

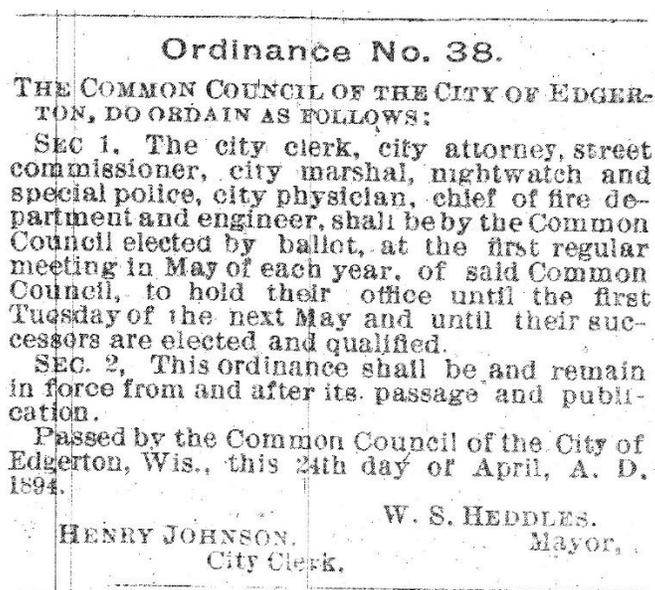
## Department Chiefs

For many decades, the fire chief was elected by members of the Edgerton Fire Department, and then the department would petition the Edgerton City Council to appoint that person as Chief. The fire company would direct the chief to appear at the city council meetings to make requests on behalf of the fire company.

Every year, at the first meeting in January, the members of the department would elect officers of the organization, including the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, as well as the Chief, Foreman, Hook and Ladder Captain, Hose Captain and Trustees. As a private organization, these officers ran the meetings for the fire department. Once elected the chief generally remained in that position until he resigned (or potentially was voted out by the membership). This was a common practice in volunteer fire departments up to the late 1900s or early 2000s. A small group of departments still practice it today.

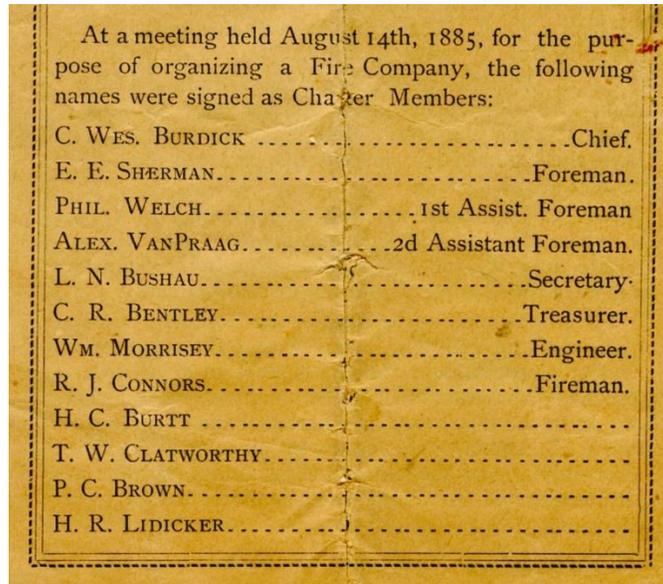
In meeting minutes of April 15, 1895, the members passed a motion to petition the city council to retain the present chief, George Price. In 1896 they petitioned for an assistant chief as well as an assistant engineer. It was noted in meeting minutes from 1901 that the chief could select his assistant chief, either from inside the department or not.

While the membership voted in January, the appointments by the city in the early years were usually made in April. The City of Edgerton fiscal year ended on March 30<sup>th</sup>, so the April appointment corresponded with other council elections and appointments for the new fiscal year. In April, 1894, Ordinance No. 38 established that the fire chief and engineer, along with the city clerk, city attorney, street commissioner, physician, marshal, night watchman, and special police shall be elected by ballot by the Common Council at the first regular meeting in May of each year.



## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

When the original "Edgerton Steam Fire Engine Company No. 1" was chartered in August of 1885, the company elected the first chief, C. Wes. Burdick, along with the foremen, engineer, secretary, treasurer and firemen.



The City Council approved Burdick's appointment at their August 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, for a term ending on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

... \$250, which was adopted. Ald. Mooney moved that C. W. Burdick be appointed chief of fire department for term ending May 1st, 1886; Carried. A petition of

The next year on April 14, 1886 the City Council approved E. F. Sherman as chief.

paid. Upon request of 24 members of the fire department, Ald. Jenson moved that Ed. F. Sherman be appointed chief of the fire department. Carried.

In 1887 and 1888 A. S. Flagg was appointed chief on the recommendation of the fire department.

ed paid. A. S. Flagg has been elected chief of the fire department and C. L. Brown poundmaster.

This practice of the members of the fire company electing a chief and recommending that person to the city council continued for over a century.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

The City of Edgerton Police and Fire Commission had the responsibility to hire the Fire Chief, although it was noted in the Edgerton Reporter in a January 1989 issue, that the volunteer firefighters continued the tradition of electing a chief even though the Commission had already named James "Jim" Neal as Chief. Fortunately, the volunteers elected Jim as well.

When the Edgerton Fire Protection District was formed in 1992, the District Board was then responsible for the hiring of employees, including the chief, for the fire department. The chief remained a volunteer, elected by the volunteer firefighters, and the District Board continued to select whoever the firemen elected as chief until 2008 when the chief and deputy chief positions became full-time paid staff. Then the board began to interview, select and hire the fire chief of their choice.

The pages below provide a background on each of the chiefs that served the Edgerton Fire Department. As noted in the biographies of the former chiefs, many of them were leaders in the community--either as business owners, leaders in their churches, or leaders in other civic organizations. Many of the members of the fire department were also businessmen and involved in civic activities.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

Below is a list of Fire Chiefs and the years they served. More information on each chief follows this.

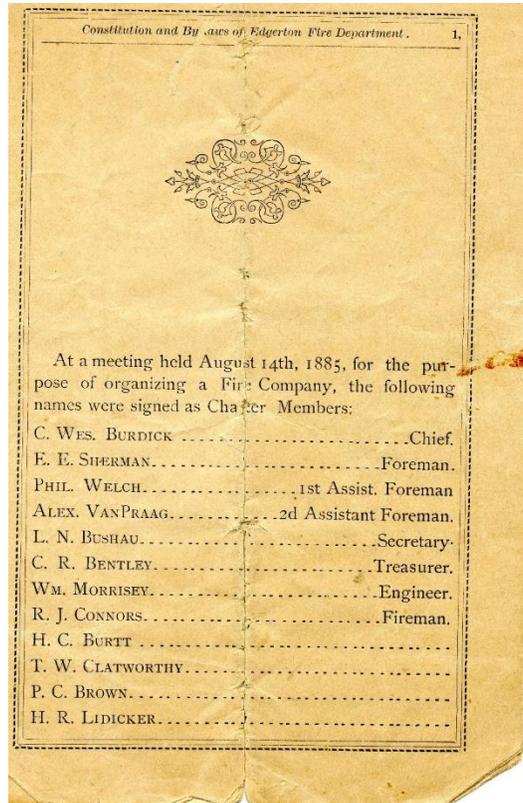
<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Notes</b>
August 1885-April 1886	C. Wes. Burdick	Chief of newly chartered "Edgerton Steam Fire Engine Company No. 1" August 1885
April 1886 – 1887	Ed. F. Sherman	
April 1887 -1889	A. S. Flagg	
1890-1891	<i>Unknown at this time</i>	
1892- 1893 (possibly) 1894-1895	George W. Price	Chief of the newly re-organized Edgerton Fire Co. on 2/1/1894. Was chief of the old company for at least a couple of years prior to that.
1896-1908 (June)	George W. Hargraves	Appointed chief on January 6, 1896, resigned as chief in June, 1908.
1908 (June)-1914 (April)	Henry Harvey	Recommended to the City Council to be appointed chief, replacing George Hargraves when he resigned.
1914 (April)-1916	George L. Ogden	
1917-1921	John Ruosch	Resigned at the end of 1921 with numerous members of the department.
1922 –1929 (April)	Hubert Arthur	
1929 (May) -1932	Harry Maltpress	Hosted Wisconsin State Fire Tournament in 1929.
1933 – 1938	<i>Unknown at this time</i>	
1939-1951	Lyman "Lime" Wood	
1951, 1952	Henry "Hank" Schieldt	
1953-1955	<i>Unknown at this time</i>	
1956, 1957	Thorwald "Tully" Gunness	
1958 to 1978	Robert Stricker Sr.	Longest serving chief.
1978 to 1981	Norman "Nort" Yeske	
1981 to 1985	Charles Edwardson	
1986 to 1992	James Neal	Also started Ambulance Service in 1970.
1992 to 1996	Mark Backes	
1997 to 2001	John Sherman	
2002 to 2007	John Gietzel	
2008 to 2016 (March)	Brian Demrow	First full-time paid chief.
2016 to current	Randall Pickering	

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### C. Wes. Burdick

Served as Chief from August 1885 to April 1886.

The City of Edgerton was incorporated in 1883. It took a couple of years and several votes to establish a Fire Department in 1885 (refer to "Origins of the Edgerton Fire Department" document for more detail on establishing the department). Members of the Edgerton Athletic Association formed the first Fire Company in February, 1885, and met throughout the spring and summer to finalize the Fire Company. On August 14, 1885, they formally established a Fire Company and named C. Wes. Burdick as the Chief.



At a meeting on August 13, 1885, the City Council approved his appointment as chief for a short term ending May 1, 1886.

... \$250, which was adopted. Ald. Mooney moved that C. W. Burdick be appointed chief of fire department for term ending May 1st, 1886; carried. A petition of fire department for recognition was referred to committee on fire department. Council adjourned.

