

Medford Ambulance May Discontinue

Delinquent Bills May Force Service To Area Taxpayers

By BOB VROMAN

Mail Tribune Staff Writer

A lot of people, who readily pay cash for groceries, hardware, clothing and entertainment, and who are generally considered to be "good citizens," are going to force the Medford Ambulance service out of business unless they pay their bills.

This fact was made known recently by Mr. and Mrs. Dayle Waltermire, owners of the Medford Ambulance service, who claim that nearly 75 per cent of their accounts are delinquent.

Many bills owed to the firm go as far back as two years, a lot of them are a year old and a great number of them are from six to eight months overdue.

Like 'Pulling Teeth'

Due to some quirk in human nature, it is like "pulling teeth" to get these otherwise "upright" citizens to pay for a ride in an ambulance, they declare.

The reasons appear to be varied, the Waltermires say.

Some simply ignore the bills sent them and others refuse to pay on the basis that the charge is exorbitant. They will say "I could have taken a taxi for a dollar!" They more than likely feel that the ambulance service has taken advantage of them when they were ill or injured, and that they didn't have a chance to "dicker" about the price beforehand. Or possibly it is the fact that they have numerous big bills in connection with their illness so they look upon the small ambulance charge as unimportant.

What many people don't understand is that the expense of running an ambulance amounts to a great deal more than the cost of the gas and oil.

In the first place, the vehicles, complete with stretchers, first aid equipment and accessories, cost about \$6,000. Medford Ambulance service has two for efficient operation. There are the usual maintenance costs on the vehicles, an exceedingly high insurance premium, laundry bills, salaries for helpers and a good-sized telephone bill every month.

Unlike other firms, which do a more or less predictable amount of business each day, an ambulance may sit idle for several days, bringing in no revenue, yet expenses keep building up. Business cannot be increased by advertising or any other means — an ambulance owner takes what comes, having to see people in need of his services, yet hoping there will be enough income for him and his family to get by on.

Waltermire and his wife have been operating the Medford Ambulance service from their home at 1109 West Main st. since 1953. They have made a living and have had the satisfaction of knowing that they have saved a good many of the lives of Rogue valley residents, but with the number of delinquent accounts on their books increasing every day, they say they will have to give up the business within a month.

Always 'Charity' Cases

There are always a number of "charity" cases that an ambulance operator cannot refuse, according to Waltermire, but when the percentage of these non-paying customers becomes too high the firm will lose money. Waltermire has never refused a call, even though he sometimes knew he would never get paid for it.

The charge made by the Medford Ambulance service is a flat rate of \$10, plus 75 cents per mile, which is just about standard throughout the county.

The Waltermires would like to continue to operate and this area supplies enough "customers" to do so if a higher percentage would pay their bills. Even if they sold their business, their problem would still probably exist.

In some cities ambulances are operated by hospitals, cab companies, funeral homes, wrecking concerns, or by the city's fire or police department. But when this service is carried out as a "sideline" it is a nuisance, and the ambulance service suffers because their personnel are not always available when they are needed. For these agencies to lose money on the service is not uncommon. Very few ambulance services make any money, and for that reason it is difficult to find someone to take over such a business.

City-Owned Service
The city-owned ambulance service in Bend recently turned over the operation to the hospital there because it was costing the city too much. A privately-owned service in Klamath Falls went "broke" recently as did one in Los Angeles.

The problem here is not unique, but it still has to be solved. According to city manager Bob Duff an ambulance



EXPENSES HIGH—The reason an ambulance service cannot charge "taxicab" rates is that their operating expenses are so much greater. Clean linen is put on the Medford Ambulance service stretchers every time they are used. Above, owner Dayle Waltermire, center, and two of his helpers, Perry M. Johnson, left, and James Rolls, get an ambulance ready for the next call. Helpers are

paid at the rate of \$2 per trip. Among other expenses is an extremely high insurance rate on the vehicles. Waltermire figures that every time the phone rings he is immediately out \$8, and this high operating cost, along with the fact that few people are willing to pay for the service, may put the company out of business within the next 30 days.

service must be maintained in Medford, no matter who runs it. Medford Ambulance service has served the area well during the time it has been in operation, Duff said, and the city will do everything it can to see that they stay in business. An inquiry was sent recently to the League of Oregon Cities by Duff to find out what other towns in Oregon have done about the problem.

A recent news item in the Astorian Budget states that the city of Astoria was forced to take over the ambulance service there after a cab company refused to continue operations. The company cleared about \$700 for a year's work.

Question Presented
The question is, will Medford have a municipal ambulance service, operated by the police or fire department, at the taxpayer's expense, or will another concern, like a cab company or one of the hospitals step in? Whoever operates it stands a chance of losing money unless people are willing to pay for the use of it.

According to Waltermire one cannot expect an injured man to reach in his pocket and dig up the fare when he is taken to the hospital. The only thing to do is to send him a bill and hope that he will pay when he is feeling better. Few hospital plans will cover the cost of the ambulance.

The Waltermires have tried taking their unpaid bills to small claims court, but since court costs have to be paid in advance and the chances of getting the money back are fairly slim they abandoned the idea. At present, they have a man calling on the people that owe them money, hoping to get enough money in to pay their own bills.

