on that side of the street, Fitzgerald's and Walsh's, are still standing in the stretch from McKay's factory to the old Customs house."

"Firemen fought the holocaust bravely, but every factor was against them. Bishop O'Neill estimated that the wind that fanned the flames was a 40 mile per hour gale."

"Today, most residents of Harbour Grace considered it a miracle that no one was seriously hurt. It was evitable that there should be some minor injuries. A number of the firefighters had their eyebrows and faces singed and swallowed a lot of smoke. One of them suffered bad cuts from broken glass."

### **Serious Blows**

In a catastrophe of this scope, it is difficult to assess the most serious losses, but two stood out, as men recapitulated the disaster in one day. One was the irreparable loss to science of 40,000 X-ray photos from the Clinic in the Post Office building. These represented years of hard work in T.B. survey covering the whole of the Avalon Peninsula and the West Coast and they are, of course, gone forever.

A rear body blow to the community, too, was the loss of the cold storage plant built by S.W. Moores and Co. Limited, as the foundation of a fresh fish industry which was giving and would give much local

employment. I heard men yesterday who turned from saving their personal effects to fight the fire saying "If we lose this, we lose our jobs." All hands pitched in, but the flames had too good of a head start.

"Today, however, Harbour Grace has set about the huge task of re-establishment. Workmen were running up the Light and Power line once again and up at Robert Noseworthy's front parlor Miss Winona Morris was doing a whacking traffic on the sole telephone line to St. John's. Yesterday she had been on duty at the Avalon Telephone company in the Post Office building when the fire broke out. "Every line burned out before I left the switchboard," she told me.

### **Will Rise Again**

Warm-hearted citizens who came through unscathed are opening their homes to the fire victims. Help is pouring in from all over. Harbour Grace will rise from the ashes of the fire, just as she has done before.

### **Notable Performance in Harbour Grace Fire**

From the Telegram of August 21, 1944, the following item in connection with the Harbour Grace fire is called: One of the most notable acts in the Harbour Grace fire on Thursday last was performed by two men, who through their splendid efforts saved the old Shea Homestead therefore saving that section of Water Street, from Victoria Street to Bannerman Street in which situated the Bank of Nova Scotia. These men turned the hose on themselves and saturated their clothing with water and then turned the wet clothes over their heads and remained in the center of the street spraying water on the fire until all danger from that section had passed.

The Shea Homestead escaped untouched in the disastrous fire when 25 houses were destroyed and property loss was estimated \$125,000.

## **United Church Was Totally Destroyed by Fire** **August 17, 1944**

No special edition on Harbour Grace would be complete without reference to the Methodist Churches which have historic significance. Fire has been the enemy down through the years destroying three sacred edifices. The Telegram is indebted to Mr. E.L. Oke for permission to peruse the old files of the Harbour Grace Standard and from issue April 29, 1910, the following interesting facts are obtained. The old Wesleyan Chapel erected in 1822 was destroyed by fire in February 7, 1850. It was erected under the pastorate of Rev. Ninian Barr and dedicated in 1844 shortly after Harbour Grace was made a separate circuit or rather a mission. It was destroyed by fire on February 7, 1850 during the pastorate of Rev. W.E. Shenstone.

Following the accepted style of architecture of the era patterned like most of the Wesleyan chapels erected in Newfoundland during that period. It was 50 feet long and 40 feet wide. It had galleries on the side and in the south end, where the choir sat. Its seating capacity accommodated about 450 persons. Its pulpit was occupied by some of the most ablest and cultured preachers including Revs. Ninian Barr, the first pastor, John Bell, Wilson, Dr. Richard Knight, Corlett, Haigh, Ellis, Richardson, Crosscombs, Pickavant, Ellidge, Snowball, Faulkner and Shenstone.

This church is also famous for its singing talent. They had a pipe organ in those days but the violins, base viols and flutes were manipulated by such men as Mr. Richard Brade, his two talented sons, Mr. George Trapnell, Mr. Fisher and Mr. Jillard. A number of talented ladies also assisted in the choir. The old people tell us that notwithstanding all the advantages of our age and the costly organs of our time the singing is not equal to what it used to be to the old church of our fathers and grandfathers.