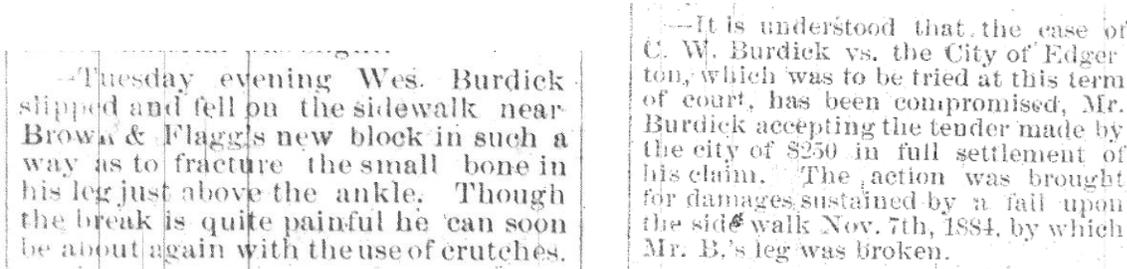
Charles Wesley "Wes" Burdick was born about 1845 in Almond, New York. His family moved to the Town of Fulton, Wisconsin when he was an infant, moving soon after to Johnstown. His father, Nathan D. Burdick, was known as the Father of Johnstown and served as treasurer for two years and sheriff for six years. After 18 years in Johnstown the family moved back to the Town of Fulton.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

Wes was married to Mary E. Crandall of Milton in 1875. They had four children, including Janie, Mable C. and Ladena M. The tombstone for Ladena says "only son of C.W. & M.E. Burdick".

Wes Burdick worked as a blacksmith in Edgerton, first partnering with Herman Lidicker in 1883, and later partnered with Thomas Westlake in the blacksmithing business in 1884. He was also in charge of the fireworks for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration in 1884.

On October 30, 1884, he fell on a new city sidewalk and broke his leg. He sued the City and a year later ended up settling out of court for \$250.



Tragedy struck the Burdick family in 1885 and 1886, when one of his children died of scarlet fever in 1885 and the other three died a year later from the same disease. Mary was so upset that she took all the children's clothes and playthings outside in a pile in the yard and then burned them. After that she packed her trunk and left her husband to go to the Dakotas. When Wes came home to the empty house he sat down and cried. The story was published in the July 16, 1886 issue of the *Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter*.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

—Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Burdick have broken up housekeeping. Wesley having gone to Chicago, and Mrs. Burdick to friends in Dakota. Where now there is a desolate and forsaken home, a year ago lived a happy family consisting of a father, mother and four children. A few months ago the scarlet fever scourge carried away the remaining three children, one having died nearly a year ago. The grief at their loss nearly drove the parents frantic and unsettled their domestic happiness. About two weeks ago Mrs. Burdick gathered all the clothing and playthings belonging to her loved little ones, carried them into the yard and set fire to them. After carefully arranging the house she packed her trunk and took the train for Dakota. This action on her part was unknown and unexpected to her husband. When Mr. Burdick returned and found the house vacant, and the neighbors informed him what had occurred, they said that he sat down and cried like a child. Taking the case altogether it is one of the saddest we have ever known.

After his wife left him he went to work in Chicago. By 1889 he had moved to Huron, South Dakota, although it is not clear if he got back together with his wife, Mary. In 1895 was living in Willow Lake, Minnesota, although two years later in 1897 he was back in South Dakota, according to his mother's obituary then. At the time of his death, we are told his family had recently left Willow Spring, South Dakota and moved to Idaho, although he was back in South Dakota on business when he died of pneumonia. The only notice of his death that we've found was a social note in the January 6, 1905, issue of the *Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter*, mentioning they had received word of his death that week. He could've died in late December, 1904, or very early January, 1905.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### Ed. F. Sherman

Served as Chief from April 1886 to April 1887.

Ed. F. Sherman was named Fire Department Chief by the City Council on April 13, 1886.

paid. Upon request of 24 members of the fire department, Ald. Jenson moved that Ed. F. Sherman be appointed chief of the fire department. Carried.

Although Ed had his share of health issues in that first year. Shortly after being named chief in April he went out on a sailboat on Lake Koshkonong and broke his arm.

—Chas. Bentley, Ed. Sherman and Pen Brown launched their new sail boat on Lake Koshkonong this week. The boat has a 20-foot keel and is considered the largest and staunchest one on the lake. It is named the "Cormorant."

—Ed Sherman is suffering from a fractured wrist, which came to him in a tussle with a sailboat. One of the bones in his lower arm was fractured, but the accident was not discovered until two days later.

Then in May he came down with rheumatism and was laid up for a couple of months.

May 28, 1886:

—Ed. Sherman has been obliged to again take to his bed, rheumatism having taken hold of him with renewed vigor. At present writing he is somewhat better.

June 11, 1886:

—At last accounts Ed. Sherman was slowly improving, although his condition is yet somewhat critical.

June 25, 1886:

—We are pleased to note that Ed. Sherman, who has been confined to his bed for nearly two months is slowly improving.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### A.S. Flagg

Served as Chief from April 1887 to April 1889.

A.S. Flagg was named to the Chief's position in May, 1887 and 1888. (Nothing was found in 1889 so he may have continued?) He was also on City Council at one point.

He owned a metal working business and a hardware store.

—A. S. Flagg & Co. have a force at work putting up a galvanized iron cornice on Lex. Jones' new block in Milton Junction.

—A. S. Flagg & Co. are getting material on the ground for an extension to their hardware store. An addition of 53 feet is to be built in the rear, two stories, making this store the largest in town, 133 feet. The extension rear will be used for the tin-shop and the upper story for storage.

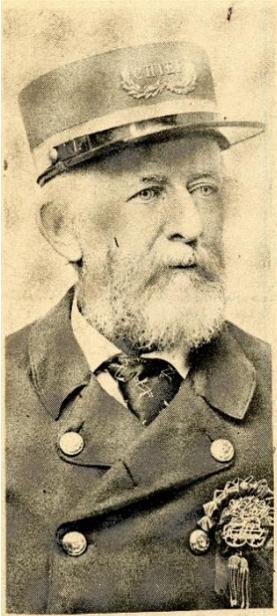
Abner S. Flagg was born December 13, 1851, in Princeton, New Jersey, and grew up in Lancaster, Wisconsin. He married Edith Coon in 1882 and had two children.

He died September 18, 1923, and is buried at Fassett Cemetery (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/114371734/abner-s-flagg>).

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### George W. Price

Served as Chief from 1892 (or earlier) to April 1895.



George W. Price was first named chief of the department in the early 1890s. When the department was incorporated in 1894 he was again named chief of the newly re-organized department, effective February 1, 1894 and continued through 1895.

The department was re-organized in 1893-1894 “on a more substantial and permanent basis” and the “move is in the interest of a more efficient fire department” (*The Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter, October 20, 1893*). He was part of the new charter, having signed the “Articles of Organization” in October, 1893. This appeared to be a bit of a tumultuous time with a lot of turnover among members of the fire department, as well as the leaders. At one time he was identified as the first fire chief in Edgerton in 1883, and while he is the first chief of the officially incorporated department in 1894, there was no department yet in 1883 and we see that C. Wes Burdick was the first named chief of the privately organized fire company in 1885.

This photo from the June 22, 1983 Edgerton Reporter shows him in uniform although these uniforms weren’t purchased until 1899 so this was probably taken after that time.

He was born in Berks County, Pennsylvania in 1837. He married Fayette D. Howe in 1858, and they moved to Wisconsin in 1861. They had seven children.

He was a carpenter by trade and became a prominent builder and contractor in Edgerton. He helped build the new office for the Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter in 1884, as well as Bentley’s warehouse shortly after. In the summer of 1887 when downtown Marshfield, Wisconsin, was destroyed by fire, he was one of several people from Edgerton who went to Marshfield to help them rebuild.

He was also prominent in the Mason and Odd Fellow orders and served as alderman for his ward for several terms, including president of the City Council. As alderman in 1886, he was named to the Committee on Fire Department.

He died on June 4, 1912 and is buried in Fassett Cemetery.

[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/88298528/george-w\\_-price](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/88298528/george-w_-price)

His obituary is in the Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter, June 7, 1912 issue, page 5.

◆◆◆  
**Obituary.**

GEORGE W. PRICE.

George W. Price, for many years a prominent contractor and builder in this city, died at his home Tuesday evening, aged 75 years. He had been in poor health for some time past and a complication of diseases incidental to advanced age was the cause of his death.

The deceased was born in Berks county, Pa., April 18, 1837. He was united in marriage to Miss Fayette D. Howe in his native town Nov. 28, 1858. The family removed to Wisconsin in 1861, where he followed the trade of carpenter since. From this union five sons and two daughters were born to them, Henry and William, who reside here, Melvin of Oregon, James of Georgia, Franklin of Texas and Robert of Arizona, and two daughters, Mrs. Amsden and Mrs. John Lyke of Emerald Grove. Mrs. Price died in 1897.

For many years Mr. Price was prominent in the Masonic and Odd Fellow orders, and served as alderman of his ward for several terms. In 1898 he was again married to Lavina Damon Mosher, who survives.

Funeral services were held from his late home Thursday afternoon, conducted by Rev. G. K. MacInnis.

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## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### George W. Hargraves

Served as Chief from January 1896 to June 1908.



The department petitioned the City of Edgerton Common Council to appoint George W. Hargraves as chief on January 6, 1896. His name appears occasionally throughout the years in the meeting minutes as Chief. Again in May, 1908, the department recommended to the council that he be appointed Chief. Although he resigned as Chief the following month on June 15, 1908. His wife Mary died six months later. It is presumed he was the chief throughout all the years from 1896 to June 1908 as there was no other reference to anyone else as chief.

He was born March 2, 1850 in Juneau, Wisconsin. He married Mary Camenga in 1877 and they lived in Juneau until 1883 when they moved to Edgerton. They had two daughters—Clara and Norma. Both George and

Mary were very active in the Baptist Church until it disbanded, and then they joined the Congregational Church and were active in that church.