Running an ambulance is no cinch. The driver and his helper have to be on call 24 hours a day. The sometimes morbid job of handling people with broken bones or severe wounds, a lot of times in a race with death, doesn't make it the most attractive job in the world. Yet it has to be done.

The problem, so far unanswered, is how, and by whom?

Delinquency Cases Reported by Police

A report of juvenile delinquency involving two 15-year-old boys who operated a tractor without the owner's permission in the McKee bridge area Thursday is being investigated by state police and the juvenile department, it was reported yesterday.

Police officers said the two, accompanied by a 16-year-old who remained in their car, were found operating a tractor owned by David B. Winningham, Applegate, Winningham and another resident held the three until state police arrived on the scene, it was said, and the trio was released shortly after.

Two rifles were in their car, according to police. Another case involving what was believed to be juveniles is under investigation by Medford police, who reported that \$1,000 damage was caused a drag line owned by A. L. Nash, 5075 South Pacific highway.

Juveniles were believed to have operated the equipment on Bear Creek sometime last week causing damage to the boom and bucket, police said.

ROONEY, MATE SEPARATE

Hollywood—Actor Mickey Rooney, who called it quits with three previous wives, decided Friday to call it "maybe" with his fourth. Rooney and the former Elaine Mahnen Davis have agreed on a trial separation. —



AMBULANCE EQUIPMENT—One of the few resuscitators in this area is owned by the Medford Ambulance service to treat accident victims until they can be taken to a doctor. Above, Dayle Waltermire loads the unit, which cost more than \$500, into one of the two ambulances operated by the company. The ambulances themselves cost about \$6,000 each, complete with stretchers, other first aid equipment and accessories. The Medford Ambulance service is having a difficult time making ends meet, since few of their customers ever pay their bills.



GOES OVER BOOKS—Getting people to pay for the services of an ambulance is a serious problem in many communities in the United States, and Carol Waltermire, who with her husband, Dayle, owns Medford Ambulance service, spends a lot of time each month sending statements that will never be paid. Above, Carol goes over the company's books. Out of the pile of bills on the desk at right, which represents the calls they have made this year, only about 25 per cent have been paid.

Brain of Alcatraz Confesses Robberies

Chicago—Authorities disclosed Saturday that Cecil Wright, "The Brain of Alcatraz," has confessed to a series of post office burglaries in southern Illinois.

Jerome Williamson, chief postal inspector, said Wright confessed to seven break-ins which brought him \$123.13. In four of the burglaries, the man who talked himself out of Alcatraz netted nothing.

Wright, a graying, sharp-eyed, lantern-faced man, started his prison record with a nine-year sentence at Stateville Penitentiary on robbery charges. Later paroled, he was sent to Alcatraz for 15 years on postal robbery charges.

While on "The Rock," Wright poured over legal texts, became an expert on law, and finally

won his freedom on a technicality after petitioning 13 times. His accomplice won him the name, "The Brain of Alcatraz."

Two-Year-Old Struck By Vehicle in CP

Central Point—Kathleen Lewellen, 2-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Lewellen staying at the Ross Motel, 34 North Pacific Highway, Central Point, suffered minor injuries when struck by a car driven by Davis Reno Offett, owner of the motel, Saturday, according to Central Point police.

She was taken to Rogue Valley hospital where she was held Saturday night for examination and x-rays. According to police, the Lewellen girl ran into the side of Davis' car as he was slowly driving past a group of children playing on the motel grounds.

Mountain Lakes Wild Area Is One of 77 Sections Preserved as Wilderness

Isolated Group of Mountains Located In National Forest

By JIM FISHER

Forty miles due east of Medford lie 36 square miles of alpine forests and lakes without a single road, resort, or sign of logging to mar the natural beauty.

This is the Mountain Lakes Wild Area of the Rogue River National forest, officially listed as being 23,071 acres of the beautiful and rugged Cascade country.

This area is one of 77 similar areas ranging in size from several thousands acres to more than 1,000,000 acres. Those over 100,000 acres are called wilderness areas. The areas less than 100,000 acres are designated wild areas. All of these areas have been established by the U.S. forest service to preserve portions of our remaining wilderness country for future generations.

Isolated Mountain Group

The Mountain Lakes Wild Area is located within an isolated group of mountains bounded on the west by Lake of the Woods, on the east by Upper Klamath lake, and on the north and south by forest roads. The highest point within the area is Aspen butte with an elevation of 8,209 feet. More than 80 per cent of the area is between 6,000 and 7,000 feet in elevation.

Actually, there are a few signs of civilization within the area. The forest service has constructed trails to aid in fire protection. These trails lead hikers to the more than 30 lakes, some of which are stocked with eastern brook and rainbow trout. A primitive shelter for campers is located at the 70-acre Lake Harriette, largest of the mountain lakes.

Five Possible Routes

There are five possible routes of travel into the Wild Area. The choice of trail would depend upon the length of time one would wish to spend hiking and the destination within the area.

