

KM firemen burn house for practice

EMILY WEAVER

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The Kings Mountain Fire Department burned down the dilapidated vacant house at 103 N. Tracy Street, leaving nothing behind but a crumbling foundation and chimney. They started the fire Thursday morning, August 10, for a training exercise. Practice burns, as they are referred to, help firefighters gain more experience in a slightly more controlled environment. Volunteers and paid officers from KMFD and other local departments worked together to battle the flames they created.

Carolyn Hill grew up in the house next to 103 N. Tracy Street. She now owns the sewing shop, Hang with Hill, across the street. She was working on her sewing as the men were practicing. "I used to play in that house as a young girl. It's a little sad to see it burned," she said.

Kathy Paine from White Oak Manor drove by the practice burn on her way to work. "I don't see how they do it out there in the heat," she said. "You have to be very passionate about that sort of thing." These men definitely have passion, not just for withstanding the heat

and smoke from the flames . . . but for slaying the fiery dragon so that lives may be saved.

Many steps and long hours were taken in preparation to make sure that the burn ran smoothly. A large oak tree in a neighbor's yard had leaves and small branches that grazed the target. If it ignited, it could have spread a one-house practice fire into a two-house emergency. The men soaked the tree before they began. After some time, the fire finally pierced through the roof and out of the sides of the attic. Some of the leaves caught on fire. A firefighter turned an extra hose to the burning tree and continued to soak it through the rest of the fire. At least two hoses and sometimes more were used outside of the residence to contain the fire.

A film crew from the State Fireman's Association was on the scene to film the practice burn. They plan to use segments of this fire and KMFD's next scheduled practice burn (on August 26) in some videos and commercials for the State Fireman's Association.

"We're real fortunate to have a staff where a lot of us have been here a long time. Most of our volunteers have been here about 10 years or

longer," said KM Fire Chf. Frank Burns.

"And we have a very experienced department overall," said Fire Inspector Joey Davis. KMFD has 8 full-time, 6 part-time and 25 volunteers and when each man's years of experience are added up, it averages out to be about 15 years of experience per person. But fire practice educates the rookies and keeps the experienced ones on their toes.

"The state requires a minimum of 36 hours of training a year, but our personnel average is somewhere around 101 to 130 hours a person," he said. Davis teaches a class in Columbus twice a week for three hours every night. With his classes, he will exceed 400 hours in training by the end of the year. Burns will probably go over 400 hours too. Those hours do not include the 40-hour work week, but are solely comprised of extra classes, workshops, practice burns, conferences, and other exercises.

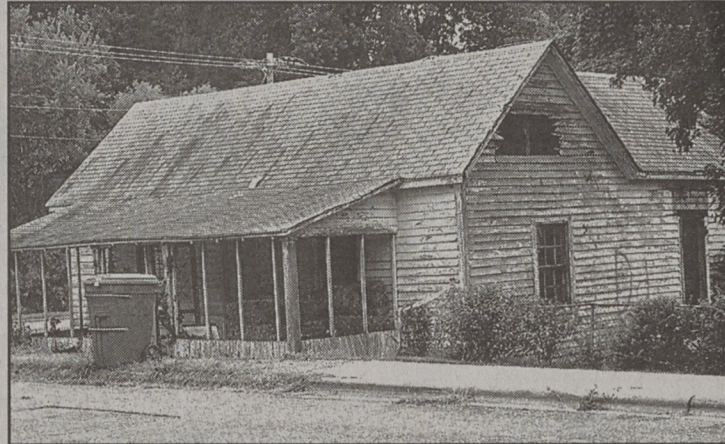
On an engine 3 quarter line, the hose that KMFD uses, there is about 120 pounds of pressure per second (120 psi). "The biggest truck we have, which is the ladder truck, as far as pump capacity, can flow (at most) 2,000 gallons of water a

minute. So you're gonna put a lot of water out in a short amount of time," Davis said. Some hoses at full blast are able to be held by one strong person, but others need a few men to keep the heavy stream of water steady.

"We'll go in and set a fire and let it burn for a little while until everything gets at its ignition temperature and lights off. We usually do that before we let them attack the fire. It gives them an opportunity to see, what we call 'fire behavior,' and what 'fire behavior' actually does," Burns said.

Davis pointed out that the scientific way of looking at a fire, is that nothing ever burns. "It's not burning the actual material, it's turning it into a gas. If you look at a piece of wood, there's a little dead spot between the wood and the flame, well it's actually not burning the material, it's burning the vapors and the gases (produced by heating that material)," he said.