In addition to the fire department, he also served on the City Council, and he “could always be depended on to stand firmly for the right.”

He was a carpenter and “his efficiency and skill as a carpenter are shown in many of the homes in Edgerton.” He too, was involved with the building of the new office for The Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter in 1884 with George Price (that building was on Fulton street, and no longer exists). He also helped building the Edgerton School in 1892 as well as Child High School in 1906.

He died unexpectedly on March 11, 1914, while still a member of the department. Notice of his death was in the March 13, 1914 issue of the Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter and his obituary was in the following issue on March 20, 1914.

**Sudden Death of George Hargraves.**

George Hargraves, the well known contractor and builder who has been in failing health for several months, expired suddenly about 4:30 o'clock Wednesday afternoon just after he had stepped into the home of Dr. McChesney to report his condition. He went to Janesville in the morning to consult Dr. Munn, who was treating him, returning on the afternoon train, and was feeling so much better he thought he would stop at the McChesney residence and tell him what Munn had said of his improved condition. Possibly the exertion of the walk from the depot was too great and heart failure was the immediate cause of his death, for he was scarcely seated when his head was noticed to drop forward and before anyone could reach him he was dead. The suddenness of it was a great shock to the community. The body was removed to his home soon after.

Funeral services will probably be held on Saturday.

**GEORGE W. HARGRAVES.**

George W. Hargraves, who passed away suddenly on Wednesday, March 11, 1914, was born in Juneau, Wis., March 2, 1850. He was united in marriage to Mary Camenga of Brookfield, N. Y., on Dec. 12, 1877. They resided in Juneau until 1883 when they came to Edgerton to live. They were both earnest workers in the Baptist church until it disbanded, after which they transferred their membership to the Congregational church. Mrs. Hargraves' death occurred on Dec. 31, 1908.

In his departure, Mr. Hargraves leaves two daughters, Mrs. R. E. Hopkins and Miss Norma, and three grandsons, Norman, Stanley and Roy Hopkins Jr., all of whom live in this city. He is also survived by one sister, Mrs. Chas. Dumont of Northport, Long Island, whose husband was formerly principal of the Edgerton schools, and two brothers, Richard of Juneau and Jacob of Appleton, Wis. Funeral services were held at the Congregational church Sunday afternoon, March 15th, and were conducted by his pastor, Rev. Philip E. Gregory, who preached from the text found in 2 Timothy 4-7.

The passing of this citizen brings deep sorrow to our community, where his manly, Christian character was a strong influence for good. He was untiring in his devotion to the church and was a constant attendant at all of its services even when failing health made it difficult for him to leave home, and his friendly words of greeting for all will be missed by everyone. He worked faithfully in the Edgerton Fire Department, and as a member of the city council he could always be depended upon to stand firmly for the right. His efficiency and skill as a carpenter are shown in many of the homes of Edgerton and made for him a warm place in the hearts of the people.

An old friend speaking of the swiftness and unexpectedness with which death came to Mr. Hargraves, said: "I know of none who was better prepared to go. His life was an open book." To all who have known him it seems that his book of life is a record of kindly, faithful service in his home, his church and his city.

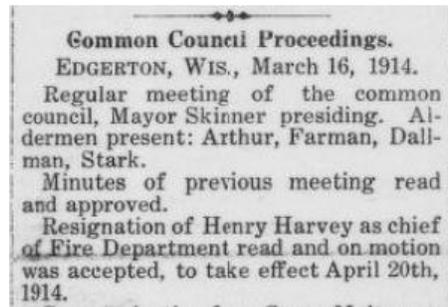
"No life  
Can be pure in its purpose or  
strong in its strife  
And all life not be purer and  
stronger thereby."

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### Henry Harvey

Served as Chief from June 1908 to April 1914.

Henry Harvey was recommended to the City Council to be appointed chief, replacing George Hargraves when he resigned as chief in 1908. He served as chief until April 20, 1914 when he submitted his resignation to the City Council. He was a member of the Fire department from February 18, 1895 to April 7, 1919.



*Not much is known about him. There is a Henry L Harvey, born 1864, died 1956, buried at Fassett Cemetery in Edgerton, however it is believed chief was Henry H. (not Henry L.), although further confirmation is needed.*

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### George L. Ogden

Served as Chief from 1914 to 1916.



George Lee Ogden served as Chief from 1914 through 1916. He was a member of the department from 1887 through 1916 and served in many roles. He was president of the department from 1892 to January of 1894. The department was re-organized in late 1893, and the new organization took effect February 1, 1894 with new officers elected. He became captain of the Hook & Ladder Company for the remainder of 1894. He was Foreman from 1895 through 1913. In October, 1912, he was recognized for 25 years of service.

He was born in Milton, Wisconsin, on December 6, 1860. He married Alice Bagley from Milton. He died on May 19, 1922 from a severe appendicitis attack, and is buried in Fassett Cemetery.

(<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/127925912/george-lee-ogden>)

His obituary is in the Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter, the May 26, 1922 issue, page 5.

Obituary.

GEORGE LEE OGDEN.

Another of the men known and beloved by people in this community and surrounding neighborhood, George Lee Ogden, is numbered among those who have finished their course and gone to their eternal reward. Mr. Ogden was taken seriously ill with an attack of appendicitis Wednesday last week. Though a sufferer from minor attacks of this malady previously, his life had not at any time, humanly speaking, been in jeopardy. This last attack was of a nature making an operation imperative, and he was taken to Janesville where the operation was performed. The surgeons found the conditions as serious as they had anticipated, and it was realized that his chances of recovery were the slimmest possible. Complications had set in, and at 10 o'clock Friday evening, May 19, 1922, he died.

The deceased was born in the town of Milton, Dec. 6, 1860, youngest of a family of seven children of the late George W. Ogden and his wife, Electa Coon Ogden. Of his brothers and sisters only James Ogden of Edgerton, Mrs. L. W. Pierce of Danbury, Iowa, and Mrs. Julia A. Fuller of Fort Atkinson, survive.

On the 24th of March, 1881, Mr. Ogden was united in marriage to Miss Alice Bagley at Milton, Wis., and to them came seven children, five of whom, together with the widow and six grandchildren, live and mourn the sudden and sad loss. The children surviving are Stella, now Mrs. Fred G. Smith, Edson, Clyde, George, and Edith, wife of Carl Kepp. Harold died in 1905, and Guy gave his life upon the battlefields in France during the great war in 1918, and his body was later returned to the U. S. and laid to rest in Fassett cemetery, Edgerton.

The funeral services were held from the home and from the Congregational church Monday afternoon, a very large audience of relatives, friends, neighbors and acquaintances present. The Rev. Atkins read the service and spoke words of comfort and hope. The body was laid in the family lot at Fassett cemetery.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### John C. Ruosch

Served as Chief from 1917 to 1921.



John Carl Ruosch first joined the fire department on March 1, 1897. He was a member for 25 years and served as Chief from January 1917 through 1921. Prior to that from 1900 to 1916 he was the Captain of the Hook and Ladder Company. In November, 1921, Chief Ruosch and about 15 members of the department resigned their positions. There are no meeting minutes from that year, and nothing in the newspaper that directly points to any issues within the department. Although 1921 saw quite a few changes as the post-World War I world was developing. One of the developments was that the automobile was becoming quite common. In September 1921, the City Council approved the purchase of the first motorized fire truck. That month also saw a civilian killed and several firemen injured by an automobile while responding to a fire and having to manually pull the hose cart. The department had been having problems with curious citizens rushing to the fire station when there was an alarm, blocking the streets with their cars and hindering the fire department just to see what was going on.

His last name is spelled 'Rousch' almost as often as it is spelled 'Ruosch' in fire department documents, and even in the newspaper announcement of his obituary. His gravestone and obituary use the spelling with the 'u' before the 'o', and his signature in the chiefs "Record of Adjustments" books has the 'u' before the 'o'.

He was born in 1865, near Watertown, and came to Edgerton as a young man. He married Bertha Knoll in 1888 in Edgerton and they had eight children. She died August 18, 1908.

He worked as a contractor, building homes, businesses and churches. He served as president of a vocational school that was established here and was on the Fassett Cemetery board. He was also a president at St. John's Lutheran church for several terms.

He died on March 15, 1952, following a four-month illness, and is buried at Fassett Cemetery with his wife and an infant son. (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/28162505/johann-carl-ruosch>)

See his obituary in the March 20, 1952 issue of The Edgerton Reporter, page 1.

## OBITUARIES

### JOHN C. ROUSCH

John C. Ruosch, 86, prominent building contractor here for many year and former fire chief, died in his home at 102 Broadway street Saturday morning following a four-month illness.

Mr. Ruosch built homes, business places and churches during the time he was a contractor. He was a volunteer fireman for 25 years.

He also served as president of the only vocational school ever established here and was a member of Fassett cemetery board. He was a member of St. John's Lutheran church and served as president for several terms.

Born Dec. 12, 1865, near Watertown, he came to Edgerton as a young man. His marriage to Bertha Knoll took place May 8, 1888, in Edgerton and they spent their married life here. She died Aug. 18, 1908.

Surviving are two daughters, Mrs. Harry Hain, Edgerton, and Mrs. Gertrude Sunbye, Stoughton; four sons, Thomas of Pelican Lake, John, of St. Augustine, Fla., Carl, of Waukegan, Ill., and George, of Edgerton; a niece, Mary Ruosch, who lived with the Ruosch family; Two sisters, Mrs. Herman Witt Sr., Edgerton, and Mrs. Anna Laib, New London; two brothers, Ed, of Edgerton, and William of New London; seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Two children preceded him in death.

Funeral services were held at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Jones funeral home and at 2 p.m. in St. John's Lutheran church, the Rev. A. M. Wahl officiating. Burial was in Fassett cemetery.

**Hubert F. Arthur**

Served as Chief from January, 1922 to May, 1929.



Hubert F. Arthur joined the department on March 15, 1909 and was a member until 1956.

