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HOUSE OF WONG



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CHILDREN'S HAPPYCOATS, ETC.

Henry and Betty Wong

Next to the Stone Lantern, Highlands, N.C.

FIRE DEPARTMENTS HISTORY TOLD ROTARIANS

Bobby Houston, Town Commissioner and Assistant Chief of the Highlands Fire Department outlined progress made in the past 20 years to a capacity crowd of Rotarians and guests at Phelps House Tuesday. There were 18 visiting Rotarians from seven states and four visitors, in addition to local members.

Mr. Houston opened his remarks by describing the equipment available in 1953 when the present Department was organized by Police Chief Nelson. At that time a buggy which could be pulled by a jeep or truck with a hose reel was kept in a frame building located on the site of the present fire station. When the alarm sounded anyone who cared to would go to the station, hook the wagon to his vehicle, and go to the fire. The equipment was of no use unless a fire plug could be reached as there was no pumper.

The first modern piece of equipment was a 300 gallon pumper, still in use, which was purchased in 1953. A system of selling memberships to property owners living outside the corporate limits for \$10.00 per year was started to raise money to finance the purchase of needed equipment. Holders of the memberships are exempt from the \$100.00 fee charged in case of a fire call to their homes.

The need for an ambulance was recognized in 1959 and a fund drive organized

to purchase a 1960 Oldsmobile ambulance. A few years later a new 1967 Ford ambulance was added which will be sold when the new equipment costing some \$9,600 is delivered next month.

The new fire truck now in use was paid for one half by Town funds and the other half entirely by activities of the firemen. This carries a 750 gallon tank and a 1000 gallon per minute pumper.

Maintenance of the ambulance service is financed by nominal charges made for local calls and extended trips, but replacement of equipment must be paid for through donations and special events. Since 1966 ambulance attendants must be licensed after a course of training in many skills and equipment is inspected regularly by representatives of State Department of Health. A roster, changed each week, of available ambulance attendants is maintained at the fire station, the town hall, and the hospital to care for any emergencies. In Highlands the Rescue Squad is the same as the Fire Department, as is the ambulance service. This is one of very few communities that combine all three services in one department. If Highlands did not have its own ambulance service we would have to rely on Franklin and in case of emergency who would want to wait for the Franklin people to make the 20 mile trip?

Cooperation between fire departments in the area is excellent. On several

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