"Everything has an ignition temperature and what happens is it heats up until it starts producing vapors. And when it starts producing those vapors, it's actually a gas and those gases are what burns," Burns said, adding that it is important for a firefighter to be aware of this "fire behavior."



A before shot of the dilapidated house on 103 N. Tracy Street that was reduced to ashes as part of a training exercise for the Kings Mountain Fire Department and a few other local firefighters.

A fire needs heat, oxygen and fuel to burn. Once it has those three components and begins to rage in a house with furniture, the materials inside will get heated up until its ignition temperature is reached, then everything will combust in flames. "We saw that first hand at training fires and that's one of the things that you hope to accomplish, when you do have a training fire, that the firemen actually get an opportunity to see what a flashover will actually do," Burns said.

In other training, they also learn that different colors of smoke indicate different materials burning. Very dark

smoke is the burning of petroleum products and synthetics. Black smoke indicates a pretty big fire. Smoke with a green tint to it, indicates a possible backdraft effect and when black smoke turns to white smoke it indicates that water is being thrown on the fire.

The practice fire, spewed forth heat, smoke and a lot of ash. Within minutes after the fire peaked its nasty head through the roof, it had collapsed it. Firemen tired by the heat and sweating ashes from their exercise, rested briefly in the shade and enjoyed the sudden burst of rain that a cloudless sky had granted.

Elvis Sighting

9-year-old Pearson performs at White Oak

Elvis was spotted Thursday afternoon at White Oak Manor. He was brought back from the grave to perform for the residents by a 9-year-old boy named Jacky Pearson, who began impersonating the King a few years ago. "It all started when he saw the movie *Lilo & Stitch*, where Stitch does his Elvis routine. He saw that and asked me, 'What is he doing?' I said 'That's Elvis,' and from then on he's been doing this," said Jacky's father, Butch Pearson.

Jacky's grandmother, Elvia, makes all of his jumpsuits, belts, jackets, and scarves for him. He has grown out of his first two jumpsuits and is working on the third. His mother, Margaret Pearson, said it is almost impossible to find white boots in this region, so she spray painted his cowboy boots white, which he has also almost outgrown. Elvia had a collection of Elvis records that he listened to, once his curiosity was peaked. Old videos of the King of Rock'n'Roll's performances and movies inspired his moves.

"He's been performing in front of people for about a year now," his mother, Margaret, said. "He loves this."

"We took him to Graceland and he about short-circuit-



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9-year-old Jacky Pearson performs as Elvis at White Oak Manor.

ed," Butch said. "He told me, 'Mom, this is my dream come true,'" Margaret said. "He cried at Elvis's grave and everything."

Jacky sang his tunes for the crowd of nurses and residents, complete with pelvic thrusts and gyrating hips. He wooed the ladies in the crowd with hugs in between verses and scarves that he pulled from around his neck to give to them, in true Elvis

fashion. During his break, he went around the room smiling and posing for photographs with his admirers.

He performed for about an hour singing classics, like "You Ain't Nothin' But a Hound Dog," "Suspicious Minds," "Blue Suede Shoes," and "Burnin' Love."

"We thought he would grow out of it. But he still loves it. I guess there are worse people he could imitate," Margaret said.

"He does this continuously, whether he's in front of a crowd or not," Butch said.

On Friday, August 4, he performed in front of a crowd at the old National Guard Armory in Gastonia, and Margaret said he brought the house down. Kathy Paine, events director at White Oak Manor, asked Jacky to come back and perform again for them around Christmastime - he said he would.

As he was leaving the building, Paine got on the intercom and announced, "Ladies and Gentlemen, if I can have your attention. Elvis is now leaving the building."



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Local officials, dignitaries, and employees celebrated the opening of Kings Mountain's new electric power substation on Margrace Road Tuesday. It will provide power for about 3,000 houses. Mayor Rick Murphrey (middle) spoke of the importance of the new substation as Kings Mountain grows, and thanked the electric department for all of their hard work. County Manager Marilyn Sellers holds the bow.

Middle School orientation set

Kings Mountain Middle School orientation will be Tuesday, Aug. 22 from 1-3 p.m.

HOW TO REACH US

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KM WEATHER REPORT

By Kenneth Kitzmiller

	Aug. 9-15	Year Ago
Total precipitation	2.96	.79
Maximum 1 day	2.12 (10th)	.79 (9th)
Month to date	3.55	1.72
Year to date	24.82	32.39
Low temperature	63 (14th)	70 (14th)
High temperature	90 (9th)	94 (15th)
Avg. temperature	75.9	81.0

The Herald

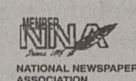
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