He was born in 1882 in Fulton Township and married Catherine McDonald.

He co-owned the "Hain, Livick and Arthur" hardware store along with Frank Livick and Harry Hain (also members of the department), having purchased it in 1913 from the J. D. Hain Estate, managed by sons Ed and George Hain. He was also a member of the Thibeau Hunting Club.

He died on May 11, 1959 and is buried in Fassett Cemetery.

(<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/45383285/hubert-f-arthur>).

The fire department turned out in uniform as a body to pay their respects. All of his pall bearers were members of the fire department. His obituary is on page 1 of The Edgerton Reporter, May 14, 1959 issue.

**The Hain Hardware Stock Sold.**  
On Tuesday a deal was closed whereby the hardware stock of the Hain Estate was sold to Harry Hain, Frank Livick and Hubert Arthur. And thus ends the business career of one of the oldest and most reliable business firms in Edgerton. In the year 1876 J. D. Hain opened a hardware store here and conducted the same until his death, some 20 years ago, and the business since that time has been run in the name of the J. D. Hain Estate, under the management of two sons, Ed. and George, and by honest methods and square dealing the business has increased from year to year until today the stock carried is one of the largest and best in southern Wisconsin. In taking over the business it would seem that the new firm was particularly fitted to conduct it in a manner in keeping with its past successful management. Harry Hain has had large experience in the heating and plumbing business, while Frank Livick and Hubert Arthur have both been connected with the store for several years. They are three upright young men and are bound to succeed if energy and square dealing count for aught in the conduct of a business of this kind.

**Funeral Services  
For Hubert Arthur  
Will Be Held Today**

Hubert Arthur, 77, well known Edgerton businessman, died Monday after an illness of several years.

Mr. Arthur was associated with the Hain, Livick and Arthur Hardware Store here from 1913 until retiring in 1954. He also served on the fire department from 1909 to 1956. He was a member of the Thibeau Hunting Club.

The son of James and Mary Learn Arthur, he was born April 14, 1882, in Fulton Township. His wife the former Catherine McDonald, died in 1957. A sister, Alice, and a brother, Charles, also preceded him in death.

Surviving are a daughter, Mrs. Robert Worth, three grandchildren and a brother, Henry, all of Edgerton.

Services will be held at 2 p.m. today in the Ruben Tellefson Funeral Home, the Rev. Walter Holliday, Methodist Church, officiating. Burial will be in Fassett Cemetery

Pallbearers will be Max Tiegs, Robert Stricker, Allen Burdick, Ole Staff, Thorwald Guinness and Carl Wallmow.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### Harry Maltpress

Served as Chief from 1929 to 1932.



John Harry Maltpress joined the fire department in March, 1915 and served as chief from May 1929 through 1932. He worked his way up the ranks, starting in 1916 as the Assistant Hose Captain for two years, then Hose Captain for four years, First Assistant Foreman for two years, Foreman for five years, then Chief for about four years. He was on the department for a total of 26 years.

He was born in 1891 in Edgerton. He married Bessie Henry of Lancaster in 1913, and they had one daughter, Marion. Marion and her husband, Laverne Bobb, had a daughter, Nancy, who married Everett Dickinson. Harry's granddaughter, Nancy Dickinson, was very involved in the EMS service for Edgerton for 37 years, and served as Secretary of the Edgerton Fire Protection District Commission. Nancy's granddaughter, Allison, continued the family tradition, having volunteered as an EMT for the Edgerton Fire Protection District.

Harry was employed at the Highway Trailer plant in town. He was also a member of the Knights of Pythias, a fraternal organization that embodied loyalty, honesty and friendship.

He died suddenly on July 23, 1941, as a result of a sun stroke. He is buried in Fassett Cemetery with his wife. (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29120011/harry-maltpress>). News of his death was on the front page the July 24, 1941 issue of the Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter, and his obituary was in the following issue on July 31, 1941.



### HARRY MALTPRESS

John Harry Maltpress, 50, a well known resident of this city his entire lifetime, died at 6 o'clock Wednesday evening, July 23, in the Memorial hospital, after being overcome by the heat earlier that afternoon.

Mr. Maltpress was born May 6, 1891, in this city, and was the son of John T. and Mary Litney Maltpress.

On May 21, 1918, he was united in marriage to Bessie Henry of Lancaster.

For many years he was employed at the local plant of the Highway Trailer company. He was a member of the Edgerton Volunteer Fire department for 26 years and served as chief of the department for a number of years. He was also a charter member of the Pythian Sisters, and a member of the Knights of Pythias.

Surviving relatives include his wife; one daughter, Mrs. Martha Maltpress Bobb; two grandchildren, Nancy Jean and Mary Louise Bobb, all of this city; four sisters, Mrs. Mabel Toynton, and Mrs. Mattie Sweetin, San Diego, Calif.; Mrs. Myrtle Langworthy, Thiensville, Wis., and Mrs. Eleanor Cheney, Chardon, O.; and one brother, Bert Maltpress, Janesville. His parents and one brother, Archie Maltpress, preceded him in death.

Funeral services were held Saturday afternoon at 1:30 o'clock in the Ruben Tellefson funeral home. Burial was made in Fassett cemetery with Rev. E. M. Oliver officiating.

Among the out of town relatives who attended the funeral services were Mr. and Mrs. Earl Langworthy, Thiensville; Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Cheney, Chardon, Ohio; Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Maltpress and son, Moore, Janesville; Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Maltpress, Milton; Mrs. Rose Henry, Miss Marjorie Henry, Lancaster; Earl Henry, Waterloo, Iowa; Dr. and Mrs. A. J. Spears, Baldwin; Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Jeidy, Mt. Hope; Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Brownell, Stitzer; Mrs. Laura English, Rewey; Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Thompson, Stoughton; Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Ogden, Madison; and Joseph Parr, Evansville, Wis.

Others in attendance were Mrs. Anna Koehn, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Koehn and son, Robert, Menominee, Michigan, and Mrs. Selina Shannon and son, Charles Shannon, Stoughton.

**Lyman "Lime" Wood**

Served as Chief from 1939 through 1950.



Lyman Wood was a member of the Edgerton Fire Department for 41 years, serving as chief from January 9, 1939 to January 8, 1951. He was the Second Assistant Foreman in 1911-1912 and 1923, president in 1917 and 1922, and First Assistant Foreman in 1924 through 1928.

He was born in Milton in 1873. In 1889 he married Olive Alverson of Indian Ford. They resided in Edgerton for 55 years.

He worked for Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company for more than 25 years. He was also a member of the Knights of Pythias, the Thibeau Hunting Club, and was on the Edgerton Baseball team in the early 1900s.

He died June 24, 1956 at the age of 83. His obituary is the June 28, 1956 issue of The Edgerton Reporter.

**LYMAN J. WOOD**  
 Lyman J. Wood, 83, of 206 Broadway St., former fire chief, died in Edgerton Memorial Community Hospital at 3 a.m. Monday after a short illness.

The son of Alpheus and Jessie Wood, he was born in Milton Jan. 24, 1873, and was married to Olive Alverson, Indian Ford, June 25, 1889. He was an Edgerton resident for more than 55 years and employed by Bloch Brothers Tobacco Co. more than 25 years.

He was a member of the Edgerton volunteer fire department for more than 40 years, chief part of the time; the Knights of Pythias; Thibeau Hunting Club; Edgerton City Baseball team early in the 1900's. His wife preceded him in death July 10, 1954.

Survivors are a sister-in-law, Mrs. W. T. Wood, Milwaukee; a brother-in-law, E. E. Hatch, Tacoma, Wash.; and several nieces

and nephews.

Funeral services will be at 2 p.m. Thursday in First Congregational Church, the Rev. Monard Sanford officiating. Burial will be in Fassett Cemetery. Friends may call at the Ellingson Funeral Home until noon Thursday when the body will be taken to the church.

Pallbearers will be Thorwald Gunness, Nordahl, Gunness, Norman Yeske, Ole Staff, Adolph Wilberg

and Robert Stricker

William C. Buchholz will give the song service with Mrs. Paul T. Schulze as accompanist

Sgt. Donald Schroeder arrived on Tuesday for a 24-day leave at the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Schroeder. Schroeder has been stationed at San Francisco, Calif., for the past year and will return there on July 19.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### Henry P. Schieldt

Served as Chief in 1951 and 1952 (at least).



Henry P. "Hank" Schieldt succeeded Lyman Wood as chief, serving in 1951 and 1952, and may have been chief for a year or two after. He was on the department from March 1937 to April 1974.

He was born in 1911 in Edgerton, and married Martha Mielke. He was the Superintendent for Fassett Cemetery from 1939 until he retired in 1976. He was also a city alderman, a Rock County Supervisor, and a member of St. John's Lutheran Church.

The centennial celebration in June 1983 had a car in the parade for former chiefs and Schieldt's name was included, however he was not able to make it.

He died July 30, 1983. The pall bearers were members of the fire department, and another member of the department, Dale Bieck, was the soloist at his funeral. He is buried at Fassett Cemetery (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/81523254/henry-p-schildt>).

His obituary was in an August, 1983, issue of the Edgerton Reporter.



## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### **Thorwald A. Gunness**

Served as Chief from 1955 to 1957 (possibly a year or two earlier as well).



Thorwald "Tully" Gunness was born in Edgerton, Wisconsin, on November 4, 1903. He played on the Edgerton High School football team and after graduation was a volunteer coach for the 1927 championship football team.

He married Margaret Heinig on August 14, 1937, in Almond, Wisconsin.

He worked for the Police Department in Edgerton from 1950 to 1968, retiring as a sergeant. He was a member of the Fire Department from 1933 to November 1959. He also served on the City Council and the Board of Education.

He died on April 25, 1973, after a long illness, and is buried at Jenson Cemetery in Edgerton

(<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59214887/thorwald-a-gunness>).

His obituary is on the front page of the April 26, 1973 issue of The Edgerton Reporter.

