

University of Maine

From the Selected Works of Kimberly J. Sawtelle

January 21, 1987

Ambulance volunteers: You go through emotional and physical hell

Kimberly J. Sawtelle, *University of Maine*



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DOVER-FOXCROFT, MAINE

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Public rallies to help Hirsch

by Jim Whitney

DOVER-FOXCROFT - The recently formed Fred Hirsch Fund-raising Committee met Friday, Jan. 16, to discuss fund-raising activities.

Many interested people attended and much was accomplished, including setting up sub-committees for the neighboring towns for the Fred Hirsch Fund. The amount of love for Fred and Vicki Hirsch was very evident at the gathering as everyone volunteered their services.

The committee decided on four fund-raising activities to be carried out by the Fred Hirsch Committee, but stated that anyone who had other ideas would be welcome to pool their money with money raised by the committee. The four projects agreed upon were a fund-raising project, a community supper, an auction and private donations.

There are three prizes offered on the fund-raising tickets. Howard Furlong donated a 700 pound registered heifer to be given as first prize. Second prize is a gun purchased by the committee from Guilmet's Sporting Goods at cost, and Rudy Guilmet, owner of the store donated a scope which he will mount on the rifle at no cost. The committee purchased a \$50 savings bond as third prize. Tickets for the raffle were donated by *The Piscataquis Observer*.

A community supper has been planned for Feb. 14, Valentine's Day. "This date has been chosen because we feel this is an outpouring of love for Fred and Vicki," said Wilma Andrews, who helped to organize the supper. Also, Fred and Vicki's birthdays are both on Feb. 13. The supper is a community project, with women from each church in the area coming together to help sponsor the event.

When news of the supper got out, there were calls from churches in Dexter and Guilford wanting to take part. The committee, realizing the amount of interest shown, decided that they should not restrict it to just Dover-Foxcroft. It was agreed that a separate supper will be held in each town, which includes Milo, Dexter, Guilford and Greenville. The suppers will all be held on the same night, Feb. 14, since the committee felt that this would bring a feeling of unity throughout the communities.

The churches in each community will be putting the suppers on at the

various locations. The Dover-Foxcroft supper will be held at Sedomocha Junior High School. The sub-committee chairmen of the neighboring towns are responsible for locating a meeting place for their respective town's supper. The cost for each plate at the supper was decided to be \$5.

Barry Costa was chosen to head the auction committee. The auction has been planned for March 14, a month after the benefit supper. The local merchants will be donating new merchandise to be auctioned off. The auction will also be held at Sedomocha Junior High School. Everyone is welcome and urged to attend.

The last of the four projects agreed upon by the committee was the private donations. An account in a local bank has been opened by the Southern Piscataquis Region Chamber of Commerce, which donated the first \$100 to get it started. All the money raised by the Fred Hirsch Committee will be added to this account. The public has been invited to add to this account also. Checks may be made out to FRED HIRSCH FUND, and may be mailed to Southern Piscataquis Region Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 376, Dover-Foxcroft, Maine, 04426. Other donations are also being accepted at the residence of Mildred Ebersteen, 19 Pine St., in Dover-Foxcroft.

Mrs. Ebersteen was elected chairman of the entire fund-raising project, because of her fund-raising experience. Also, sub-committees were set up for each of the neighboring towns, with a chairman for each of the committees. Listed below are the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of each of the chairmen. If anyone has questions or information concerning the fund-raising activities they are asked to contact their respective town chairman.

Dover-Foxcroft: Frank Murch, 17 Court St., Dover-Foxcroft, 564-3304.

Dexter: Richard (Buster) Gilbert, 495 Main St. Dexter, 924-5065.

Milo: Everett and Lee Worcester, 13 Pleasant St., Milo, 943-7321.

Guilford: Greg and Jane Clement, PO box 705, Genthner Court, Guilford, 876-4037.

Greenville: Everett and Janet Parker, Bx. 418, Greenville, 695-3077.



