



## "Clearwater's Hottest Department"

Fall 2004

### **"Hail to the New Fire Chief – Jamie Geer"**



Fire Chief Jamie Geer, Clearwater Fire and Rescue. Chief Geer has more than 28 years experience in Fire and ALS-EMS services and comes to us from Franklin, Tenn. where he has been the Acting Fire Chief.

Chief Geer has worked at all levels of the Fire Service. He began his career as a Firefighter/EMT, moved on to become a Driver/Operator, promoted to Lieutenant, Captain, Deputy Fire Chief and ultimately, Fire Chief. He possesses a Masters of Public Administration from the State University of

West Georgia; a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from Shorter College in Rome, GA.; and an Associates Degree in Fire Science from Midland Technical College in Columbia, SC.

"We are happy to have someone with such a wide variety of administrative, labor and operational experience to lead us into the next phase of our fire department's future," said City Manager Bill Horne. "I look forward to Chief Geer's leadership as we focus on implementing some of the current **recommendations for the department**", states **City Manager, Bill Horne**.

# Welcome, Chief Geer!

## **Chief Herald's Farewell Message**

I thought I'd use this newsletter as an opportunity to express my best wishes to those I leave behind at Clearwater Fire & Rescue. Of the 18 new recruits that I came on with in 1979, four of you still remain. I'll always remember those days in the Fire Academy...mostly because I'm still glad they're over. In order to get a perspective on how far this organization has come in 25 years, here's some of what I recall about the state of the Department in those early years.

- We had a tillered ladder downtown with a snorkel tender. I can remember going to fire alarms to the beach in the early morning hours. While on the Memorial Causeway returning to HQ, the guys driving the ladder would have the front half in one lane and the back half in the other (Allman). It looked like it was going down the road sideways.
- We had four ALS units running out of what were then Stations 1, 2, 5, and 6. All four units had three personnel and were transport-capable. Today, we have eight ALS units.
- Jim Napolitano and I were the first Firefighters the City had hired who were already Paramedics. Until then, the City sent everyone to Paramedic School. There was no State certification back then and when I got out of the Academy, I was one of six Paramedics for all of C-Shift. Jim went back to New York City to be a law enforcement officer and Paramedic.
- We were covering the same size fire district back then that we have today. We were doing it with six stations rather than the eight we have today.
- We had no automatic aid or closest unit dispatch. I remember responding from headquarters to a motorcycle accident at U.S. 19 and Enterprise. I made it in six minutes and got a lecture about my driving from Captain Petellat when I got back.
- We had one Captain (District Chief) covering the whole City.
- All of the reserve apparatus and a lot of the front-line apparatus were older than I was at the time.
- There was no such thing as a Hazardous Materials Team or Technical Rescue Team. Personal watercraft hadn't been invented yet.



- We had “smoke divers” but I don’t know if anyone but Lt. Bossom can explain that designation. When I came on, Lt. Bossom’s nickname was “Choo-Choo.”
- New hire orientation was a five-minute lecture from the Lieutenant, your first day on shift. Basically, we were told that for the first year we should keep our eyes and ears open, our mouths shut, and any task that anyone else didn’t want to do was our responsibility. Oh yeah, we got wet a lot that first year. (I haven’t seen the quarter and funnel trick in several years now.)
- I was accidentally assigned to the beach rescue one day. We went on a call for an overturned 4WD truck in the palmetto bushes. Today that area is Sand Key Park. Where the Hilton Hotel stands today used to be a somewhat rundown mobile home park.
- No one understood the Supplemental Pension and recruits never knew about it their first year. I asked Captain Clements, Plan Secretary, about it one time and he told me not to worry about it. I became a Board member at the next opportunity.
- Lt. Joe Pidala and I went to get fuel once and accidentally had an open-mike for quite some time. We did our own dispatching back then and the Dispatcher kept keying the mike trying to cover our conversation. Apparently, our conversation wasn’t something to be proud of. Captain Petellat wasn’t happy with us when we got back.
- Lt. Clements told all his crews to stand on that tailboard until he told you what to do. Apparently they pulled up to a ripping fire, Lt. Clements got out of the unit, didn’t issue any orders, went off and did a size up, came back and his two tailboard firefighters were still standing there face forward with their hands on the rail, fire still ripping.

