

Wendell Rescue Squad

Wendell EMS

Research notes by Mike Legeros

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Pre-History

See main Wake County rescue squad history document.

1962-1969

Memories from Dolores Dean and Ira Fuller:

1962 - Organized in June 1962.

- Local businessman Gene Clark, later the first squad Captain, approached the Wendell Lion's Club.
 - He presented the need for a rescue squad in eastern Wake County.
 - Lions Club voted to support the project, and pledged \$300 toward the project and the purchase of a vehicle.
 - Same Gene Clark that later started Raleigh Ambulance Service in 1965?
- After receiving the support of the Lions Club, Clark held the first organizational meeting in the old courtroom on Main Street.
 - The squad had fifteen or sixteen charter members.
 - Incorporation filed with state on July 23, 1962.
 - Three directors are listed, each members of the Lion's Club:
 - Normal L. Dean
 - Shelton V. Bridgers.
 - Everette A. Ledford Jr.
- First vehicle was a 1949 Dodge van, a surplus Postal Service vehicle.
 - Purchased at a government sale in Raleigh.
 - Competing bidder didn't realize that a rescue squad was trying to win the bid, so the squad had to raise theirs by one cent to win.
 - Squad members painted the truck, and outfitted the vehicle to serve as an ambulance.
- Second vehicle was a used Pontiac hearse purchased from MK Davis Ambulance Sales in Raleigh.
 - Model year might've been 1952.

- First location was near the intersection of Main Street and Campen Street, with the original ambulance (and later vehicles) parked beside the railroad tracks.
 - Second location was behind the newly built Town Hall and fire station at Pine and 4th Streets, which opened in September 1963.
 - Later housed the squad's 1969 Ford station wagon inside the bays, parked between two fire engines.
 - Later shelter added behind the fire station, to house the 1971 SWAB ambulance.
 - Note: City directories of that era listed the squad's early addresses as 29 E. 4th Street and later 361 E. 3rd Street.
- Funding during these early years was entirely community donated. To the best of their knowledge, no county funding was provided in those early years.
 - Money was raised by radiothons and private donations.
 - By December 1972, the town had been donating \$300 each year to the squad for several years. (GLF, 12/7/72)
 - County subsidies of rescue squads had started by 1973. (WCAB)
 - Wake County Commission Vassar Shearon was very involved with helping the squad to start receiving county financial support.
- Squad was the first formed in eastern Wake County, and the service area was large:
 - West, from the Neuse River Bridge on Highway 64.
 - East, from the Nash County side of Zebulon.
 - South, to the Archers Lodge area.
 - North, to Rolesville.
- Calls were usually major incidents: car accidents, heart attacks, medical emergencies, and farm pond drownings.
 - And there were few people to answer the calls.
 - Squad was strictly volunteer.
 - There were no duty crews. Members responded from work or from home.
 - They answered only one call at a time.
 - Calls were infrequent in the early years, some times as long as a week or two without a call.
- Squad used CB radios to communicate.
 - Later installed an electric siren on the water tower, to notify members of calls.
 - Once they had pagers, calls were dispatched from Wendell Town Hall.
- Members performed minimal first aid in those first years.
 - Squad served mostly as "scoop and go."
 - There were no regulations requiring certification of ambulance attendants.
 - Members, however, each pursued their own first aid training, and typically took as many and as advanced first aid courses as were available.

1967 – Squad purchased their first new vehicle, a 1967 Ford Econoline van. Cost \$1,700.

1967 – September, 14 – Newspaper story. “Wendell Squad Not Providing Ambulances.” Captain Robert Clark says that a number of people “apparently think the squad does provide ambulance service.” [e.g., medical transport.] They’ve received several calls asking the squad to “dispatch a vehicle to transport an ill person.” And in some cases, they’ve been requested to transport to places as far away as Durham. “The Wendell Rescue Squad is not in the ambulance business” says the story. (N&O, 9/14/67)

1969 – Squad received their second new vehicle a 1969 station wagon donated on loan from Champion Motors of Wendell. The owner of dealership was Mr. Velton Champion.

- Vehicle was used for a couple years, then returned to the dealership.

1970 to 1979

1971 – First SWAB ambulance delivered.

- 1971 Ford/Swab SAB 9 II.
- Build #2922, delivered February 10, 1971.
- Ira C. Fuller traveled with Norman Dean and Paul White to Pennsylvania, to pick it up in February 1971.
- Source: OH, Swab records.

1971 – Five-hour Radiothon raises more than \$6,300 in pledges on Sunday, May 23, 1971.