SCORES 4 GOALS: Scoring all his team's goals in a 6-4 loss to Orono was sophomore John Raymond of FA who set a school record in doing so. Earlier this year he had three against Stearns. Assisting on three of his goals were Todd Mountain and Bill Forbes (2) and one was unassisted. (Stevens)

Public hearing set Jan. 29

SAD 41 directors meet tonight to discuss school improvements

by Virginia Foss

MILO - The Board of Directors of SAD 41 will meet tonight at 7 p.m. The agenda items include discussion of the proposed school improvement plan for the district.

At the last meeting Jan. 7, Superintendent Roy Bither distributed the Five Year School Improvement Plans to board members. Ideas for improvements came from school board meetings, administrative council meetings, recommendations from the community survey, state assessment, state law, the administrative team, staff and students, the Special Education Program, Chapter 1 reports, teacher evaluations, guidance counselors, custodians, the Education Reform Act of 1984 and the Maine

School Library Media Programs Guidelines of 1986.

Board members were asked to look over the plans and discuss them at tonight's meeting. A public hearing will be held to discuss the plans on Wednesday, Jan. 29 at the Penquis Valley Middle School Library at 7 p.m. There is a master plan of the district and additional plans for the high school, middle school and primary grades.

Bither read a letter from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges about the possibility of either the high school or all the schools in the district becoming members of the association. Bither said that the board had voted three or four years ago to

Boat launching site approved for Onawa

by Gary Knowles

ELLIOTTSVILLE - Many years have passed since the Parks and Recreation Bureau, (PRB), received its first request for a public boat launching facility on Lake Onawa in Ellitsville. The initial request was made in 1971, according to PRB representative Richard Skinner.

Skinner said extensive investigation was needed in order to determine the best point of access to the lake. When the PRB was first approached about the boat launching facility, they looked into various possibilities.

Skinner said requests were made intermittently between 1971 and 1982, but it wasn't until March of 1983, when he recommended that a site be developed by going across the public lot, that the development process began to take a steady course.

As time went on, things got more complicated. Skinner said the Bureau of Public Lands, (BPL), who oversees the state's interest in public lots, decided to sell the public lot. When the sale

was made, Skinner said, the BPL retained an easement, (reserved rights), to allow for the development of a public boat access facility to Lake Onawa. Skinner closely scrutinized the sale to see that the easement was obtained.

After the sale of the public land, the management of the easement was transferred to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, (DIFW), which has access to funding for the project through federal monies.

Skinner said 75 percent of the funding for the facility will come from the monies administered by the DIFW. The other 25 percent will be taken from the State Boating Facilities Fund, which is derived from his department.

Following the transfer of the management of the easement, the DIFW had to apply for a "Great Ponds Permit" in order to continue its quest for the facility. The application was presented to the Land Use Regulation Commission, (LURC), office in October of 1986, according to LURC representative, Bill Galbraith, who also stated that the public lot had been sold to residents of Richmond, Va.

Galbraith said that it was decided the permit application should be presented before the commission, because the general staff felt that the decision should not be made on the general staff level. Since the commission only meets once a month, there were further delays in approving the application. (A plan for the boat launching facility had to be submitted with the application).

The application was approved on Jan. 13, according to Galbraith. He also stated that the facility will be placed in the Southwest corner of the lake, approximately a mile from where the Onawa Road ends.

Skinner stated that the next step for the DIFW is to apply for funding for the project through their federal sources. Skinner said he doesn't feel there will be any further problems in the development of the facility.

Skinner believes there will be a long entrance road, a parking facility for approximately 12 cars and trailers and a hard surface launching ramp made of part pavement and part pre-cast concrete plank. He believes the project could be completed as early as this summer.

Funding, volunteers needed in Milo

by Virginia Foss

MILO—Dr. Robert Hockmuth, family practitioner in Milo met with reporters last week to stress the need of additional funding and volunteers for the Three Rivers Ambulance Service. Dr. Hockmuth is the chairman of the board of directors of the Ambulance Service and is very concerned on keeping the service in the area.

Dr. Hockmuth said that at present there are four full time Emergency Medical Technicians and six full time drivers. More people are needed on the 24 hour coverage. He said that at times there is no one on call, and if an ambulance is needed, it is requested from Mayo Regional Hospital in Dover-Foxcroft, which means a longer wait and sometimes time is the essence on whether the patient gets the immediate treatment needed.