The winter of 1850 was remarkably severe and on the bitterly frosty night of February 7, this church caught fire and in the morning there was nothing of the edifice left but a mass of blackened ruins. Through the kindness of the Board of Works, in conjunction with Sheriff Gaden, the congregation occupied the Court House for public worship during

that year.

Following an appeal from the pulpit the following Sunday plans were laid for rebuilding and in the spring the new church was built and on February 9, 1851, the new church was opened and dedicated. This church was built by John D. Withycombe and his staff of workmen. It was 58 feet long by 36 feet wide with galleries similar in the former chapel and had a seating capacity of 500 persons. It was a neat, substantial and well accommodate 750 persons. In 1881, under the pastorate of Rev. John Goodison, the trustees imported from England and erected a fine pipe organ valued at \$1,000.

On Sunday February 7, 1904 at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the same day of the same month that the church was burned down 54 years before, the alarm for the fire rang out and it was found that the Methodist Church was on fire. Crowds ran to the scene to assist in extinguishing the flames and save the edifice, but owing to the bad condition of the water pipes in that section, they were filled with rust due to the intensity of the weather, the congregation could do no more than look at their sacred and time-honoured church of their fathers which stood as a monument to their goal and devotion the last four years. This church after its enlargement and the erection of the organ meant a loss of \$9,000 covered only by \$3,000 insurance.

The pastors of the HI-fared church were Rev. W.E. Shenstone, two terms, S.W. Sprague, James Dove, three terms, J.S. Pinney, two terms, Elias Brett, C. Lockhart, Thos. C. Ladner, R.W. Freeman, one year, J. Goodison, George Boyd, T.W. Atkinson, T. James, Wm. Swann, Geo. Payne, J.T. Newman, A. Hill and James Pincock.

The following day arrangements were made to occupy Coughlan Hall for the interim and plans were formulated to rebuild the church the following spring. The congregation subscribed handsomely to their building fund and within a year the new church was opened on the same site but it too was to suffer the same fate as the two previous churches on August 17, 1944. So far the congregation has been unable to see their way clear to rebuild and services are being held in Coughlan Hall.



**Water Street.**



**Water Street.**



**Lt.-Cdr. O Merchant and Lt. Chas Spinney examine the old hose reel used at the start of the fire of Hr. Grace, NL, Aug. 18, 1944.**



## *Photo Gallery - A Mixture of Past and Present*



**Harbour Grace Fire Station, Old (Above) & New (Below)**



## *First Aid Training*



**Back Row:** Lee Rogers, Jamie Pike, Doug Taylor, Keith Skinner, Alf Dove, Rick Davis, Billy Ryan, Paul Snow

**Middle Row:** Charles Archibald, Pat Hearn, Wade Luffman, Cory Laing, Charles Rogers, Stephen Sullivan, Chris, Noseworthy, David Green

**Seated:** Paul Sullivan, Peter Butt, Bob Lynch, Dave Regular, Eric Hunt, Darryl Sheppard



**Fire Bell, Water Street  
Harbour Grace**



**Cutting of the Ribbon for Remodeled Hydrant Club  
(L-R) Club Manager Pat Hearn, Hon. Fred Mifflin, Mayor Don Coombs**



**Firefighter's Lockers**



**The rescue of one of the two horses at Lady Lake on February 22, 2000 (L-R) Rick Davis in water, Robert Lynch stepping**



**Honor Guard / Life members, Fire Fighters Provincial Curling  
1990 Harbour Grace  
(L-R) Willis Regular, Ted Ash, George Moore (Bag Piper),  
Charles Garland, Neville Sheppard**



**1994 Curling Championships, Harbour Grace beat Gander 11-3, first year won. (L-R) P.J. Coombs, Don Coombs, Paul Ash, and William Martin (deceased)**



