

Community Heroes Wear Rubber Boots

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

When Calabash fireman, Capt. Ronnie Gore, extricated a half-clad intruder from the chimney of a Calabash resident earlier this year, it was not your run-of-the-mill call for the town's volunteer fire department.

However, the incident typifies the range of community service

rendered by these volunteer groups.

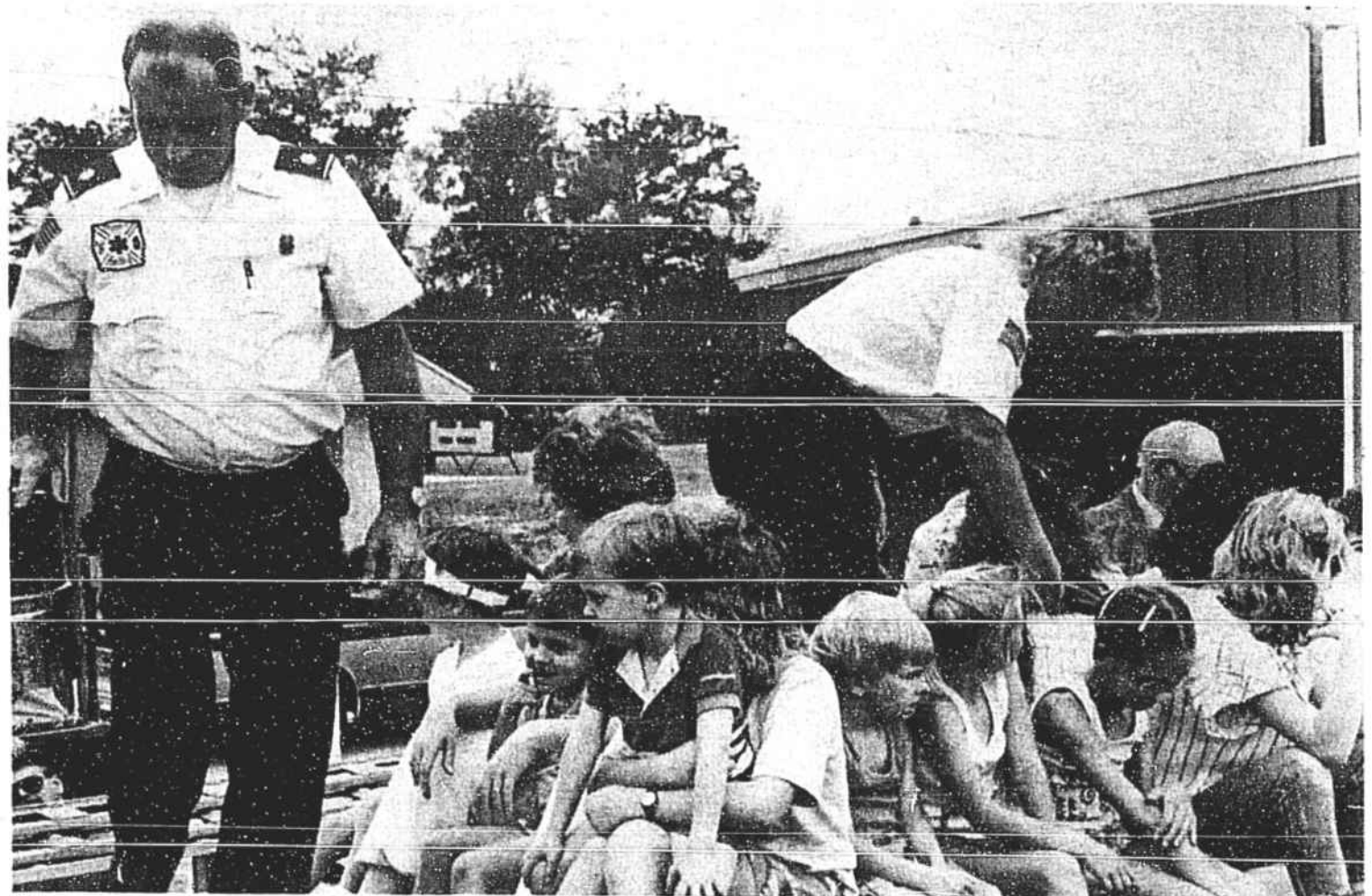
Fire-fighting is the number one activity, of course, and frequent letters to the Beacon editor express a recurring theme of gratitude for the heroic efforts of these valiant, unpaid men and women.