Hockmuth said he was going to ask for an increase on the on-call volunteers to receive around \$1.75 an hour instead of the .50 cents they receive now. He knows that volunteers will still need a regular job along with their ambulance duties, but he feels if the increase can keep the volunteers on the service and entice more to join, then it will be worth it.

Dr. Hockmuth said that future volunteers will be trained to start intravenous fluids, perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation and perform work on a defibrillator. Present volunteers will learn these jobs also. This will make for a better personnel equipped ambulance service. Sometimes these jobs have to be done on the way to the hospital.

The doctor said it is essential to have sufficient, capable personnel to cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He said a recruitment drive is underway. Volunteers will be trained either locally, at Mayo Regional Hospital or at Eastern Maine Vocational Technical Institute. Well trained people are an asset to the service.

Hockmuth said that funding is another area of concern. He said that state and federal funding for ambulance services has been eliminated and funding has to come from the towns serviced by the ambulance service. He said they presently have two ambulances, but with different drivers all the time, and wear and tear, they should be replaced next year. A new ambulance costs around \$70,000. There is a sinking fund of \$5000 a year put towards a new ambulance.

There is \$14,000 in the accounts receivable fund of accounts that have not been paid. He said there will be an effort made to acquire this money. He feels that if a patient does not pay his ambulance fee, then the town he lives in should be responsible for paying it if the patient is unable to pay. This is something that will have to be decided at town meeting time.

Hockmuth said there is a budget meeting on Jan. 22 and it will be decided then what exactly is needed and they will prepare an article for the area towns' Town Warrants.

Hockmuth said the fire department is not lacking for volunteers and he feels the ambulance service should not be either. They both perform a vital service for the community.

The doctor explained that last year they made repairs and improvements on the ambulance garage and provided a classroom area plus accommodations for volunteers that have to spend the night. This is an asset whereas someone from another town, other than Milo, could stay at the garage at night while on call.

Ambulance volunteers

'You go through emotional and physical hell'

by Kimberly Sawtelle

Editor's note: The following accident account is fictional, written with the intent of expressing the physical and emotional trauma faced by persons dedicated to saving lives by serving as ambulance service volunteers. The Dexter Ambulance Service is cited in the account for the purpose of example. An interview was also conducted with members of the Dexter squad to obtain a personal insight to the work of an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Any similarity to actual persons or situations in the fictional account is coincidental.

"Plummer Unit to Portable 61...you have a 10-55 rollover on Route 7. Possible multiple injuries."

"10-4, Plummer Unit...will meet everyone at the station."

The first crew member to arrive at the Dexter Fire Station in response to a call begins preparations for the run, pulling the ambulance out of the garage and logging the time of the call. "Your heart is pounding," said Margaret Murray, Dexter Ambulance Squad crew chief, in a recent interview

with fellow squad members at the Hewitt Building in Dexter. "As soon as that telephone rings, as soon as that radio goes off, your heart rate triples. The adrenaline gets to flowing..."

A bone-chilling wind cuts through the blue windbreaker jackets which identify individuals as squad members. In a matter of seconds, in the time it takes to run from the car to the station, pelting drops of ice water have soaked through the minimal protection.

"I don't know about anyone else, but I shake. Whether it's the anticipation of the unexpected, the adrenaline or the cold...I don't know, but I shake," said Debbie Barber, training officer.

Within moments of the call from Plummer dispatch the three-man crew has loaded into the rig and is speeding toward the accident site.

"They don't know," said squad member Rick Batchelder commenting on the dispatch unit, "All they get (for information) is whatever is given to them over the phone. We never know what we're going to find. They try not to surprise us, but nine times out of 10 that's exactly what we get."

During the short response time, crew members prepare for the worst possible situation, assigning each other to specific responsibilities and organizing the equipment that may be needed on location. Hundreds of thoughts race through each crew member's head as the unyielding siren wails unnoticed by those riding inside the box.

"The things that go through my head on the way to a bad car accident are the very worst situations we could find. I prepare myself for the worst and hope for the best," explained Batchelder.