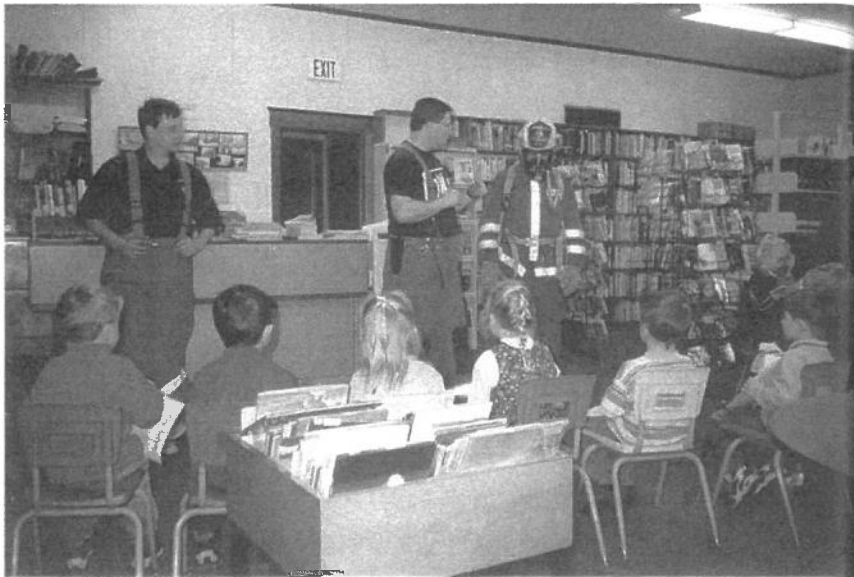
**Fire Prevention 1970**  
**Back (L-R) Dexter Noseworthy, Charles Garland, Charles Godden (deceased), Ted Ash (deceased), Frank Janes (deceased),**  
**Front: Willis Regular, Boyd Ash (Mascot), Walter Sheppard (Fire Chief) (deceased).**



**Fire Trucks by the Spirit of Harbour Grace**



**Members of the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade in the late 1980s**



**A visit to school during Fire Prevention Week**



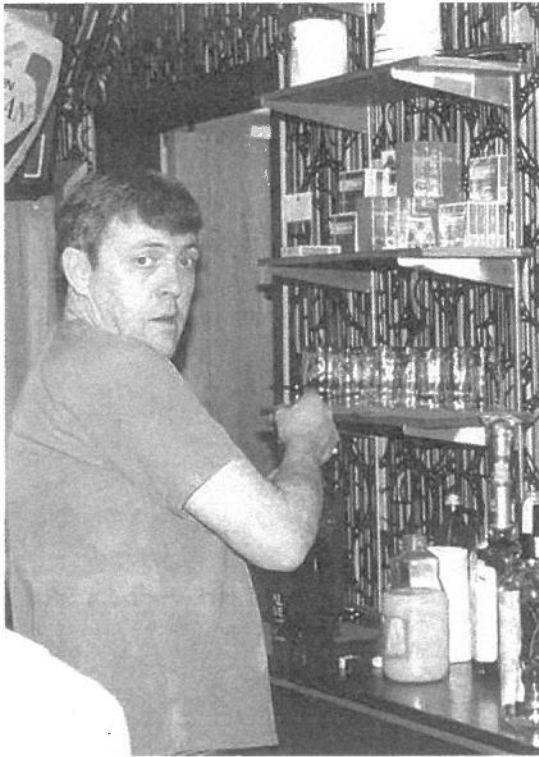
**Mr. Max Parsons (deceased)**



**Fire fighters visit Tom Snow Sr. on his 93rd Birthday  
(L-R) Paul Snow, George Crocker, Tom Snow Sr. (deceased), Bill Oke, Tom Snow Jr., John Pike (deceased), Robert Lynch, Lloyd Pike, and Roy Avery**



**Fish-N-Brewis Luncheon  
Seated: Don Regular, Mayor Don Coombs, Ken Tetford, Kathy Tetford, Daphne Mercer, Tom Short. Standing: Cyril White,**