## "Tully" Guinness

Funeral services for Thorvald ("Tully") Guinness, 69, will be held Saturday afternoon at Central Lutheran Church. Mr. Guinness died Wednesday morning, April 25, in Memorial Community Hospital, following a long illness.

An 18-year veteran of the Edgerton police force, Mr. Guinness was born in Edgerton November 4, 1903, and was a life-time area resident. He was a 1925 graduate of Edgerton High School, where he played football and later was a volunteer coach for the 1927 championship team. He attended Millikin University, Decatur, Ill., and was married to Margaret Heinig on August 14, 1937, in Almond, Wis.

Mr. Guinness joined the Police Department in Mar. 1950, and retired as a sergeant in 1968. He was a member of Central Lutheran Church, Fulton Lodge No. 69, F. and A.M., served on the City Council and the Board of Education, and was a former member of the Volunteer Fire Department.

In October 1968, when he retired from the Police Department, "Tully" was given an Appreciation Dinner, where he was praised for his services to the city, and especially his law enforcement work with youngsters.

Survivors include his wife; a brother, Lester of Edgerton; and two nieces.

Visitation will be held Friday afternoon and evening at Brunf Funeral Home.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### **Robert Stricker Sr.**

Served as Chief from January, 1958 to January, 1978.



The longest serving chief, Robert Henry Stricker Sr. was chief for 20 years from January, 1958, to January, 1978. He was on the department nearly 44 years, from July 1934 to January 1978.

When he started as chief, the department only had two trucks—a 1921 American LaFrance pumper and a 1929 Pirsch pumper. By the end of his tenure the department had eight trucks—a ladder truck, three pumpers, three tankers, and a brush truck.

Chief Stricker often provided guidance and instructions at the monthly membership meetings to improve the skills and knowledge of the firemen, such as requiring them to learn how to use a new resuscitator or the new foam generator, having the men report to a training school in Janesville, going to the station after the meeting to show changes in equipment on the truck,

reminding them to get their inspection cards in on time, warning them about driving responsibly to fire calls, encouraging the men to help with the remodeling as well as maintenance of fire equipment.

In 1970, Stricker organized a “museum” of EVFD artifacts in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room of the original fire station/city hall at 16 Burdick Street. Those artifacts were moved to the new station in 1993 and are still part of the department’s historical display.

He was born in January 1912, and married Beatrice Bussey in 1935. He was a carpenter and owned Stricker Construction Company. He was also a member of the United Methodist Church, the Lions Club, and served on the Park Board. His grandson is professional golfer Steve Stricker.

He died in December 1985 of a heart attack. Edgerton Fire was paged to his home for a rescue call and the firemen transported him to Edgerton Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

He is buried at Albion Prairie Cemetery. (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/41056828/robert-henry-stricker>). His obituary is in the Wisconsin State Journal, December 23, 1985 issue.

# The EDGERTON REPORTER

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 1978

## Fire Chief Stricker Retires

By Tom Thrun

After almost 44 years with the Edgerton Fire Department, Fire Chief Robert Stricker Sr., 810 N. Main St., has announced his retirement. The announcement came Monday evening at a dinner held by the department at the fire station.

"I can't express how happy I've been to have been a part of this department all these years," said Stricker, who joined the volunteer department in 1934, becoming chief in 1958.

Stricker recounted the first fire he ever helped to fight during the summer of '34, saying he wasn't even a member yet when one night he was driving through town on a date with the girl who would become his wife a year

later when he stopped and offered his assistance at a fire that was burning above what is now Wileman's Variety Store. He said they handed him a plain rubber coat because that was the only piece of protective clothing they had at the time.

He continued that a second fire broke out that same evening in the old ice house in town and that the Janesville department was called to assist.

Stricker said that stopping to help with a fire is not an uncommon practice, saying, "That's the way it is today. A fire chief can stop anyone on the street and request that they help by law."

"I've seen a lot of upsetting

things over the years," said the chief, relating only a few incidents. Likewise, he said he has seen a lot of changes in all aspects of fire fighting and fire fighting equipment.

When he joined the department, Stricker said they primarily had only two pieces of equipment to respond to a fire with—a 1922 American LaFrance pumper and a 1929 Pirsch pumper, made in Kenosha. The first vehicle, which had hard rubber tires and a chain drive, was hard to drive. "It went where it wanted," he said, explaining how it was to drive vehicles with hard rubber tires.

According to an article appearing in the Jan. 22, 1961 edition of the Wisconsin State Journal, this truck, which also had a right-hand steer wheel, as well as an old hand-drawn hook and ladder wagon, estimated to have been built during the Civil War days, were sold to George Getz, Lake Geneva, on Feb. 3, 1961 and now can be seen completely restored in Getz's museum, which is located at Getz's "Hall of Fame," intersection of highways 43 and 31. According to an article published in the May 28, 1886 edition of the Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter, the hook and ladder wagon was purchased by the council on May 13, 1886.

Because of the lack of space in the present fire station, Stricker noted that the old 1929 Pirsch now is parked in the old city garage and is used as a stand-by piece of equipment. On top of the old truck, the department later added a 55-foot ladder with the help of Edgerton's Highway Manufacturing Co., which built the attachment for the ladder on



ROBERT STRICKER SR.

the truck.

Edgerton now has eight fire fighting units: three different pumpers, three different tankers, a four-wheel-drive grass fire pickup and an emergency vehicle, which the Strickers brought from Washington D.C. The fire district includes Edgerton, the towns of Albion and Fulton and portions of the towns of Porter, Sumner and Milton. Also, the department is part of a mutual aid agreement and will respond to fires anywhere in Rock County upon request.

Stoughton also is another mutual aid partner, even though it is in Dane County. Stricker said

Continued on Back Page

### In Appreciation...

*We wish to commend Bob Stricker for his years of devotion to the Edgerton Fire Department and his dedication to the well being of this community. Protection from fire is of prime importance - fire companies date back to colonial times for this very reason.*

*Bob Stricker has 44 years of service here at Edgerton with 20 of these years as Fire Chief. He has been a part of the continued growth of the Fire Department and the good relations which it maintains with the Edgerton area.*

*As we express our appreciation to Bob for his many years of service, we also pay tribute to all the volunteers, past and present, which make the Edgerton Fire Company one in which we all can be proud. It's not easy to rush at any hour, day or night and help those in need. And let us not forget to pay tribute to Bea and the other wives of these volunteers for their support and understanding.*

*So, Bob, you've done a great job and on behalf of the entire community, we thank you.*

# Fire Chief Stricker

Continued from Front Page

there always has been a very close bond of friendship between the two departments.

"Way back, the fellowship was something to behold," said Stricker. "There are many times I'll call Stoughton before anyone else even though Milton has a very fine department."

The Edgerton department also is a member of the Rock County Firemen's Assn. and the Southern Wisconsin, Northern Illinois Firemen's Assn. Both are groups which meet regularly to exchange information and ideas on fire fighting techniques and latest equipment.

Stricker said all of the modern fire fighting equipment is so much better than what he started out with. Mentioning hoses, he pointed out that new hoses are treated so as to not mildew. He recalled that a person could hardly stand to unroll the old hoses because of the odor caused by the mildew. He said Edgerton did not have a drying tower for the hoses like many of the better equipped stations.

Edgerton now has more than the required amount of hoses, said Stricker, who added they even have 400 feet of new four-inch hose. "It's like laying a water main on top of the street," he said of the big hose, adding that firemen have all the water in the mains available to them almost at once when they hook it up to a hydrant.

A 1932 graduate of Edgerton High School, Stricker and his wife, Beatrice, have two sons and

a daughter: Robert Jr., who is married and has two children and owns his own electrical business in Edgerton; John, who also is married and has one child and works for Banker's Life in Virginia; and Mary Jo, who goes to school part-time at Madison Area Technical College and works part-time on weekends in Edgerton as a nurse's aide.

"You're not in a fire department as long as I have and turn it off like keys to a car," Stricker said. He said once before, in March of 1970, his doctor asked him to consider retirement from the department following a heart attack. However, he said he was careful and stayed with it.

"I just hope the good Lord lets me live long enough to see a new fire station in town, and you can quote me on that," he said, adding that it is in the city's plans for the future, but that the department is terribly overcrowded now and perhaps not in compliance with certain state laws and regulations.

Stricker, who owns his own construction business in Edgerton, said he plans to continue with what work he can do, saying, "I want to keep on doing something; I'm going to be choosy. No more roofing jobs."

He said the department always has had good relationships between firemen and between the department and the community. He said the public has been good in supporting the annual Fire-

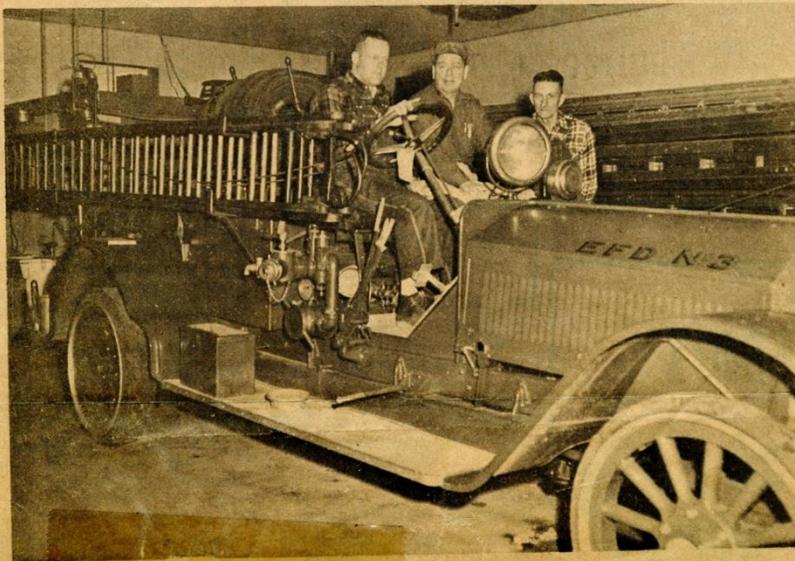
men's Ball over the years, which has been the only time the department has approached citizens for funds to purchase equipment until this winter when different organizations and firms offered to contribute towards the purchase of a \$5,000 power tool used in saving accident victims from wrecked cars.