Through a streaked windshield, crew members get their first glimpse of the accident site and quickly assess the situation. Blue strobes wink through the darkness as silhouette figures dash past a half-dozen pair of glaring headlights. There's no wreck in sight but the position of the police cruisers indicate the vehicle is off somewhere in the brush. A call is made for back-up assistance.

"Your mind gets to the accident before your body does," said Murray. "Once you're there it's like 'tunnel vision' and you're on automatic pilot. You don't concentrate on where you are, the patient is the first concern. A lot of times I couldn't tell you what the whole scene looked like, just what involved

my patient."

As the rig pulls to a stop near an accident site the first utterances from squad members are most likely to be a short, seemingly angry bursts of frustrated profanity, or utterances to a Greater Being for the victims and the strength and wisdom to make the right choices for treatment.

The rain-washed roadway mirrors the red and amber flashing lights of the rescue unit as doors fly open in all directions. Crew members unload with basic equipment and head for the mangled remains of a vehicle, half hearing the exposition given by a young rookie trooper.

Each crew member slides down the slick sides of the ditch on the heels of their shoes, trying to maintain balance and keep the equipment clean and dry. In the mud lays a bloody mass which may, at one time, have resembled a human being. Shrieks of pain and fear issue forth from the front of the car. The smell of gasoline lingers in the air as rain continues to pound down.

The words of multiple training instructors scrawl across each mind's blackboard and are confirmed by a brief examination of the first victim by an EMT. "Help the living, let someone else take care of the dead."

"Sometimes there's fear. When you're out there in the middle of the dark and cold and there are people screaming and by-standers crowding in, you can have a flash of panic. "What am I doing here? What do I do now?" Barber explained.

"It's 20 degrees below zero, the wind's blowing and it's 2 a.m., and there's a body twisted into a shape you never dealt with in any kind of training and you've got to untwist it and not do any further damage," added Craig Fellows, supply officer.

Crew members quickly assay the location and position of the vehicle. The fear of sparks igniting gasoline floating in the icy puddles prompts the ambulance driver to look under the gaping hood of the vehicle. The battery is missing and a quick scan is made for anyone in the vicinity carrying a lit cigarette or pipe. Police are instructed to call for the jaws-of-life from a neighboring town.

"Check the battery first," stated Batchelder and Barber. "Always check the battery and pull the cables. You don't want any chance of a spark igniting gas."

Next priority is to get someone inside to check the screaming victim. The only stable port of entry is through the back window. The second victim is visible for the first time, laying off-kilter, shoulders, neck and head against the driver's door, one leg draped over the top of the seat, the other leg not visible.

Subtle observation skills are in action as the remains of the back window are removed and a Child on Board sign drops to the ground. Quick inspection with a flashlight shows no indications of a child's car seat in the back of the vehicle. An order is barked out as the second unit, a fire truck and wrecker arrive... Search the woods for a child.

"Those are the most traumatic cases," said Barber. "When there's a child involved. Those are when you're likely to lose EMT's (Emergency Medical Technicians). If it's a bad case, that's the point at which (the EMT) will say, 'That's it, no more.'"

The vehicle rocks slightly as an EMT, carrying a blanket, trauma kit and radio, crouches low to squeeze into the car, loosing balance momentarily when empty beer bottles, unseen in the dark, roll underfoot. Police organize a search party for the possible third victim. Shouts and the sounds of sloshing issue from the other side of the floor boards as lines are tightened to prevent the vehicle from rocking again. Firemen mull about, investigating a possible gas leak and discussing the need for a layer of foam before extrication procedures begin.

"There is danger in almost all accidents," explained Barber. "The EMT is almost always in some physical danger."

"Once you've pulled traction, you're there for the duration," added Batchelder. It may be 10-minutes, it may be 20-minutes, it may be an hour, but you cannot let go. Sometimes, when you finally get out, you could be as much a patient as the victim because you're suffering from hypothermia too."