**Firefighter Ray Maher  
(deceased), manager of  
the Fireman's Social  
Building.**



**Steak & Eggs Breakfast, 2003**



**Bob Lynch and Paul Snow, 2002**



**Christmas Parade 2001**



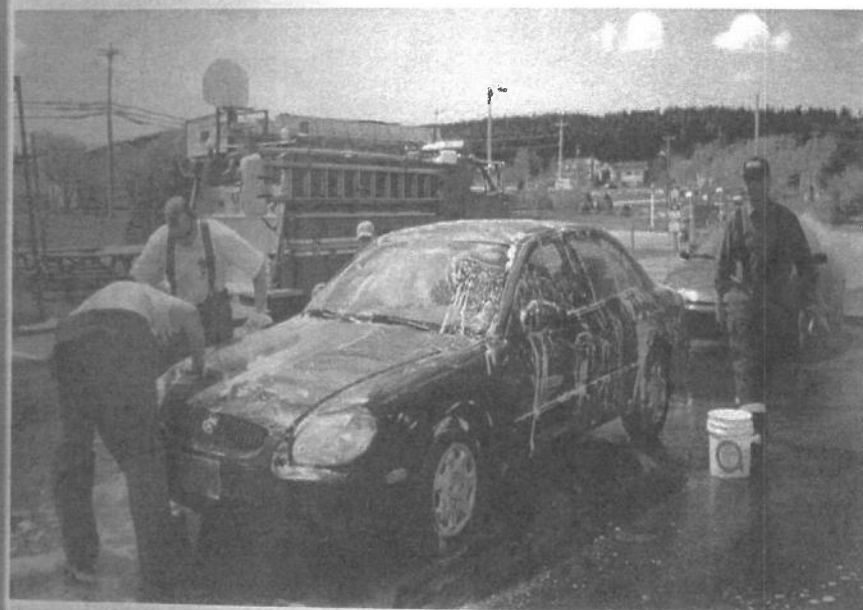
**Brigade Hockey Team**



**Top of the Ladder Club at the Fire Fighter's Ball 2002**



**Family Fun Day, 2002**



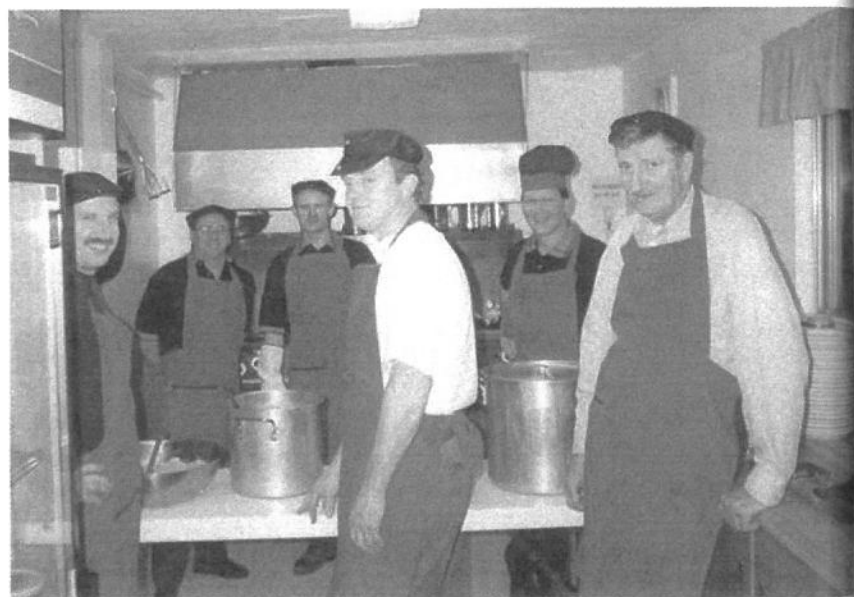
**Car Wash - June 2002**



**(L- R) Paul Snow, Don Coombs, George Sweeney and Paul Ash**



**Skating Party, December 2001**



**Christmas Catering - December 2001**



**Ladies Auxiliary at the Fire Bell Service with Haig Young, MHA**



**First RCMP detachment in Harbour Grace**



**Celebrating 125 Years**



**First Thompson Memorial Ambulance, housed by the Fire Brigade**



**Mayor Paul Moriarty (deceased) captured by Easton & his men**



**Pirates capture Roger Pike and his staff  
at the Spirit of Harbour Grace site**



**Charity Dart Tournament  
(L-R) Paul Ash, Constable Ian Fowler, Pat Hearn,  
Sitting: Keith Moriarty and Louise (Martin) Doran**