"I can't tell you how much I'm going to miss the Fire Department. It's been my life," Stricker concluded.

Edgerton resident Norman Yeske has been selected as the new Fire Chief and will be featured in next week's Reporter.

Other new Fire Department officers include: Dennis Haried, president; Charles Edwardson, vice president; Robert Balke, first assistant fire chief; Jim Neal, second assistant fire chief; Laurence Herrick, secretary; Donald Vickers, treasurer; Norman Kittleston, hose captain; James Zaborek, assistant hose captain; Robert Stricker, Jr., hook and ladder captain; Robert (Dupa) Furan, assistant hook and ladder captain and trustee; Thomas Anderson, sergeant of arms; Dale Bieck, chief training officer; Ken Crandall, assistant training officer; Richard Burns, radio operator; and Max Tiegs, assistant radio operator.

New members included Thomas Anderson, Allan Jacobson, Roger Schieldt and Jack Ylvisaker.



Retiring Fire Chief Robert Stricker Sr., left, is shown here in 1961 on the 1922 Pirsh fire truck which was purchased by George Getz, second from left, for his museum. Note the hard tires and right hand steering. It was one of two trucks in use when Stricker joined the department in 1934.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### Norman Yeske

Served as Chief from January, 1978 through 1980.



Norman "Nort" Yeske served as chief from 1978 to 1981. He had been an assistant chief to Bob Stricker prior to that. He was on the department from April 1942 to January 1981.

He was born in 1914 in Edgerton and married Doris Holtan in 1933. They had one daughter.

He worked for Highway Trailer as a plant manager.

He served four terms as mayor and many terms as city councilman for the City of Edgerton. He served on nearly every council committee, board, and commission in the 34-plus years with the city.

He was vice president of Trinity Lutheran Church and president of the Towne Country Club.

He died on November 22, 1994, and is buried at Fassett Cemetery ([Norman Yeske \(1914-1994\) - Find a Grave Memorial](#))

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### Charles E. Edwardson

Served as Chief from January, 1981 through 1985.



Charles E. Edwardson joined the department in 1953, moved out of town a year later, and then rejoined the department in 1958. He served for 29 years, retiring in 1987. He was first elected chief on January 12, 1981, having served as second assistant chief the prior year.

Charlie was employed by the City of Edgerton, working for the Streets Department.

He was born in Edgerton in 1926. He married Marjorie Wescott in 1947. He died in 2004 and is buried at Fassett Cemetery.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### James Neal

Served as chief from January, 1986 through 1991.



James "Jim" Neal volunteered for the Edgerton Fire Department for 28 years and served as assistant chief for many years.

He was born on June 30, 1943 in Saginaw, Michigan, grew up in Spokane, Washington, and lived in Ohio during his teen years. From the time he was a small boy, he wanted to be a firefighter. His neighbor was a firefighter and both Jim and his brother became firefighters, and eventually fire chiefs (his brother was chief in Baileys Crossroads, Virginia).

He married Mary Margaret Ford in 1967, in Fairmont, West Virginia. They had three children. Mary was an RN working at a hospital in West Virginia. Jim had become sick and needed hospitalization, which is where he met Mary and, as they say, the rest is history. They moved to Edgerton in 1969. Mary worked at the Edgerton Hospital emergency room and was a volunteer EMT in Edgerton for about 10 years.

In 1970, Jim and Gene Gruna created the Edgerton Ambulance Service. Prior to this, Bruni Funeral Home ran an ambulance service that was basically for transportation to a hospital. Jim started with his own Buick Station Wagon serving as the ambulance, then bought a Cadillac station wagon as a second ambulance. He developed the ambulance service into a modern day service with all the first aid supplies and equipment to treat injuries. After traipsing through winter snow down long farm driveways, Jim used his innovative and mechanical skills to develop a gurney on skis to carry patients on the snow. He had used a [Stokes-type] basket and attached it to cross-country skis. In 1977 they decided to sell the service to Kutz Ambulance in Fort Atkinson, who continued to provide service for Edgerton. Both Jim and Gene had full-time jobs (Jim worked for General Motors in Janesville), and running the ambulance service had become too much to handle as well.

In the 1970s, firefighters still needed a sponsor and Chief Bob Stricker sponsored Jim to become a member of the fire department, and for a time Jim was the Assistant Chief under Chief Stricker. Both men were highly regarded as excellent chiefs. Jim believed in prevention and planning. He was involved in the fire prevention programs at the schools, and often wouldn't sleep at night, worrying about how to save the old historic buildings downtown if any of them caught fire. Even though he couldn't save the Carlton Hotel itself, his pre-planning limited damage to the buildings around it.

One of Jim's hobbies was to build half-scale fire trucks, which won awards at national shows. Jim built two trucks and made every single item on the trucks at exactly half-scale. One was an Ahrens-Fox model and the other a Pierce model. The Ahrens-Fox is at the Ephraim Fire Department museum in Door County, Wisconsin. According to former Ephraim Fire Chief Niles Weborg, Jim's son, Michael, lived in Bailey's Harbor where Jim stored this half-size truck. Jim was in Minnesota when Michael had to call him to inform him that the building where the truck was stored had caught on fire. Jim collapsed of a heart attack and was taken to a hospital. The truck did not sustain much damage—just the roof was affected and the truck was still in good shape. Sadly, Jim passed away about a week later.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

Jim died on May 21, 2006, and is buried at Fassett Cemetery (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/>). His obituary is in the May 24, 2006, issue of the Edgerton Reporter.

### JAMES L. NEAL

James L. Neal, age 62, of Edgerton, passed away Sunday, May 21, 2006 at the University Hospital, Madison.

James was born June 30, 1943 in Saginaw, Michigan, son of the late Francis and Leona (Biver) Neal. He graduated from Woodsfield High School in 1961 and in 1962 he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was Honorably discharged in 1964. He later married Mary Margaret Ford in Fairmont, West Virginia on July 8, 1967.



James worked for General Motors for 30 years, retiring in 1998. He was currently employed by Southern Wisconsin News.

James was a member of the Edgerton Volunteer Fire Department for 28 years, many of those years he served as assistant chief and eventually chief. He also owned and operated Edgerton Emergency Ambulance Service for a number of years.

He was president of the Edgerton Conservation Club, as well as head caretaker of the deer herd at Racetrack Park in Edgerton. James was a longtime member of Ducks Unlimited, serving as Master of Ceremonies for the Koshkonong Chapter banquets. He was also a member of numerous antique duck decoy collector groups, fire truck collector groups and he was Edgerton Citizen of the Year in 1992.

James' hobbies included collecting duck decoys and fire fighting memorabilia and he also enjoyed sitting outside on his bench watching the many birds he fed. He also enjoyed spending time in North Dakota at their house and property. He was an avid duck hunter and decoy carver. He liked puttering in his garage and he was well known for his handiwork including building two half-scale fire trucks.

Survivors include his wife, Mary Margaret Neal of Edgerton; daughter, Stephanie (Thomas) Schultz of Eau Claire; sons Michael (CJ) Neal of Bailey's Harbor and their son Aiden and Thomas (Renee Denio) Neal of Edgerton; a brother, Francis "Bud" (Mary) Neal of Port Charlotte, FL; two sisters, Lois Blackman of Spokane, WA and Marian (Thomas) Little of Longview, WA, many nieces, nephews; five "granddogs"; and many, many close friends too numerous to mention. He was preceded in death by his parents Francis and Leona Neal of Spokane, WA and his in-laws Jim and Margaret Ford of Fairmont, WV.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 25 at St. Joseph Catholic Church, Edgerton with Father William Hower officiating. Burial will take place in Fassett Cemetery, Edgerton.

Visitation will be on Wednesday from 4-8 p.m. at the Whitcomb-Lynch-Albrecht Funeral Home, Edgerton and on Thursday from 9:30 a.m. until the time of the service at the church.

A memorial is being established in his name.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### **Mark Backes**

Served as chief from January, 1992 through 1996.



Mark J. Backes joined the fire department in July, 1977. He served as assistant chief under Jim Neal for a few years, and was elected as chief in 1992, the same year the Edgerton Fire Protection District was formed. He retired from the department on May 8, 2006.

He remembers when he first joined the department that the firemen all wore rubber coats and rubber boots. A set of two coats and boots were stored on the back of the engine, and the two firemen who rode on the back would wear whatever size coats and boots were there. They would stand on the back bumper and hold on to the back of engine with a strap around them to help secure them.

Mark had been hired by the City of Edgerton as a Driver/Dispatcher for the fire department a few months before being elected chief. After the District took over, he was also hired by the District as a full-time Driver/Dispatcher.

In the early 1990s, the 9-1-1 system was being developed and implemented in Wisconsin. Mark worked with Rock County to help get it going. Edgerton had their own dispatchers (Mark being one of them) and other communities relied on the Sheriff's office to dispatch calls.

He realized that when there was a fire, his job as a driver did not allow him to perform the duties of a chief on the scene properly, so he requested that he not be considered for chief in 1997.

Edgerton's first female firefighter (Melanie Fitzsimmons) joined the department in 1995, while Mark was chief. He noted that she was a good firefighter, and was accepted by the men right away because she was so good.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### John Sherman

Served as chief from January, 1997 through 2001.



John M. Sherman was elected as a member of the fire department in March, 1981, and served until September, 2005. He was the chief from 1997 to 2001. He retired from the department in 2005.

According to John, the year he was elected chief was the one year he did not attend the January meeting where the chief was voted on. John's daughters had a band concert every year on the same night as the association meeting and he always had missed their concerts, and that year John had decided to attend their concert. After the concert he walked into the station and was greeted "Hello Chief!" and discovered that in his absence he had been voted the new chief.

John worked for Dana Corporation. John is married to Julie and they have two daughters.