With the vehicle doubly secured, the extrication team begins efforts to cut the roof of the car open to free the now silent victim. Inside the car, a quick examination reveals the victim (a best friend's daughter) has gone into shock. The blanket is hastily thrown over the patient to help cut the chill of the rainy night. Oxygen is administered and the

Please turn to Page 4



RECENTLY ELECTED OFFICERS of the Dexter Ambulance Squad include, front, l-r, Margaret Murray, crew chief; Treasa Lowell, assistant secretary-treasurer. Standing, l-r, Debbie Barber, training officer; Julie McMahon, secretary-treasurer and Craig Fellows, supply officer. Other officers include Ed Walker, ambulance director; Irving Gray, assistant supply officer and Steve Bailey, maintenance officer. (Sawtelle)

Editorial

Feb. 13, Fred Hirsch Day

Prayers, funds, and well wishes are pouring in from far and near as Fred Hirsch puts up one of the toughest fights in his 33 years of life to recover from a broken back at Eastern Maine Medical Center. It's the general consensus that 'if anyone can overcome the medical obstacles ahead, Fred can!'

Hirsch gradually worked his way into the hearts of this community after he came to Dover-Foxcroft in the summer of 1980 and bought radio station WDME. He saw the Shiretown as a beautiful place to settle and since he had a fascination with the railroad and liked to ski, it was a perfect place for him.

He made headlines in October 1983 when he purchased an Amtrak sleeper-lounger 3205 and converted it into the first radio station of its kind. It sits on its own section of track adjacent to the newly opened Dover Pasta Depot (formerly Trues Farm Market) on Route 15.

Gradually Hirsch became more active in the community, joining the Dover-Foxcroft Business Association, the Dover-Foxcroft Kiwanis Club, and more recently taking an active part in the success and growth of the Southern Piscataquis Region Chamber of Commerce.

All the while, he managed to increase the radio coverage in the area both in wave-length strength and programming and more recently won an award in the broadcasting media. He was at the local police and sheriff's offices as early as 5 a.m. daily checking and gathering news for the radio station.

He seemed to have an endless supply of energy, zipping here to sell advertising for the station, there to promote a timely promotion for the business association, turning in news releases or arranging an advertisement for other media on a special promotion for the chamber. The days simply were not long enough for him to meet all the goals he had set for himself.

His busy schedule became so much a part of the community's daily routine, no one seemed to notice the impact he was making in the area until Jan. 3 - the day he had a skiing accident and was hospitalized.

Born in Arlington, Vt., he is the son of a furniture manufacturer. He attended a private school and majored in Communications at Ithaca College, New York State. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree and worked as a station manager in New Rochelle, N.Y. before coming to Dover-Foxcroft.

It's not surprising after getting to know him, that Hirsch was named Outstanding Young Businessman by the Jaycees in New Rochelle for the work he did there.

He is known in these parts as a congenial, hard-working individual who believes in standing up for what he believes is right.

Penquis area residents admire him for these traits and now that he needs a helping hand they are rallying forces to help him in his fight for recovery. There is an overwhelming desire in the community to provide financial assistance through a newly established Fred Hirsch Fund and cards and letters continue to pour in to his hospital room daily. Prayer meetings and vigils are being held, an auction, public suppers and other fund-raising projects are being planned.

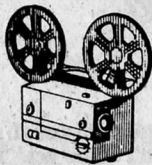
Hirsch must put up a long, hard fight and he is going to need an abundance of moral support and prayers, as well as financial help, in the weeks and months ahead. Without a doubt, the outpouring of goodness by so many caring people in the Penquis area will help give him the strength needed for recovery.

Let's make Feb. 13 (Fred's birthday) "Fred Hirsch Day" when everyone in the Penquis region remembers him with cards and letters. Mark it on your calendar!

M.R.B.

Your good nature

Jerry Stelmok



Home movies

by Roger Carr

Lithgow, Yes! Brickman, No!

If you, personally, you yourself, design the blueprints for a house, if you then build it yourself with your own two hands and your neighbors' tools, if you personally furnish and decorate it with your own carefully-selected choices, then you're the one to blame if you don't like living in it.

The Manhattan Project, this week's video movie, was co-produced by Marshall Brickman, co-written by Marshall Brickman, and directed by Marshall Brickman. I don't like to jump at conclusions, but I have a sneaking hunch that Marshall Brickman is a major creative force behind the picture. I do hope he's more satisfied with it than I was.