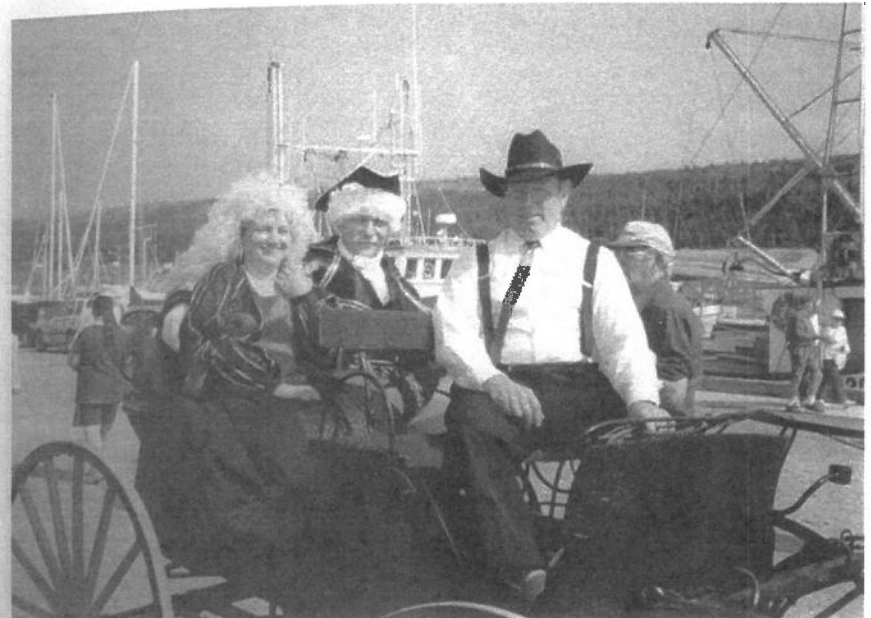
**Fire Prevention Parade**



**Pumpkin Patrol**



**Service Medal Presented**



**Gilbert Pike and Sheila NaGeira's Weddings**



**TCP Health Foundation - Telethon**





**Cold Water Rescue**



**Training Seminar - Smoke House**



**( L R ) John Crane, Charlene Godden, Glenys Godden and Judge James Kean**



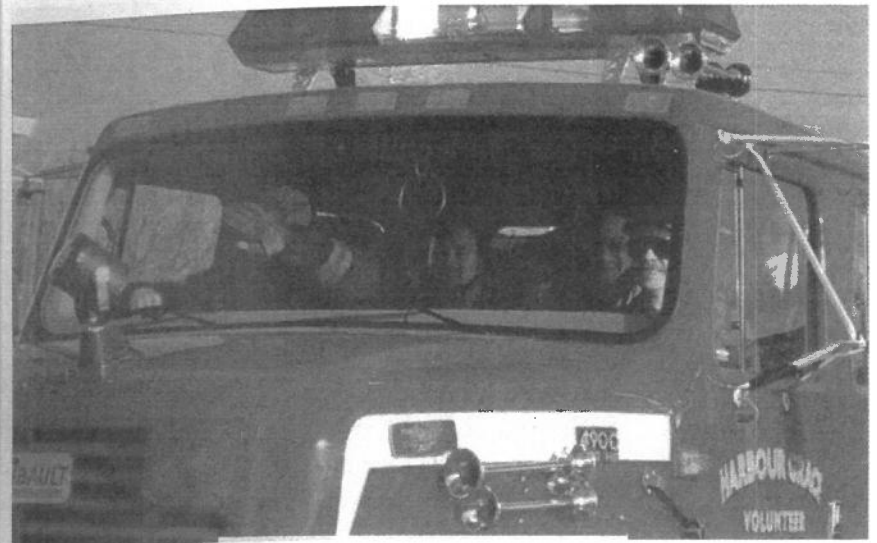
**Pirates during the Matthew Visit**



**Dedication of the Bell Tower - Last Alarm**



**MD Suit Chief Paul, Craig Cox, Wade Parsons, and Bill Ryan**



**Christmas Parade**



**Santa's Helpers**



The Irs and Snappy

Junior Fire Brigade Christmas Float



Children's Wish Foundation Walk 2004



Remembrance Day Pictures





**Jaws of Life - Demonstration**



**Fire Prevention 2004  
Firefighters, Jamie Pike, Chris Noseworthy  