- Need money to pay for recently purchased new ambulance, boat, and motor.
 - Fifteen-foot fiberglass “life saving boat” with 10 HP motor.
 - Mounted on trailer, with scuba diving equipment, fire lights, and disaster pouch.
- Squad has eighteen members, all volunteer.
- Answered 191 calls during eleven-month period between May 1970 and April 1971.
- Serves communities of Wendell, Corinth, Pilot, Zebulon, Knightdale, Rolesville, Archers Lodge, and Riley Hill.
- Source: GLF, 5/27/71

1971

- Worker rescued from inside water tank on May 24, 1971, with help of helicopter and four-person crew from Seymour Johnson Air Force base. (GLF, 5/27/71)
 - Squad Captain is Norman Dean.

1972

- Squad Captain is Norman Dean. (GLF, 12/7/72)

1973

- That year's Radiothon's goal of \$15,000 was reached.
- Squad answered 598 calls that year.

1974, April – Hurst tool purchased in April.

- Cost \$4,100.
- Initial contributions made by First Citizens Bank, First Union Bank, and Wendell Savings and Loan.
- Squad Captain Norman Dean said the following month "it's saved three lives in less than a month."
- New tool was demonstrated at the fourth annual Radiothon on the Sunday after May 16, 1974. Fundraising goal was \$20,000.
- Source: GLF, 5/16/74.

1974, May 5 – Rescue squad building completed at 401 E. Third Street.

- One-story metal building with three (?) bays.
- Dedication plaque read:
 - Norman Dean, Captain
 - Clifton Couick, 1st Lieutenant
 - James W. Greene, 2nd Lieutenant
 - Phillip Honeycutt, 2nd Lieutenant
 - Harold Poole, Treasurer
 - Jerry G. Lee, Secretary
 - Hazk Mazzeo, Director
 - Robert Jones Sr., Director
 - Phillip E. Banks Jr.
 - Phillip Bissette
 - Roy Gene Buffaloe
 - Henry Bunn
 - Robert Clark
 - Otho W. Eudy
 - Randy Green
 - Don Price
 - Ray Smith
 - Alton Staples
 - Thomas Strickland
 - Ben Tongue
 - Paul White
 - Earl Wemple

1974, circa – New fiberglass rescue boats added, part of twenty-four donated by Industrial Plastics of Louisburg to the seven rescue squads in Wake County. (N&O, 7/29/74)

1974 – Fourth annual radiothon held at new squad building.

- Raises \$14,195.10 of \$20,000 goal.
- More than \$6,000 collected, rest are pledges.
- Time limit for pledges extended to three weeks.
- Squad Captain Norman Dean estimates more than 1,200 people attend.
- Their new Hurst tool is demonstrated, and some 150 people saw several members of the squad tear off doors and pull the steering rod “so that the mock victim could be disengaged.”
- Squad member Paul White’s moustache is shaved, honoring a promise he made if he received \$400 in donations and pledges. The goal was received about 4:30 p.m. and member Robert Jones had the honors of shaving.
- Afternoon entertainment was provided by the Psalmismen Quartet, Slim Short, Traveling Echoes, Fairly Four, and the New Directions, a youth group from area churches.
- “Telephones, adding machines, typists and contribution receivers” were all manned by squad members, their wives, and volunteers.
- Four telephones were used.
- Radio station WETC donated the hours 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Dean and Station Manager Bill Kirby were the emcees, assisted by the station’s Program Manager Charlie Holt and Advertising Manager Charlie Hocutt.
- Source: Unidentified, undated newspaper story.

1975 – Rescue squad vehicles:

- 1967 Ford Econoline van, white over red.
 - 1971 Ford/Swab ambulance, white over red.
 - 197_ Chevrolet ambulance, white over orange.
 - Boat and trailer.
 - Generator and light trailer.
- Source: A Will and a Way - The Story of Emergency Medical Services in North Carolina, 1975 short film.

1975, November – Fleet updates:

- 1971 Ford/Swab had ambulance body removed and remounted on a new Chevrolet chassis.
- New [and first?] crash truck built using a Reading body purchased from Simpson in Wilson, NC, and mounted on the 1971 Ford ambulance chassis. The crash truck carried the Hurst tool, rope, bolt cutters, pry bars, field stretchers and splints, three-ton chain puller, portable jack, axes, fiberglass tool for moving electrical wires, and 1,250-watt emergency landing light. The truck and equipment cost \$25,000. [GLF, 11/13/75]

1977 – New ambulance.

- 1977 (?) Chevrolet C-30/Swab SE-120.
Build #3528, built 1977.
- Source: Swab records.

1978 – Crash truck body remounted on new Chevy chassis. The entire truck was repainted and the lettering updated to match the style on the squad’s other three vehicles. Also, squad member Hank Mazzeo built a floor-mounted instrument console for the cab, to provide easy-access to the radio, siren, electrical switches, and generator starter. The truck also now had four telescoping lights powered by a 5,000-watt generator. [GLF, 8/17/78]

1980 to 1989

1981 – New ambulances.