He starts off with the ultimate material for a suspense flick, nuclear devices. It seems that a scientist (John Lithgow) has discovered a way to isolate a new, 99.997 percent pure plutonium isotope that is a source of unbelievable power. A bomb roughly the size of a tool kit, for instance, could turn New York into Dogpatch in roughly a thousandth of a second.

When the scientist makes friends with a young boy (Christopher Collet), the kid steals some of the plutonium and then sets out to win a Science Fair Prize by making his own nuclear bomb, a project that does not exactly win him lots of friends in the U.S. government.

All this could make a good story if it didn't have more holes in it than the average screen door. Collet's penetration of a top-secret installation is about as difficult as buttering toast. His construction of the bomb, all to the accompaniment of cutesy-poo music that belongs in a frisky-lamb cartoon, is done with no more trouble than making an erector-set crane. We are given to understand that it's no big deal for a high school kid to figure critical mass, access half a dozen computers, buy plastic explosive from a soldier, stuff like that. Any kid can do that, right? Sheesh!

In case that isn't enough, we also have a collection of nerds at the Science Fair whose very presence is an insult to every serious science student in the country. We have tons of security personnel too dumb to even check a bus station when the kid's on the run. (Incidentally, there have just gotta be some smart military people somewhere; how come we never hear about them?) To top it all off, Collet's character is such a self-centered jerk, I caught myself hoping his bomb would go up in his face. Now, that would have been a surprise ending!

As you may have guessed by now, I'd really have hated The Manhattan Project if it weren't for two things. One, the final scene, even though predictable, is well played and has a great line from John Lithgow. Two, the mere presence of Mr. Lithgow can turn an average movie into something better. In the movie's first scene, he is perfection, displaying an expert's enthusiasm for something completely beyond everyone else in the room, rattling on like a proud father as he displays his lasers. In the final scene, as a man forced to confront the moral implications of his own acts, he shows insight even when given fairly banal lines by the script. The man can act.

The original Manhattan Project had a genius named Oppenheimer. The current one has a genius named Lithgow. Sadly, both of them were involved in making bombs.

Louis Stevens observes: Press conference

SCENE: The waiting room at the hospital after President Reagan had surgery. All the members of the press, radio, and TV network news programs are there to question Mrs. Reagan, and analyze what SHE thought she said, but which THEY are positive they know what she meant even if she did not say so.

'Mrs. Reagan, it was reported that when the President came out from under the operation, you greeted him with hugs and kisses. Just how many hugs was there, Mrs. Reagan, and how many kisses?'

'Well, I really didn't count because it was such an emotional moment, and...'

'Would you say there were two or more?'

'Oh, yes, at least five.'

'But the TV cameras caught only three. Then two were given without anyone present, is that right?'

'I suppose so, but...'

'Then would you say that this showed a lack of physical strength when he clutched you so quickly in hopes to prevent himself from falling?'

'Oh, I didn't say that.'

'But you did say, did you not, that you embraced twice in range of cameras?'

'No, we just slightly clutched, not embraced.'

'And while embracing...'

'No, sir, we did not embrace.'

'But, Mrs. Reagan, the New York Times, Dan Rather, Sam Donaldson, and Oprah Winfrey all say it looked like an embrace rather than a mere clutch, so which was it?'

'Oh, embrace then. Have it your way.'

Thank you, Mrs. Reagan. Embrace it is then. Now, it appeared that the President was whispering something in your ear while you were embracing, is that true?'

'Yes, but it was a private conversation.'

'But did it contain any information about Nicaragua or Iran, Mrs. Reagan?'

'Oh, nothing like that.'

'What do you mean, "like that"? Like what, Mrs. Reagan, the budget deficit? The space program? Or SALT talks?'

'Oh, no, again, nothing so serious as that.'

'But, Mrs. Reagan, one of our mikes picked up the number 123-4567, and we wonder if you'd explain what it means, please.'

'Oh, if you insist. It's the number for Luigi's home-delivered pizza.'