In 2015 John started serving on the District board of commissioners, as a representative for the City of Edgerton. In 2017 he was elected president of the board.

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### John Gietzel

Served as chief from January, 2002 to December, 2007.



John Gietzel joined the fire department in July, 1991. He served as assistant chief under John Sherman for four years before being elected chief in 2002. He was the training officer for six years, and was the vice president of the Rock County Fire Officers Association. He created the first replacement plan for replacing vehicles over time. He resigned in December, 2007, after dealing with difficulties within the department. A long-standing legal battle over the driver-dispatcher positions created tensions in the department. John lobbied the District Board to make the chief an appointed position “so the chief does not have to worry about always pleasing the majority of the volunteers in order to be elected.”

By Jason Francis  
Reporter Staff

John Gietzel has announced he has resigned as Edgerton's fire chief and as a member of the fire department.

In a phone interview Tuesday morning, Gietzel said his personal life has changed in recent months and that he will soon be moving to Roscoe, Ill., to be with his girlfriend.

He also said he has lost interest in the position due to “the fighting within the volunteer organization and the fighting within the fire district.”

His resignation is not a reaction to the return to work this week by the fire department's three full-time employees, he said.

“I'm glad they are back. I think, overall, it will be good for the department, the fire district and the community,” said Gietzel, who became chief in January 2002.

He said the long-standing legal issues surrounding the driver-dispatcher positions has hung like a dark cloud over the department.

“You couldn't move forward with anything. You felt like your hands were tied behind your back,” Gietzel said.

Edgerton Fire Protection District Commission Chairman Jim Linsley heralded Gietzel's dedication to the position, saying he will be missed.

“He's been a really good chief. He was one of those guys who lived and breathed firefighting,” Linsley said. “If he wasn't at work, he was at the station.”

Lt. Adam Walton, public information officer for the fire department, declined comment, saying Gietzel's resignation is not official.

Commenting on the driver/dis-

patcher situation, Walton said whatever changes the department undergoes, the focus will remain serving the community.

“We're here to provide public safety and that is what we are going to do,” he said.

The situation does not boil down to the volunteers versus the full-timers, he said.

“There is not as much controversy here as people think there is.”

Though everyone has an opinion regarding the driver/dispatcher controversy, the firefighters are able to check those issues at the door, Walton said.

“We're all going to get along and do what's best for public safety,” he said.

As another reason for his resignation, Gietzel said the fire district had not responded favorably to his request to make changes to the fire chief position. He believes it should be an appointed position so the chief does not have to worry about always pleasing the majority of the volunteers in order to be elected.

“I wanted the fire chief position to be appointed by the district to give the chief more authority over the volunteers,” Gietzel said.

The fire chief and other officers for the department are elected by department members. Fire chiefs are elected every two years. Elections occur in January.

Linsley said the commission considered the change, but decided against it. It may be considered again in the future, he added.

“I have had a good time working with my fellow firefighters. I got to know a lot of people, including ven-

(Continued on page 16)

## Gietzel

Continued from page 1

dors and sales people,” he said.

Gietzel joined the department in 1991. He became chief after four years as an assistant chief under former chief John Sherman. Gietzel also spent six years as a training officer for the department and six years as vice president of the Rock County Fire Officers Association.

Gietzel said he hopes he has left his mark on the department by helping to acquire new vehicles and fire equipment and by starting a replacement schedule.

Linsley said Gietzel was known to lobby hard to improve the department's equipment – from firefighter

turnout gear to trucks – in order to improve services and safety.

Gietzel's term as fire chief was set to end Jan. 12. Just how the fire chief duties will be handled in the fire department until a new chief is elected in January has not been announced.

The department has a deputy fire chief, Brian Demrow, and an assistant fire chief, Ryan Beckwith.

Gietzel said he wishes the department well.

“I wish the best for everybody and hope the fire department gets through these hard times,” he said.

**Brian Demrow**

Served from January, 2008, to March, 2016.



Brian L. Demrow became a member of the fire department in June, 1995. He worked his way up the ranks, serving as training officer, captain, assistant chief and deputy chief, before being elected chief in January, 2008.

In April, 2009, he was hired as the first full-time fire chief for the Edgerton Fire Protection District. (See article below from the April 8, 2009, issue of the *Edgerton Reporter*). He served as chief until his resignation on March 9, 2016.

He was born and raised in the Edgerton area, and was a graduate of Edgerton High School. He worked as a mechanic at Johnson Tractor and later as an operator in the Edgerton Public Works Department.

# Demrow, Beckwith to fill fire chief positions

By Mark Scarborough and Jason Francis  
*Reporter Staff*

Edgerton's Brian Demrow will be the first full-time, paid fire chief of the Edgerton Fire Protection District. Demrow and commissioners agreed last week and this week.

Demrow, elected fire chief in 2008 by the volunteers who serve the Edgerton Fire Protection District, was offered the new position April 2 and formally accepted the job on Monday, April 6.

Also on April 2, commission members offered the job of full-time paid deputy fire chief to Ryan Beckwith, also of Edgerton. Beckwith also accepted the position Monday.

Demrow, who has "worked with the district for years" and "has always done everything we've asked

him to do," had the qualifications the district was looking for in a fire chief, said Evan Sayre, who represents the town of Fulton on the district commission. "He's a known quantity," Sayre said. "He had the qualifications to do the job."

The other finalist for the fire chief position "had the qualifications to run the world," but would also have expected "pretty heavy money" in terms of salary, Sayre noted.

Demrow will earn an annual salary of \$52,500 and will be responsible for the day-to-day management of a fire department of about 30 volunteers, as well as implementation of a new, district-operated ambulance service.

Demrow, 304 Spencer St, has worked as an operator in the Edgerton Public Works Department since 2002. From 1990 to 2002, he

worked as a mechanic at Johnson Tractor.

A 1984 graduate of Edgerton High School, Demrow has been a member of the fire department since 1995. He was elected by other volunteers to serve as deputy chief from 2002 to 2008 and was elected chief in January 2008.

Demrow initially joined the department upon the recommendation of a friend and found that he enjoyed it, "knowing that you're part of a group of people that is there when someone needs help," Demrow said.

"It's very gratifying to be part of an organization with a deep history of always being there for others," he said.

The new fire department positions were needed for several reasons, said Demrow, who has two children (11-year-old Alyssa and 14-year-old Colburn) with his wife Shannon.

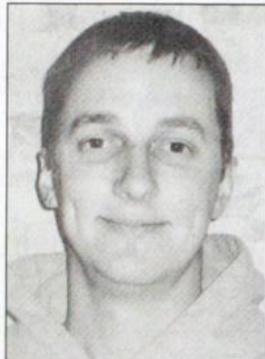
"With all the demands that are on the department, with training and paper work, there isn't time to work at a full-time job and run a fire department," Demrow said. "With trying to get grants, state and federal paper work and calls, there is no time for your family."

A former training officer and captain in the volunteer department, Demrow lists his certifications for various firefighting and emergency services specialties under the heading for education on his resume.

Serving as the chairman of committees responsible for the acquisi-



BRIAN DEMROW



RYAN BECKWITH

(Continued on page 16)

## History of the Edgerton Fire Department

### **Randall L. Pickering (2016 to present)**

Served as chief from 2016 to present (2023 and beyond).



Randall “Randy” Pickering served as fire chief from 2016 to the present. After serving with the Fitchburg Fire Department he and his wife Ruth moved to Edgerton to build a new retirement home, on land they had owned for 15 years in the Town of Fulton. Randy, who grew up in Janesville, joined the Edgerton department in January 2014 as the Safety Officer. When Brian Demrow resigned in March, 2016, Randy was named interim chief for a few months and then became the District’s choice for the permanent chief.

Randy’s full-time job was a regional vice president for AT&T and he brought a lot of business knowledge to the district. His previous experience with Fitchburg Fire brought a lot of knowledge of government budgets.

He started as a volunteer firefighter and EMT while still in college, and became a volunteer for Fitchburg Fire in 1980. From 1982-1987 he volunteered for the City of Franklin, WI, fire department, before returning to Fitchburg where he continued to volunteer until moving to the Town of Fulton and volunteering for the Edgerton Fire Protection District. He has been a member of the Wisconsin State Firefighters Association, the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association (WSFCA), the International Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Wisconsin Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) at the state level. He served as treasurer for the WSFCA as well as executive director of the WSFCA Foundation. He was vice-president of MABAS for several years. At the local level he has also been involved with the Dane County Fire Chiefs Association, the Rock County Fire Officers Association and the Jefferson Fire Chiefs. In 2019 he was named Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year by the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association.

In 2018, Randy and his deputy chief, Jason Russ, worked to obtain paramedic level of service for the District ambulances, which took effect January 1, 2019.

In 2022, the municipalities served by the Milton Fire Department petitioned to join the Edgerton Fire Protection District. With Randy’s experience of corporate mergers while at AT&T, he guided the municipalities of both the Edgerton and Milton fire departments to work together to integrate the Milton Fire Department into the Edgerton Fire Protection District, which took effect February 1, 2023. After the integration, members of the department and the District Board voted on a new name to rebrand the combined department – Lakeside Fire-Rescue.

From the September 14, 2016, Edgerton Reporter:

# Interim fire chief named

By Tristan McGough  
Special to Reporter

The consistent and diligent efforts by the Edgerton Fire Protection District (EFPD) Commission yielded a unanimous decision from its members to hire as Interim Fire Chief Randy Pickering at its last regular meeting on Sept. 8, 2016.



PICKERING

Pickering has been with the district two years, serving as its Safety Officer and holding a distinguished background of 41 years of both Fire and EMS experience and 36 years of business management experience. It is this combined experience the Commission hopes to leverage as it implements its newly reorganized operational model, which consolidates administrative, supervisory, personnel and public relations duties in the Fire Chief's position and designates day-to-day operational matters, such as scheduling and assignments, to a newly carved-out "Deputy Fire Chief-Operations" post.

