

Two of the ambulance service's three vehicles at the service's headquarters.

"We've got a bunch of dedicated people here . . . professionals who care about people, or they wouldn't be here."

— Jim Henley

Dedication Is Standard For Ambulance Service

By Bill Lindau

The ambulance service is for people who want to help other people in trouble, don't mind taking risks, spend hours in training regularly when not out on an emergency and who put money somewhere under first place.

This came out of an interview Monday with an experienced ambulance man, Jim Henley. He's director and he and his wife Linda are the co-owners of the Hoke County Ambulance Service. He was speaking in his office in the ambulance service headquarters, the old, two-story house at 124 E. Central Ave., Raeford.

As far as the financial rewards are concerned, Henley said he and his wife between them draw about \$12,000 a year. The pay for the rest of the staff amounts to about \$36,000 of the total annual budget of about \$110,000.

The service has seven fulltime and 16 parttime people, including the Henleys, and every one of them is a certified Emergency Medical Technician, except the office secretary, Jody Viperman. The other fulltimers besides her and the Henleys are Guy Hardman, Ann Leeton, Jimmy Stewart and Judy Clark.

Henley got into ambulance service while he was still in the Army, serving in the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg. He started working parttime seven years ago with the Spring Lake Ambulance Service.

Two months later, his wife went into training out of curiosity after spending many nights alone while her husband was on ambulance duty.

Then, she said, she got interested in the service, and she's been in it ever since.

"It gets in your blood," she said.

The Henleys have two children: Jimmy, Jr., 15, and Teresa, 10. Henley followed his father, a career soldier, into the Army, serving 15 years, most of the time at Ft. Bragg. He's a native of Alabama, but was an "Army brat," as he put it. His father stayed in service until he retired.

Henley left the Army in 1979, short of retirement, when he and his wife took over the Ambulance Service and got the Hoke County contract.

The Ambulance Service has been having bill-collecting trouble which county officials are trying to help solve, with legislative help.

People the ambulance service helped owe a total \$54,000.

The legislative help will come when State Rep. Danny DeVane of Raeford gets the county included in a state act penalizing anyone who does not pay for ambulance service.

The county provides the ambulance service with a subsidy to help the financial situation.

Henley, the administrator, conferred with County Manager James Martin Monday.

Henley, the ambulance EMT, had to cut the interview short to go out on a call to help a girl in an emergency.

Henley's story indicates efforts are made constantly to upgrade the Ambulance Service and the efficiency of its people.

Henley expressed pride in his people.

He said there were none better in their service in the state -- dedicated, caring, conscientious, as well as highly competent technically.

A tremendous improvement came last year.

That was the installation of the advanced life program. With special equipment and training in skills even beyond the regular EMT's, the advanced life increases greatly the chances of survival particularly of shock victims and also or people who have suffered heart attacks among other sudden illnesses until they can be admitted to hospitals.

Henley said the new system, installed last spring, has already saved at least five people. They'd be dead, he said, if the ambulance service hadn't had the advanced life system.

The county commissioners helped set it up by authorizing the outlay for the special equipment.

It cost the county \$1,100.

The advanced life program, Henley said, is literally, a vital addition to the service, considering that the county has no hospitals.

The nearest are Moore Memorial at Pinehurst and Cape Fear Valley at Fayetteville, each about 25 miles from Raeford.

Henley said these two get most of the patients the ambulance service carries. The others are taken to hospitals elsewhere in the state.

Last year, the ambulance men and women answered 1,200 calls for help, transported over 800 patients, traveling over 56,000 miles and working 4,473 hours.

He said more "pickups" of patients were made in 1981 but the

number of calls were less. Of the 800-plus last year, 259 were taken to Moore Memorial and 226 to Cape Fear Valley, he said.

Of the 1982 calls the service received, he said, about 30% resulted in no pickups: it turned out that some people didn't need the service, and others were treated on the scene and didn't need to be hospitalized.

People with a possible injury are examined thoroughly on the scene, Henley added.

And the ambulance service does go to the patient, wherever he or she is, he said, and the special "in-house" training makes it possible for the ambulance EMT to get to the patients in the most difficult places to reach.

The training includes reaching high places and includes rappelling, a mountain-climbing technique.

The ambulance service staff people trained regularly to be ready for all sorts of situations. Last year, for example, they trained especially on a hypothetical situation: a person was injured on top of a high structure.

Later, that situation became a reality. That was last year, Henley said.

A man was electrocuted accidentally while working on top of a water tank. EMTs worked on him where he was instead of spending time getting him to a place more convenient for the ambulance people.

It took all the resources of the ambulance service, and the Hoke County Rescue Squad to give the patient the best help possible.