From the front of the House

by Rep. Dale F. Thistle



Everything is political

Last week I began serving as your Representative and learning about the real world of politics in Augusta. Much of this is as you would expect. It's really a perceived reality, standard politics. And then again, politics is much, much more.

There is the Legislature as you know it from Civics class. 'There are two Houses of the Legislature, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate has 35 members and the House has 151 plus two Indian Representatives. The Legislative Branch is one of three branches of our government...' And this is certainly politics.

But everything else is political, as well, and it is reality with a capital R. I'm speaking now of the inner workings and decision-making.

Recently, I became aware of this again as I worked on my committee assignment. (Incidentally, the Speaker of the House has complete authority over what committee assignment one receives.) Initially, I was asked to fill out a form listing my top three choices for committees, understanding, of course, that though the Speaker wanted to give me my first or second choice it wasn't always possible. There are 19 Joint Standing Committees, made up of members of the House and Senate, to choose from and occasionally a special or Select Committee is created for a period of time.

Committee choices

I dutifully filled out my committee choices listing them in order of priority: Transportation, Education, and Human Resources. I can't recall exactly but it seems to me this was completed in early December.

Now Freshman legislators, even members of the majority party, don't wield a lot of clout so they're apt not to get their top choice. Knowing this I began early to lobby for my selections by making my interests known to the Speaker. No less than four times did I speak with the Speaker directly and twice I called him at his home. He knew how strongly I felt that roads were important to the people of my district. I reminded Mr. Martin that no Representative in recent memory had come from Piscataquis County to the Committee on Transportation. And that seat on this committee was singularly important to me.

Well, one day not long ago, I had a message to call the Speaker. It was late but I made the call and found him in his office working on committee assignments. He calmly explained to me that the only seat on transportation had to go to a senior member of the House who was giving up a committee chairmanship to sit on that committee. And of course, I could understand. Well, I thought, there goes number one.

Next, the Speaker told me how very much another Representative wanted to be on the Education Committee and since his district bordered on mine well of course he couldn't put both of us on the same committee. And finally he commented on my third choice, the Committee on Human Resources, by saying in effect...well, you aren't really needed there; you could be put to better use somewhere else.

At this point, I interrupted the Speaker and said 'John, I'm forced to respond here. I began campaigning last April in order to win this seat in the House. I worked every day. I'm a member of your own party, and I defeated an incumbent. Certainly this must count for something. But, not even my third choice!'

John Martin replied: 'I've got a couple of ideas. A seat on the Judiciary Committee is available, and so is a seat on the Banking and Insurance Committee. How would you like to have your choice of one of them? Judiciary is a very busy committee. It handles many of the most controversial pieces of legislation, such as capital punishment.'

I thought about it for a few moments and said that I'd accept a position on the Judiciary Committee if I could also get a seat on the Select Committee in Corrections. Finally, we agreed. And there you have it.

Later, I almost lost my seat on Corrections to some members with a lot more seniority because it became a highly sought after committee to those Representatives with correctional facilities in their districts or to those who had strong feelings on the subject. But Speaker Martin kept his word.

It's fair to ask 'Why are you telling us about this?' Truthfully, and here is the remarkable part, 151 representatives were after the Speaker for positions on 19 different committees and committee chairmanships. Assigning the right people as chairman and the right mix of members to each committee is the single most important factor in determining not only the make-up of the committee, but also the nature of the work and the success of the work of that committee.

It is on a conversation late at night between the Speaker and a freshman legislator that any significant change or activity may hinge in an area of concern to a particular Joint Committee. To us as we live out our daily lives it may seem insignificant. However, it is or can be everything. In a committee, as in the House itself, as in an election, one vote can make all the difference. And regardless of outcome, it is highly political.

I'll keep in touch.

Letters to the Editor

Readers are encouraged to write on any subject to express any opinion. We endeavor to print all letters, provided they are brief, non-libelous and in good taste. Letters may be edited for clarity and brevity. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. Signatures will be withheld from publication if requested.

Open letter to Dexter squad

To The Observer:

An open letter to the Dexter Rescue Squad and Dr. Judith Chamberlain: I want to express my deepest appreciation on the professionalism and kindness that was used on me in my accident in Dexter, Dec. 17. The care and professionalism showed by the individuals who cared for me shows that Dexter can be very proud of their rescue squad.