Calabash organized its fire department in 1973, the 12th in Brunswick County, and there are presently 22 volunteers, including four female and four black firefighters.

President Bob Crocker said they must all receive 36 hours of training (given through Brunswick Community College) to meet minimum state requirements. "But we have continual three-hour training sessions every Tuesday night," he said, "on various specific topics. We just had one last week on propane gas burning."

These volunteers have accumulated a store of memories over the past 12 years. Particularly noteworthy was the series of wood fires of 1986, when drought made a tinder-box of hundreds of acres of woodland here and in Pender County.

Other memorable fires for the Calabash crew were those at Dockside and Calabash Seafood restaurants, Acme Oil Co., and the Oyster Bay clubhouse in 1984. "That (the Oyster Bay fire) was the only time several of us had to go to the



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

PLAYING EASTER BUNNY for a crowd of Calabash youngsters this Easter were Calabash volunteer fire personnel. Pictured here are David Scott and Terri

Bryant, who are loading the fire truck with excited children for a ride after the egg hunt.

Calabash Information

Town Hall.....	579-6747
Town Clerk.....	Janet Thomas
Building Inspector.....	Bill Dunker
Mayor, Douglas Simmons.....	579-7522
Commissioners:	
Keith Hardee	
Landis High	
Sonia Stevens	
John High	
Ronnie Pittman	
Fire Department.....	579-2123
Rescue Squad.....	579-7474

Calabash Regulations

The Town of Calabash has few "Dos and Don'ts" aside from state laws, such as a prohibition against fireworks.

Visitors are asked to refrain from solicitation, keep dogs fenced, caged or on leashes, and observe the 35 miles per hour speed limit.

Calabash

Calabash, formerly called Pea Landing, was a thriving community in the 1800s, when peanuts dominated the economy.

It began a decline in the 20th century, but the first seafood restaurant opened in 1940, followed by at least 20 others in the next 40 years, making the town a "seafood capital."

A first council and mayor were elected in the 60s, but the town was not incorporated until 1973.

Now, in 1988, it is building a water system, has moved into a new town hall, and has a population of 201, with 109 permanent housing units.

hospital," Crocker said. "We were overcome by carbon dioxide batteries that were used in golf carts."

This volunteer organization, like its counterparts all over the county, is supported by county and community donations, as well as dozens of fund-raising activities throughout the year. "The county gives us \$10,500 a year," Crocker said, "and the Town of Calabash gives \$1,000. Also, we get a percentage of profits from the Calabash ABC store."

With a \$48,000 budget, this income doesn't quite pay the bills, so fire personnel hold fish fries and Bingo games, as well as overt campaigns among community businesses for

contributions. The money is needed for upkeep, repair, fueling and replacement of its vehicles, which include two pumper trucks, one ladder truck, a van and a brush truck, all housed in the attractive metal building on Thomasboro Road.

As if the fire fighting were not sufficient contribution to their community, Calabash volunteers hold an annual Easter egg hunt for area children and give the kids the extra thrill of a ride in the fire truck.

Then there are services unrelated to fire, like the chimney caper. "We get several cats out of trees," Crocker said, "and we frequently get calls to clean out culverts. This is our community service."

Service is the key word. The urge to give it compels the 22 gals and guys of Calabash to put on mackintosh, helmets and boots, mount the screaming truck, and dash off to somebody's blazing building, where they lay their lives on the line to extinguish that blaze.

"I feel from my heart that I'm inclined to help others," Crocker concluded, summing up the motivation for these particular heroes of Calabash.

If you have a fire to report, a treed cat or any other emergency requiring the hook-and-ladder crew, call 579-2355, and you'll get a prompt response.




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