

Fire Hydrants 'Pinpointed'



Fire Chief Ellsworth Smith, who started his 31st year with the Salem department Thursday, studies his office map locating Salem fire hydrants and water mains. Smith just finished a survey of the city's 576 fire hydrants, and is preparing a new list for each station. (Statesman Photo)

Chief Starts 31st Year With Fire Department

By VINITA HOWARD
Staff Writer, The Statesman

Fire Chief Ellsworth L. Smith started his 31st year with the Salem fire department Thursday and, although his 30 years' service makes him eligible for retirement, he plans to stay on the job.

Smith, who became head of the Salem department in 1952, was persuaded to join the department in 1925 when he was 18 years old and just out of high school. He was hired by the then chief, Harry F. Hutton, who told him, Smith recalls, "I don't know how long you'll stay, but you might as well give it a try."

At that time, Salem's entire department consisted of 24 men and five pieces of equipment, all stationed at the central station on Chemeketa street. Today, 83 men, nine pieces of equipment in service, two in reserve, and four district stations comprise the city's fire-fighting network.

Change in Technique

But Smith says the biggest changes he has noted during the years is not in equipment as much as in technique of attacking a blaze. In the old days, he said, a fireman didn't do much more than turn the hose on the blaze.

"New tools, chemicals, and methods of applying water have revolutionized the work, especially since the war," Smith commented. One development he singled out is placement of water in the form of fog, created by high pressure, which provides better heat-absorption.

"Another change, Smith noted smilingly, is aimed at eliminating the old picture of the "fireman with his axe chopping everything in sight." Old-time firemen probably wouldn't believe it, he said, but we now carry sponges, mops, brooms and vacuum sweepers to clean-up after a fire.

"It's an important part of building good public relations," Smith said.

"And, as if to prove it, a local resident whose home had been struck by a minor blaze, arrived just then to thank Smith for the clean-up work the department did after the fire was out.

"The Salem department answered 430 alarms last year, and Smith noted happily that alarms have been reduced in recent years, despite the fact that Salem's growth makes the potential greater. This he attributes, in part, to increased fire prevention education, and to the department's inspection service which was started in 1950.

"Four other members of the Salem department have records of 30 years or more in the department. They are: Robert Miller, a battalion chief who has been in the department 37 years; Walter Edwards, a captain with 33 years service; William Hunt, battalion chief, and Ray McCauley, both with 32 year service records.

Grange Favors Sales Tax for School Support

ROSEBURG (AP) — The Melrose Grange here passed a resolution Wednesday night favoring enactment of a state retail sales tax, with receipts earmarked for school support.

The action is contrary to the position of the State Grange, which has been a leader in campaigns which have defeated sales tax proposals in five Oregon elections. The executive committee of the state group recently reaffirmed that position.

The Melrose resolution criticized the executive committee, saying it "is not consistent in its public announced stand on the proposed sales tax for the state of Oregon."

Copies of the resolution were sent to other Douglas County Grange bodies, and the Pomona (County) Grange will be asked to approve a sales tax at its meeting in Roseburg Jan. 29.

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FPC Rejects Private Dams Dismissal Plea

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Power Commission (F-P-C) turned aside Thursday a move to reject plans for three private power dams in the Hells Canyon of the Snake River, where a federal project has been proposed.

It refused to dismiss applications of the Idaho Power Co., as requested by public power groups advocating the 400-million-dollar federal Hells Canyon project in the deepest river gorge on the continent, along the Idaho-Oregon border.

The dismissal motion "may be considered later," FPC said, but not until after all briefs in the controversial case have been filed and an examiner's decision has been given.

The National Hells Canyon Assn. asked last month that the FPC: Either dismiss Idaho Power's applications to license its proposed 133-million-dollar series of dams, or strike substantial portions of briefs submitted by the company and by the FPC legal staff.

Briefs of the company and FPC Counsel John C. Mason, recommending construction of the three dams, "make a mockery" of the case, the Association said.

Idaho Power replied that the motion was "sham and frivolous. . . a mere repetition of motions previously made and denied," and declared the Association "again seeks to confuse the issue."

Mason said in his reply "the inadequacies and blunders in the motion are so numerous as to make it fall of its own utter lack of substance."

The FPC said the dismissal motion "requests the Commission to render a final decision in these proceedings" and "it is apparent the Commission would have to consider a substantial portion of the record in order to determine whether the motion is sufficient to justify such a decision."

Under the circumstances, FPC said, "it does not appear a final decision would be warranted at this time."

The FPC deferred action "until such time as the record is certified to the Commission for final action." This probably will be in several months.

Examiner William J. Costello hopes to write his decision in the spring, possibly during April. The case then will be taken to the Commission itself and possibly to court later.

PEDESTRIAN DIES

PORTLAND (AP) — A. B. Middlekauff, 93, died in a hospital Thursday, raising Portland's 1954 traffic fatality toll to 41. He was injured Dec. 20 when hit by a car in front of his home.

Plane Crash Victim Files Damage Suit

ROSEBURG (AP) — A damage suit has been filed in circuit court here by the lone survivor of a plane crash in which three persons died southeast of Eugene last May.

Wallace Asker, identified as being known also as Olaf Larson, asks \$50,000 general and \$6,000 special damages. He says he was totally disabled and alleges that the pilot, Orvall C. Mattoon, was grossly negligent in choosing the flight route.

Mattoon and Bernarr and Joy Asker, brother and sister-in-law of the plaintiff, were killed. The damages are sought from Sylvia Mattoon, administratrix of the pilot's estate.

The plane was being flown from Sutherlin to Lakeview when it crashed May 9 in the woods near Highway 58 in the Willamette Pass area.

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