I also want to express my appreciation to Dr. Chamberlain, who took time out of her very busy schedule to attend to me. She not only attended to me at the accident site but was waiting for me at the hospital when the rescue squad brought me in. I had a doctor in Old Town look at me and he said he could not have stitched me up better.

The Town of Dexter should be very proud to have these type of individuals in their town.

I again express my deepest appreciation to the Dexter Rescue Squad and to
Dr. Chamberlain,
John Ehman
Old Town

The Piscataquis Observer

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struggle to control bleeding begins.

"I don't think about who the patient is until afterwards," said Batchelder. "I just do what I'm trained to do to stabilize that person for transport."

Part of the oath taken by EMT's is the confidentiality of any case treated. EMT's are not allowed to give information on a patient's condition or identity before, during or after a run. "It's really hard sometimes," explained Barber. "Especially dealing with the families. At the scene they'll run up and grab you and want to know how bad the injuries are, will the victim make it? There are times, in the very critical cases, when you know the patient isn't going to survive...that's when it's really heartwrenching."

Work as an emergency medical technician in a small town adds to the mental anguish when the victim is well known in the community, is a friend or acquaintance and co-workers demand details about particular runs. "We can't say anything," stated Murray. "That's part of the oath we take. Confidentiality."

The red strobes of an approaching rescue unit refract through the web of cracks in the windshield, announcing

the arrival of the jaws-of-life. Ground glass sticks to wet, cold, numb fingers which deftly struggle with mass trousers.

"There's ground glass pulverized glass everywhere. I'm picking it out of my skin for days after covering an accident," said Barber.

Barely audible above the din of stressing metal and power tools the EMT calmly explains the on-going procedures to the unconscious victim. Again and again the same questions are asked: 'Can you hear me? Can you tell me your name? Was there a child riding with you?'

The exhaustive search through the woods for a possible third victim continues. A hunt bordering both sides of the road turns up nothing and the search pattern alters to a circular path, each party member within sight of the next.

Inside the vehicle the patient, now immobilized with a cervical collar, KED board and splints, has momentarily stabilized. With a heaving groan the half-collapsed roof gives way to the prying like a clam shell and a long board is brought in to prepare the victim for transport. The victim is strap-

ped onto a gurney and loaded into the ambulance. Attendants check vital signs and tuck blankets tighter around the limp form.

A signal on the back window confirms the doors are secure and transport begins. The emergency room is notified of the patient's condition and estimated time of arrival (ETA). If luck is with the crew, they'll arrive at the ER without the victim going Code and needing CPR during the ride.

"That's the longest, loneliest ride of your life," said Barber, describing the emotional and physical torture of performing CPR on a Code victim. "It's the hardest physical work I've ever done in my life. I can ache for two or three days after a Code run."

The stress of working as an EMT is more than most people would tolerate and to voluntarily take on the responsibility seems beyond comprehension. "Your life is not your own," stated Batchelder, explaining his feelings about the demanding responsibilities. The sentiment was echoed by several other technicians present.

Due to the volunteer status of the ambulance service members also hold down full-time jobs. It is not uncommon,

in light of a personnel shortage, for an EMT to pull in excess of 60 hours a week call-time, and the responsibility of an EMT's license does not stop when the technician is off-duty, according to the squad. There is an unwritten obligation to help people in medical need, no matter the time or location. "If I'm on my way to Bangor to shop and see an accident, I've got to stop and help," said Murray.

Faced with the psychological stress of serving as an EMT and the strain the duties places on work and home life, why do individuals undergo days of training and take on weeks of call-time, voluntarily?

"There are two sides of the coin. When I can help an elderly patient who doesn't have anyone else to depend on, that's when it counts. If I can help save a life, that's when it counts," stated Barber. "When I'm (at work) and I hear that ambulance go out, my heart goes with it. It gets in your blood and you can't stop. It's rewarding...it's living."

It's not the glory. There is no glory, it's a thankless job," said Murray. "But if you really love helping people...it's a driving force that keeps you going."