- 1981 (?) Chevrolet Silverado/Swab SE-120.
- Build #4138.
- Chassis built December 1980.
- Ordered August 1980 (?), built February 1981.
- 1981 Chevrolet/Swab SAB 9 II
- Build #2922, remount of 1971 body.

1983 – Ronald Thompson new Captain of squad, replaces Norman Dean, who has been captain for nine of past twenty-years, including his latest term of two years.

- Squad has twenty-two members.
- Other officers for 83-84: Asst. Chief Bennie Collins, Lieutenants Scott Yancy and Ronald Ray, Treasurer Maude Staples, Secretary Vickie Perry, and Director Randy Raper.
- Source: GLF, 6/30/83.

1984 – First radiothon held in three years on Sunday, May 20. Money wasn’t needed in prior years, but squad needs to replace an ambulance chassis and also add onto the present facility. Kemp Furniture Industries has donated an extra fifty feet of adjoining land. (GLF, 5/17/84)

1986 – New ambulance

- 1986 Chevrolet C30/Swab SE-120.
- Build #4138, remount of 1981 body.
- Order #42165.
- Built March 1986.

1990 to 1999

1991 – Nine volunteer rescue squads in Wake County abandoned tradition of free ambulance service and begin charging fees for transporting patients. (N&O, 6/10/91)

Snapshot of rescue squads, from September 10, 1991, News & Observer:

Rescue Squad	BLS fee	ALS fee	Lifetime Membership	1990 Calls
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Wendell Rescue Squad	none	none	none	952
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1991 – Squad considering adding charges to responses. Currently doesn't charge either membership fees or transport fees. (N&O, 11/29/91)

1991 – Squad building burns at 401 E. Third Street on November 29. Reports the December 1 and December 26 issues of the *News & Observer*:

- Blaze reported on a Friday night, about 9:00 p.m.
- Building was unoccupied when the fire started.
- Cause suspected as pot left on stove, when volunteer left the building to respond to a motor-vehicle accident with injuries.
- Passing motorist saw the smoke and reported the fire.
- The metal building was seventeen years old.
- Two ambulances had responded to the accident.
- Two other remaining emergency vehicles were removed from the burning building, when a squad member heard the fire call, and went to the building and removed them from the bay.
- Fire damaged the kitchen, office, meeting area, front bedrooms, and a storage area.
- Damage over \$100,000.
- Squad relocates to fire station, while the insurance company evaluated the loss.
- Ambulances are parked at fire station and, later, at the Town Hall.
- Members answer calls from their homes, which has added an average of two minutes to response times.
- Insurance will pay for building repairs, but only a fraction of contents replacement.
- Squad can replace two of four beds, a computer, a copier, and a refrigerator. But it will have to find its own tables, chairs, couches, eating utensils, cooking supplies, cleaning supplies, office supplies, and such.
- They need \$7,000 or \$8,000 to restock the building.
- Squad looks for donations of furniture, office supplies, and cash to replace what was lost.
- Churches, businesses, and the town have contacted the squad to assist.

1993 – Paramedics added at **Wendell** and **Zebulon**, after July 1. (N&O, 3/2/93)

1999 - Snapshot of Wake County EMS System, from TriData's *Comprehensive Assessment of the Wake County Emergency Medical Services System Final Report*, which was submitted to Wake County EMS on June 16, 1999:

Agency	Ambulances		Square Miles	1995 Pop.	Personnel	1998 Calls	1998 Revenues
Wendell VRS	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First duty, paramedic (WCEMS paramedic plus EMT intermediate) • Second duty, EMT intermediate 	50.2	10,396	4 paid, 17 vol.	1,327	\$182,000

2000 to 2005

- 2005 – Renamed **Eastern Wake EMS** on May 1, 2015, and first of three merging organizes with Knightdale Area Rescue Squad and Zebulon EMS.
- See Eastern Wake EMS history document.

Help Wanted!

This document is part of a project to research and record the history of rescue squads and EMS providers in Wake County.

You can help in any number of ways, including:

- Read this document and visit the project web site, www.legeros.com/history/ems
 - What's good about what we're doing?
 - What could be improved?
 - What haven't we thought of?
- Proofread this document as casually or extensively as desired:
 - Misspelled names?
 - Wrong makes or models of vehicles?
 - General timeframes that seem off?
 - Etc.
- Supplement this document with things that you remember, or stories you've heard.
 - Jot your thoughts in an e-mail.
 - Send a long, detailed e-mail.
 - Write things down on paper and send via postal mail.
 - Talk to the project organizers in person, at your convenience.
 - Etc.
- Share any scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, old photos, or old documents that you have, or can find.
 - Want some blasts from the past, to help you remember?
 - Visit <https://www.facebook.com/WakeEMSHistory>
- Suggest particular people that we can contact, for more information.

Contact Mike Legeros or Jeff Hammerstein at any time. Thank you in advance!