The Commissioners were charged upon appointment by their respective municipalities comprising the district to assess and correct any deficiencies in the district's way of doing business.

Their assessment led to discoveries of mistakes and questionable decisions in the management of funds, much of it due to the lack of accounting rigor and collective scrutiny of the finances in detail. The board also exposed other business weaknesses in the organizational structure and operational processes of the district. One of these weak points was created with the organizational assignment of all business duties—administrative, personnel, PR, scheduling and maintenance—to a fire chief that was also expected to perform fire inspections and participate in firefighting response.

To verify their initial assessments the Commission called upon business and financial consultants, fire chiefs from other districts around the state, assorted technical experts and one man who was acquainted with them all, since he is the Executive Director of the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association Foundation—Pickering.

Pickering's impressive career includes serving as past treasurer of the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association and past president of the Dane County Fire Chiefs Association. He is, also, the current Vice President of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS)—WI, as well as being an active member in the International Assn of Fire

See **FIRE DISTRICT**, page 8

## PICKERING

Chiefs, WI State Fire Chiefs Assn, WI State Firefighters Assn, Dane County Fire Chiefs Assn, and Rock County Fire Officers. This vast network of working relationships demonstrates the arena in which Pickering fashioned his business, financial management, executive, and other organizational skills. The network is also the talent pool and idea bank from which he may call to solve problems.

Recognizing Pickering's repertoire of organizational and professional skills, the Board asked its Safety Officer to conduct a system-wide analysis of the District as a business. The results of his research and findings were the subject of a recently concluded, three-part series of Informational Meetings sponsored by the EFPD to inform the public and solicit their feedback.

Pickering's wide-ranging career development, far-reaching network, and facility in conducting the analysis of the district, not to mention agility in presenting the facts to the public, gave him a unique and intimate understanding of how the Edgerton area fire department and EMS presently serve its constituents. The Commission came

to the conclusion that the district would suffer a lost opportunity if Pickering were not chosen to help guide the district's future as a valuable interim resource for constructive change.

Supervisor Leonard Mueller from the Town of Sumner extolled Pickering's performance for the district thus far, "What Randy's given us is outstanding, something very amazing." Further, Mueller expressed his appreciation for all the time and energy Pickering had expended in doing the analysis and presenting his findings.

In concert, Supervisor David Viney, representing the Town of Porter, pointed out, "Now that the number one position has been taken care of, number two is close-at-hand." In previous meetings Viney had said that the board was very close to completing several top-of-the-list items in its pursuit of reorganizing the District to improve its business efficiencies and operational effectiveness. "This," he said, "is one of the things now done."

Meeting in seven special closed sessions just this last month of August alone, the commission has shown exemplary leadership and concerted energy in its reorganizational endeavors.

Continued from page 1

In prior months the board had been meeting consistently for a special session each week of the month, as well as its regular monthly meetings, like this evening.

President Douglas Dypold had the last congratulatory words of the meeting, expressing his deep appreciation for the tireless dedication each of the commissioners showed in bringing themselves to all the meetings and working so hard on the various tasks they've assisted in, like reviewing the Policy & Procedure Manual, detailing job descriptions, taking a hard look at the finances and reorganizing the business model the district operates under. "Thanks," he expressed, "for attending the ton of meetings we had and all the dedication you've shown." He also re-endorsed their selection of Pickering from the candidates considered for the position, "I think we made a great choice."

Dypold then went on to congratulate Pickering, who was in attendance, "Thank you, Randy, for all you've done to improve our district, and thank you for accepting the challenge of the new Interim Fire Chief."

From the January 25, 2017, issue of the *Edgerton Reporter*:

## **Meet Randall Pickering**

Randall Pickering grew up in Janesville and “has deep roots in Edgerton,” according to information released by the Fire Department. His great-grandparents settled in the Town of Fulton in the 1850s.

He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin - Stout and is currently employed as an executive with AT&T, with 37 years of business management experience.

He has been involved even longer in volunteer fire and emergency medical service, which he entered 43 years ago. He has volunteered for six fire and EMS departments, serving in the roles of firefighter, emergency medical technician and apparatus operator, as well as in various officer roles. He has been active in the Wisconsin State Firefighters Association, the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Wisconsin Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS-Wisconsin). He currently serves as the executive director of the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association Foundation.

Pickering also volunteers as a sports announcer for many school districts in southern Wisconsin, announcing football, basketball, hockey and track, and is known as the voice of the WIAA State High School Track and Field Championships in LaCrosse each year.

He is married to his wife of 36 years, Ruth, and they have three children.

From the Edgerton Reporter, July 17, 2019 issue:

2B – The Edgerton Reporter

Wednesday, July 17, 2019

## Chief Pickering honored for WSFCA award

By Tristan McGough  
Special to the Reporter

Since receiving the Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year Award from the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association (WSFCA) on Friday, June 21, 2019, EFPD Fire Chief Randall Pickering has also been receiving a stream of accolades from family, friends, comrades, and associates across the various networks Pickering has cultivated over these last 45 years.

Perhaps none hit so close to Pickering's professional home as the wreath of accolades laid before him July 11, 2019, at the regular EFPD meeting, which was only adjourned to enjoy cake and conviviality after commissioners saluted their chosen chief with tributes.

Commissioner and Edgerton City Councilperson Candy Davis began, "Thank you for all you do for the district, the board, the staff here, and the city. You have given your all and it shows."

She then turned to Ruth Pickering, Randy's wife of many years, "And thank you for being the spouse of and supporting our chief."

Davis paused, "This is big. I think it's huge for a town the size of Edgerton. It's huge for any town; but it's very, very big for a town our size!"

"Thank you, Randy," she concluded, "you deserve the best."

After a loud round of applause, the next to speak-up was District Chair John Sherman, who admitted, "I'm still trying to figure out how you do it!"

"For all you do here, we're very grateful for, especially

since you hold a fulltime job and are an avid sports fan!

"For a job well done, thank you and congratulations on your award, which reflects on all of us so well?"

Another round of clapping, and then Pickering stood up, willing to express his appreciation to everyone who showed. However, others wanted to commend the chief and he was good-humoredly forced to sit back down.

Commissioner David Viney next gave his recollection of "Randy showing up on our doorstep." It was just in time, too, as the EFPD needed to have its organizational structure revamped, its business model changed to run more like a business, its finances put into good order, and the relationship between management and volunteers repaired.

He was not only up for the task; as the Volunteer of the Year Award demonstrated, Pickering was up for a good many other things, too.

In the words of Kevin Bierce, Pewaukee's Fire Chief as well as President of Wisconsin MABAS who nominated Pickering for the award, "His legacy as Fire Chief for both the City of Fitchburg and the City of Edgerton has been that of providing guidance and planning to agencies as they moved through tremendous growth and expansion. Seeking at all times what is best for the agency and the community as a whole, his tenure as a chief has been milestone by successes including the recent upgrade of the Edgerton Fire Department EMS Service level to Paramedic."

Viney ended up thanking Randy and staff for "keeping things going and getting the trucks out the door."

Commissioner Evan Sayre there after opened with the gambit, "I'm famous for not being politically correct (enter audience laughter), so bear with me."

"I think we're kinda fortunate that Randy has kinda adopted us and, you know, he's put a major effort into it. And I think his wife, who's been mentioned a few times here, should get an award too for putting up with him" (enter more laughter).

"Thank you very much for everything you've done and I've been on the board here for a number of years and it's nice to see things running so smoothly. Thank you very much!"

More applause, and then Deputy Chief Russ recounted his job search that led to Pickering, whom he thanked for teaching him so many new things he'd not known before. Others expressed their gratitude and then it was time for the chief to speak.

"A lot of thoughts go through your mind when you get something like this, and it's genuinely humbling, especially considering there are 820 fire chiefs in this state. Every one of them do as much as they can for their communities, their department, their personnel."

"And so, the thing that strikes me is when your peers nominate you for something, it means a lot."

Pickering expressed his appreciation to the board, volunteers and community for their support and the way they

worked with him so that, even with a full time job and dedication to multiple sports, things have progressed to the point where now third parties recognize the achievements made by everyone in the District.

"This is as much," Pickering offered an analogy, "as a team sport as any professional sports team. I'm the coach and I get that. But that's nothing without a front office and general manager that support you and give you what you need; without a team that practices really hard to get it right, and without all the other things that go into making up a great team. And that great team is in this room!"

"Firefighting is the ultimate extreme sport. Though I play a role on the team, I can get no recognition for success without everybody else in this room doing what they do on the team. "And I truly mean that."

Then, after addressing the cooperative work that everyone in the District does, Pickering summed it up, "How everybody steps up is just amazing to me." He included the medical director and other agencies for their seamless integration with the District.

"As a fire chief," Pickering shared, "I have a lot of opportunities to see other departments and how they operate. We in Rock County truly don't understand how good we have it."

"What that really does is allow me and others to focus on the stuff that can make us better. Otherwise, all you're doing is trying to fix problems: 911 is broke, or medical direction is broke, or this is broke, or that is broke. You never actually get to where you can make things better for the community."

"This county and this organization work so well together, we can focus on how to make things better for the community."

Turning then towards his wife, whom he believes "a saint," he joked how if anyone needs anything fixed, such as a lawn mower, "just call Ruth. She knows how to fix just about anything, because while I've been away, she's had to learn how to fix things."

The chief continued, "Ruth and my kids have been amazingly patient, allowing me to do the things I've done over the years and I genuinely appreciate that. What I do and what you do matters. What we do matters."

As proof, Pickering recounted the recent occurrence of a woman who walked into his office, handing him a check. Wondering what it was for, he asked and she said, "Well, it's the second anniversary."

It had mattered enough to her, having been rescued by EFPD first-responders after a "pretty bad accident on Hillside Road" two years ago.

She simply said, "Thank you." Pickering smiled and told her, "You just being here is 'thank you' enough, because that's why we're here!"



Ruth and Randy Pickering at the post-meeting celebration in the firehouse on July 11.

Photo by Tristan McGough