I guess the point of all this is that I enjoyed my time here. The camaraderie on the line as well as with the entire staff in Administration is something I will never forget. This will always be the best job I’ve ever had. The Department has, and will always continue to get better. For me, it’s time to do something different. For the four of you in my recruit class who remain behind, remember that no one looks back on their life wishing they’d spent more time at work. Take care.

Rowland

## *New Training Chief*

Robert (Bob) Dubé recently joined Clearwater Fire & Rescue as the Assistant Fire Chief for the Safety & Training Division. Before coming to Clearwater, Chief Dube worked 28 years with the Fairfax County, VA. Fire Department and retired as a Captain II in charge of the Fire and Urban Search & Rescue Training Division. Dubé was also an Operations Chief for VATF-1, International Urban Search & Rescue and was deployed to disasters in Nairobi, Kenya; Izmit, Turkey; Touliu, Taiwan; Douje, Turkey, the Pentagon, and most recently to Bam, Iran. Bob is an adjunct instructor for the National Fire Academy, instructing in the Incident Command Curriculum. In addition, he is a lead instructor for the DHS/FEMA structural collapse technician course.



Chief Dube has an Associates Degree in Fire Science Administration and is certified as a NFPA Officer III and Instructor III. He also is a contributing writer for Firehouse magazine and instructs at the annual Firehouse Expo in Baltimore, MD.

### ***Clearwater Fire & Rescue Takes Honors At Florida Firefighter Fitness Games***

**John Savage**: Gold Medal in Wrestling #188

**Scott McGrail**: Four Gold Medals- 50,100,200 & 500 meter Freestyle swimming

**Mike Faulkner**: Bronze Medal- Rifle Rim fire Sharpshooter

**Walt Yasensky** *(retired)*: Gold Medal, Grand Master Bowling - All Events  
Gold Medal, Grand Master Bowling Single

**Pat Scanlon/ Roscoe Dodson** *(retired)*: Silver Medal- Grand Master  
Bowling Doubles

**Bob Jones, Ken Schrems, Walt Yasensky & Ed Stinson** *(all retired)*  
Gold Medal - Grand Master Bowling Team

*New Babies, Kids, Moms & Dads*



L-R: Mom Shawne, baby Kaden, son Brandon, daughter Halee and Daddy Jeff Patterson

***More New Babies!*** *(no photos available)*

Congratulations to Chief Peppe and his wife with new Baby **Girl**, Joelle Tristan. Joelle was born on August 22, 2004, at 4:59 AM, weighing 8 lb 1 oz and 22 inches.

Proud Parents to Baby **Girl**, Haley, are Anthony and Sarah Gomillion. Haley was born on Sat. July 17, 2004 at 6:08 AM.

Congratulations to Chris and Mary Vaughan on their new **daughter**, Alice Elizabeth, born Wednesday, April 14, 2004 at 8:00 AM weighing 7 pounds 4 ounces, 20  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches.

## **"The Odyssey for Madeline"...** *by Steve Colbert*



**I decided to just tell you our story...** My wife Jeannine and I have been in the process of adopting for more than two years. In fact, my fingerprinting for the adoption was done two days before Dolphin Cove. We decided to adopt from Thailand. During this process, we became pre-identified with our daughter. This was in November of 2002. We received our final, **'come and get her' notice at the end of June 2004.** We had about three weeks to make all of our arrangements for air travel, hotel accommodations, etc. Luckily,

we were given the name of an excellent travel agent, and our facilitator in Thailand was able to make us some superb reservations. We left to bring Madeline home on July 18<sup>th</sup>, and arrived in Thailand on the 20<sup>th</sup>. It took about 30 hours with layovers, and evacuating the terminal at LAX when a security breach occurred (a 3-hour, 3:00 AM unpleasant experience). The actual air flight was great, and we were ready to go when we arrived in Bangkok.

Bangkok is a unique and unusual city. It is huge, and has a population of around 8 million people. There are commercial businesses and multi-story hi-rises everywhere, interspersed by beautiful and colorful Buddhist temples. One thing I was sure of right away was that I would never think about driving in Bangkok. There are about 20 times the cars we have here, and almost as many motorcycles weaving between and around the cars. It was amazing, and a little scary. Our hotel, the Asia Hotel Bangkok, was a 4 or 5 star hotel. It had many great restaurants in the building, and was connected by a walkway to a SkyTrain station. The SkyTrain is an elevated mass transit train. We also met our facilitator Lisa here. She was wonderful. She helped us completely through the adoption proceedings, and we would have had an incredibly hard time without her help.