The Mountain Lakes Wild Area trail leaves the Lake of the Woods Recreation area near the Klamath Falls junction. This trail travels over 10 miles before reaching Lake Harriette, geographical center of the Wild Area and favorite camping spot for most hikers. The climb is gradual, but steady, until Whiteface Peak is reached. Because of the length of this trail, it is used mainly by horseback riders from Lake of the Woods.

On the top of Whiteface peak, a few hundred yards from the trail, are the remains of several rock piles. Shale had been piled high to serve as stands for signal fires between the Indians of the Klamath basin and Indians of the Rogue River valley.

Trail Drops Suddenly

From the top of Whiteface peak, the trail drops suddenly down through a series of switchbacks before reaching the alpine forests again. The trail leads on through the forests before passing between the twin lakes of Meh and Zeb. The Mountain Lakes Wild Area trail joins with the Varney creek trail near Lake Como, which at 40 acres is the second largest lake of the area.

The Varney creek trail has its beginning five miles south of Pelican guard station. This is the most popular trail into the area since it is only five miles to Lake Harriette over an easy route. Once Lake Como is reached, it is only a mile over a small ridge to Lake Harriette.

Two trails enter the area from the east and they are almost identical in nature. The Moss creek trail leads directly to Lake Harriette and the South Pass lake trail leads to South Pass lake and Paragon lake. The trails leave a forest road within a mile of each other and are steep. The country is brushy until you reach the top of your climb and enter the Wild Area. Clover Trail

The last trail that enters the Mountain Lakes Wild Area is the Clover trail which begins six miles southeast of Lake of the Woods. It is only two miles to Clover lake and a junction that would lead you either north to the Mountain lakes trail or east over Aspen butte to the South Pass lake trail. Near Amberg pass, a trail leads to the top of Aspen butte which once served as an emergency fire lookout for the forest service.

Many of the smaller lakes are not located along the trails and are difficult to find. Not all of these lakes are stocked with



MOUNT HARRIMAN—Rising in the background of Lake Harriette, above, is Mount Harriman, in the Mountain Lakes Wild Area

of the Rogue River National forest. Hiker made a 10-mile walk over trail to reach the scenic spot.



LAKE HARRIETTE—Largest of the lakes in the Mountain Lakes Wild Area of the Rogue River National Forest is Lake Harriette, above. A primitive area for campers is located near the water. Shale rock slides slope down to the shores.



TO MOUNTAIN LAKES AREA—Back pack travel indicated above is the most common method of travel into the Mountain Lakes area of the Rogue River National Forest. Some, however, take horses into the 23,071 acres of rugged Cascade country.

Area is often quite difficult. Pelican butte lookout, located eight miles north of the area, can only see a few of the higher peaks. With at least two lightning storms each summer and fires also being started by fishermen and campers, the detection of these fires becomes a matter of airplane patrol and ground patrol. When fires are sighted within the area, smoke-

Coast Guard Says Tug Presumed Lost

San Francisco—A Coast Guard spokesman said Saturday that the tugboat Companion out of Astoria, Ore., missing since July 19 when it left here for Portland, must be presumed lost.

The 45-foot craft carried two men, the master, Fred Cone, Portland, and an unidentified seaman.

The spokesman said Coast Guard and Air Force planes and ships had searched the California, Oregon and Washington coasts for several days after the Companion's disappearance. No trace of wreckage was found.

The tug was owned by W. B. Martinson, Portland. About five weeks before the Companion left here, it started to tow another tug, the Bulldog, to Portland. The Bulldog sank outside the Golden Gate.

Edmonds Man Killed in Speeding Boat Mishap

Wrangell, Alaska—Fred Christensen, 49, Edmonds, Wash., was killed Thursday when a rifle accidentally discharged in a speeding boat near here.

Mrs. Christensen, who was riding in the back of the boat with her husband, was wounded in the hand. Christensen's son, Leroy, said the rifle was lying in the boat's prow pointing back towards his parents when the rocking of the craft apparently discharged it.

Washington Extends Lounge Closing Hours

Olympia—The Washington State Liquor Control board Friday extended closing hours for taverns, cocktail lounges and clubs to 2 a.m. on weekdays despite strong opposition of temperance groups.

The new hours went into effect Friday night.

jumpers are usually dispatched from Cave Junction and fire crews are sent from Lake of the Woods to assist them.

Wildlife is abundant in the area during the summer. Deer, bear, grouse, and marmots make their home here. Occasionally, a duck will stop by at one of the larger lakes. The short summer and the lack of food in this alpine country keeps the animals out of the area the greater part of the year.

Names of Landmarks

The names of the lakes and other landmarks within the area have a beauty of their own. Besides those already mentioned, there is Coyote lake, Greylock mountain, Echo lake, Topographer's peak, Mystic crag, Avalanche lake, High knob, and Sunset rock.

For the ambitious fisherman or hiker who doesn't mind having to walk to his fishing spot or camping place, the Mountain Lakes Wild Area offers an unspoiled locale for relaxation. It is best to plan on staying at least one full day in the area and better if you stay longer.

The fishing changes from day to day and once you have walked five or 10 miles to enjoy outdoor living, you will want to get your full share of it.