Henley said the Rescue Squad,

whose members he expressed high respect for, was needed to bring the patient to the ground to the ambulance.

The story should have had a happy ending, but it didn't. The victim was dead on arrival at Cape Fear Valley.

But it certainly was not for lack of caring and expert help on the part of the people of Rescue and the Ambulance Service.

Then, too, he pointed out, the ambulance people go into some situations which law enforcement officers go into, but one difference is the ambulance people don't carry guns. Henley said some of the ambulance staffs have been assaulted and others have faced guns.

In 1981, a young woman EMT was injured when she was struck by a motorcycle at a Montrose Motocross competition. She ran onto the course to help a bike rider who had been injured in a fall from his machine when the other cycle struck her, its rider unable to swerve in time.

Speed also, of course, is essential in the service. Henley said that of all the 1982 calls the ambulance people answered, it took an average of only 7.9 minutes from the time the call was received till the ambulance and its EMTs reached the patient at the scene.

He called that "pretty good response time," considering that this average included calls made to places all over the county.

The ambulance service went to 227 traffic accidents during last year, a greater number than in the previous year, he added.

The service training program an-

ticipates situations. So far, Henley said, the service hasn't been called to an accident involving hazardous materials. "We've been lucky so far," he said.

But if such an accident happens, the service EMTs and equipment will be ready to help the victim, he said.

"We keep them up on hazardous materials," as much as possible, Henley explained.

The regular training for the EMTs for the advanced life program consists of 120 classroom hours, 30 clinic hours at the hospital and 200 more in emergency rooms.

Then every six months afterward, the people get 24 hours more of classroom instruction and are retested every two years, Henley said. Currently, seven members of the staff are in the advanced life program, with ratings of EMT Intermediates.

One of the uses of the program allows the EMT to get oxygen, through a special tube, into the lungs of a patient who has stopped breathing, Henley said. He said the program also allows introduction of essential fluids into a patient while waiting to get to a hospital.

But he said he wanted to emphasize the quality of the ambulance service people.

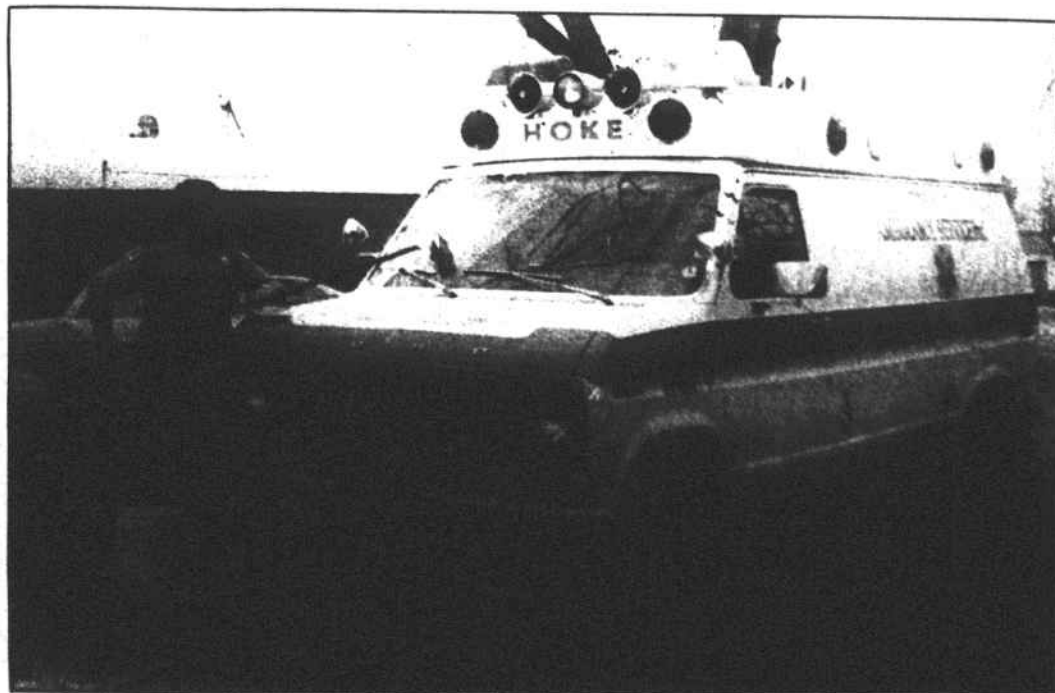
"We've got a bunch of dedicated people here . . . professionals who care about people, or they wouldn't be here," he said.

It takes a special kind of person for ambulance service, he said.

On the whole, Henley said Hoke County is well fixed with emergency medical services, which includes the Rescue.



Jim and Linda Henley, co-owners of the service, in Henley's office.



Jimmy Stewart sprucing up an ambulance.