On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, we met with Lisa, and Nuanthip, the social worker from the adoption center. We proceeded to the orphanage and met the orphanage director and her staff. We started out **to do a tour of the orphanage, and heard a 'look who's here'. And walking up the walkway was our daughter, Madeline.** It took her about a minute, and then she was reaching for Jeannine to hold her. We never expected her to take to us so quickly. There was not a dry eye in the house (including her Daddy's). **And she has been with us ever since. She is beautiful, and I'm not just saying that because she's my daughter. She has a great personality and is always smiling and**

laughing. She does not speak any English. When we first got her, she spoke only a few words, all in Thai. Now she is saying what we think are complete sentences, but also all in Thai.

We had six days to get to know Madeline and bond with her, and then on July 28<sup>th</sup>, we proceeded to our meeting with the adoption board. In Thailand, they have an adoption board that meets with the prospective families. They ask questions and look to see how the children are bonding with the parents. They asked us a lot of questions. They seemed real pleased with what they heard, and thought Madeline was doing wonderful. They were truly happy for her and



us. Surviving the adoption board meeting, we next set our sites on the US Immigration part of our trip. This would turn out to be the most stressful part of our whole trip. The board meeting was on Wednesday, and we were leaving **on Monday. To get Madeline's Visa, we had to first have an** interview at the US Immigration office, and then go across the street to the US Embassy, and submit more paperwork, have another interview, and then come back and get her Visa. At the immigration office, we (and 2 other US families that were also adopting) were told that all the officers were at a training that day, and they would have to call us when they were able to arrange an interview. As Friday was a holiday in Thailand, and the offices were closed, we knew that this was not good. Luckily, one of the new fathers works fairly high up in the government, and was able to get all 3 of our families an interview that day. What a relief.

The next day, Thursday, we went to the U.S. Embassy to get our final interview, and later that day, we got her VI SA. We left Thailand on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, and arrived in Los Angeles 3 hours later on the **same day (isn't the date line wonderful)**. As soon as she landed on US soil, she automatically became a US citizen. We left LA later that night, and arrived back in Tampa on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. She did way beyond our expectations on the trip back. She made the whole journey of 31 hours without a single complaint, and seemed to love the airplane and the flight.

We have seen a remarkable difference in her from the first day we met. She exhibited some institutional behavior at first, but that has completely gone. She was very non-verbal at first, but now is very verbal. She is starting to say a few words in English, like 'eat' and 'night-night'. **And her personality seems to get more vibrant with every day. We love** parenthood, and even though this adoption process was very long, we would not have given it up for the world. She was worth every bit of the wait and more.



## **Retirements & Promotions – Congratulations!**

### **Retirements:**

Art Brown	1987 - 2004
Bill Gillette	1979 - 2004
Jim Hagedorn	1978 - 2004
Rowland Herald	1979 - 2004
Garry Wigington	1973 - 2004

### **Promotions:**

Jevon Graham                      Promoted to Fire Fighter/Driver Operator

## **CF&R's Elder - Link Program Transitions**

Jennifer Wargin has recently graciously volunteered to take over the duties of department liaison for the Elder - Link Program. (Please forward all referrals, requests for forms, or information to Jen on "C" shift.)

For those new folks who do not know what the Elder-Links program is, Dave Daiker (Retired) left this information so we could pass it on. The Elder – Links program is one avenue that enables our paramedics/firefighters to refer elderly citizens in need of assistance to County-wide services that can provide that help. This includes personal care, homemaking, home delivered meals and other special needs services.

This referral is made through the *Area Agency on Aging* via the fire department liaison. Once notified, the county agency will send out an Elderly Services Specialist to evaluate and advise the client of community resources available to them. Services needed are provided free of charge, depending on the income of the client.

Since Dave started this program in 1997, we have helped hundreds of our elderly citizens by providing a means of keeping these seniors in their homes rather than placing them in nursing homes facilities. This has also, in many cases, eliminated their need to repeatedly call 911 for EMS assistance for minor problems.

Thanks for your help in making this program work!

## *Fire Station #51 Grand Opening*

On August 25, 2004, Station #51 held its official Grand Opening. It was a long, hard road that required many hours of planning and coordination at all levels of our department, the City of Clearwater management, residents and other city departments. Thank you to all who were involved in this very noble effort. This station has already begun to demonstrate its value. On the first day E51 responded to 10 calls. Since Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup>, **you've shaved northwest response time by nearly a minute.** Congratulations!



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