and Sonia Williams with CLB.**



Our first sale 3/13

**First Bingo Ticket Sold**



**175th Anniversary Committee Meeting**



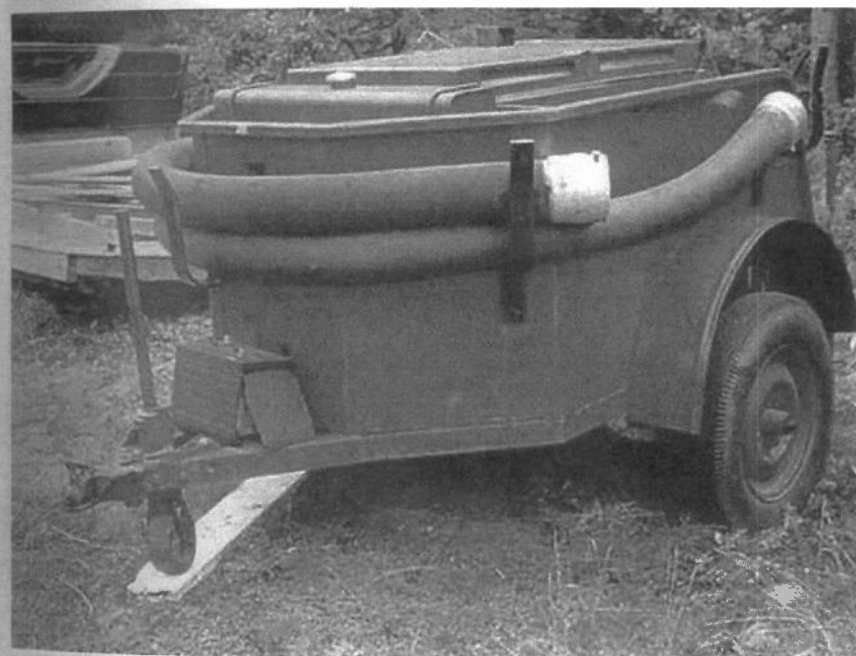
**Junior Brigade at the Ball**



**Old Apparatus of the Brigade**



**Pirate Day**





**1944 Fire Pumper and The 1947 Fire Brigade - (Standing) Assistant Chief A.L. Rogers and Roy Abbot, (Driver) Lloyd Archibald, Arthur Ash, Richard Cooney, Herbert Yetman, John Hogan, Cecil Archibald, G. Archibald, and Police Sergeant Richards**



**Fire Brigade Picture - 1980s**



**Pumper Training Practice**



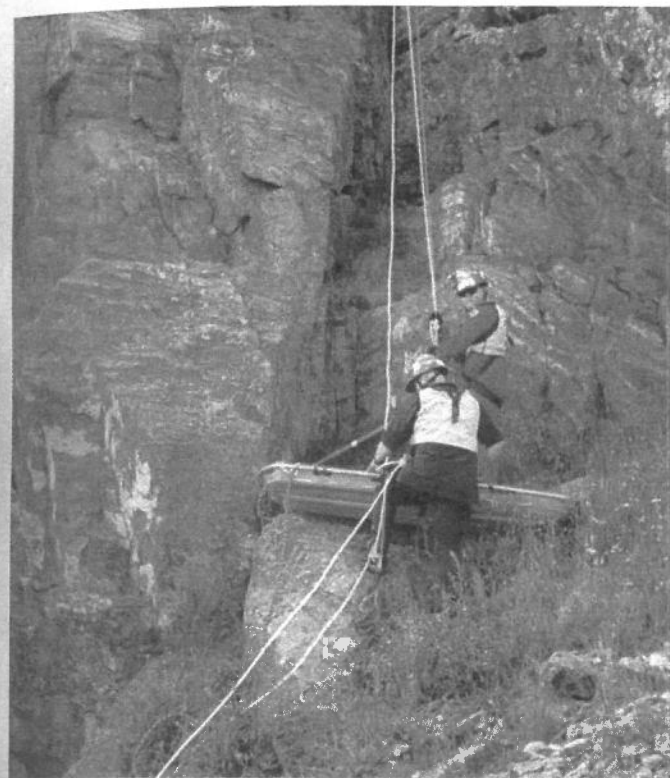
**Stephen and Lee After Fighting a Fire**



**Award Recipients from the Ball - 2004**



**Award Recipients of 1993**



**High Angle Rescue Training**



**Christmas Social**



**Fire Convention Fun - 1983**



**Jarge & his other brother, Jarge**

