

RESCUE 1

FOUNDATION

1984-86

SCRAPBOOK

"1984-1986 Rescue 1 Foundation Scrapbook," is a detailed historical scrapbook documenting the activities, achievements, and notable events of the Rescue One Foundation and the Moraga Fire Protection District from 1984 to 1986. Here is a summary of its key contents:

1. Community Leadership and Tribute

- **Marion Devin**, a community leader and founder of the Rescue One Foundation, is memorialized. She was pivotal in organizing paramedic services in Moraga and supporting local civic causes.
 - The scrapbook highlights her efforts in community health and emergency preparedness, especially through her involvement with the Rescue One Foundation.
-

2. Rescue One Foundation Activities

- The **Rescue One Foundation**, a nonprofit supporting the Moraga Fire District, facilitated major purchases of emergency medical equipment like the **Lifepak 5 heart monitor/defibrillator**, funded by community donations.
 - From 1979 to 1986, over \$21,000 was raised and used to support paramedic services, CPR training, and equipment acquisition.
-

3. Community Events and Education

- The Foundation participated in public events such as **Fiesta de Moraga**, offering health services like free blood pressure screenings and promoting programs like **Medic-Alert** and the **Vial of Life**.
 - CPR classes were promoted and partially funded by the Foundation, aiming to equip residents with lifesaving skills.
-

4. Fire District Developments

- Chief **Don Skinner** retired in 1986 after 18 years of service and was honored by the community in a large public event.
- **Ed Lucas** was appointed the new fire chief. He had served the district since 1959 and was actively involved in fire prevention and safety initiatives.

5. Fire Safety and Prevention Campaigns

- Emphasis was placed on fire hazard reduction, including guidelines for homeowners to plant fire-resistant ground cover and maintain defensible space.
- The fire district advocated for replacing flammable shake roofs and promoted ordinances for safer housing developments.

6. Historical Perspectives

- The scrapbook includes reflections on the transition from a volunteer-based fire service to a professional, full-time operation.
- It discusses the early days of Moraga's fire services and milestones in paramedic and emergency response capabilities.

7. Public Communications and Outreach

- Numerous press releases, public letters, and articles document the Foundation's work, community partnerships, and safety education efforts.
- The scrapbook includes photographs, newsletters, and news clippings that illustrate community engagement and the evolution of emergency services in Moraga.

1984

- **Rescue One Foundation leadership (1984-85):**
 - President: Jeanne Kirsch
 - Vice President: Carol Porterfield
 - Secretary: Ellie Kositch
 - Treasurer: Gordon Nathan
 - **Community Donations & Equipment Purchases:**
 - Community donations fund a significant number of equipment purchases for paramedics, including CPR mannequins and training aids.
 - Lifepak 5 heart monitor-defibrillator is highlighted as a top priority for future fundraising.
-

1985

- **Leadership Transition:**
 - President: Carol Porterfield
 - Vice President & Secretary: Ellie Kositch
 - Treasurer: Julie Fisher
 - New Director: Ellen Long
- **Fiesta de Moraga (May):**
 - Rescue One Foundation participates with a booth and a vintage fire truck in the parade.
 - Promotes Medic-Alert, Vial of Life, and offers free blood pressure screenings.
- **Community Contributions:**
 - Lifepak 5 purchased with funds from individuals and organizations, including neighborhood associations and a local golf group.
 - Notable donations include memorial contributions, gifts of \$10–\$500 from residents, and more than \$1,000 from community groups.



1986

- **March 10:** Death of Marion Devin, community leader and Rescue One Foundation founder.
- **March 28:** Chief Don Skinner retires after 18 years as Fire Chief of the Moraga Fire District.
 - Retirement celebration attended by 250 community members.
 - Skinner honored for expanding paramedic services and modernizing the district.
- **April:**
 - **Ed Lucas** appointed new Fire Chief.
 - Lucas had served since 1959 and was Assistant Chief since 1972.
- **April 7–13:** “Moraga Beautiful Week” features town beautification and fire hazard reduction efforts.
- **October 11:** Fire District hosts Open House and Fire Prevention Week activities.
 - Events include tours, CPR demonstrations, and safety education for families and children.
- **CPR Training Campaign:**
 - Rescue One sponsors CPR classes through the Fire District.
 - Recordi-Anne mannequins and training videos purchased and refurbished.

Marion Devin funeral services set Saturday

Funeral services for Orinda - Moraga community leader Marion Devin will be held at the Orinda Community Church Saturday, March 17 at 5 p.m.

Mrs. Devin, 64, died Saturday, March 10 in Walnut Creek following a long illness. She and her late husband, Frederic Ray Devin moved to Orinda in 1941, and to Moraga in 1948. Devin Drive is named after them.

Mr. Devin, who died in January, 1974, was president of the Moraga Fire Commission for eight years and the addition to the main fire station was dedicated to him in February. Although seriously ill at the time, Mrs. Devin attended the Moraga Liaison Committee's dedication ceremony and unveiled the plaque in her husband's honor.

Mrs. Devin was a native of Colusa in the Sacramento Valley and attended school there and at Santa Cruz.

When she graduated from Stanford in 1935, she was given a trip around the world as a graduation gift—a trip she never completed. As aboard ship, she met Mr. Devin's grandmother who introduced her to her grandson when they docked in Japan.

He was an importer in his family's business and they had a whirlwind courtship ending with his proposal in the Philippines.

After their marriage, they returned to Japan where they lived until 1941 when war broke out, and they came back to the Bay Area.

Mrs. Devin was one of the founders of the Orinda Nursery School, and re-

turned to the Orinda Community Center Park dedication in 1976 to speak as one of the pioneers of the area.

She was one of the first women members of the Commonwealth Club, when integration was mandated. An ardent supporter of swimming, she was an organizer of the Oak Springs swim club.

Other activities included the Mt. Diablo Assistance League, United Bay Area Crusade, Planned Parenthood, Orinda Community Church, Moraga Country Club board.

For a short time, she and Thelma Rowley had a dress shop at the Rheem Shopping Center.

One of Mrs. Devin's favorite activities, after her eldest daughter moved to Oregon, was to participate in the National Park Service search and rescue operation atop Mount Hood for two weeks every summer.

She was founder and organizer of the Rescue One Foundation, a non-profit corporation to back the Moraga Fire District paramedic program.

Contributions in her memory may be made to Rescue One Foundation, Moraga Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga.

Survivors include: three daughters, Mary Lou Fitzgerald, Portland; Heidi Vinsonhaler, Moraga; Priscilla Devin, Eureka; sons-in-law Ron Fitzgerald, Loyd Vinsonhaler, Ross Clark; grandchildren, Elizabeth, Rebecca, Tony and Sandy Fitzgerald and Devin Mack; sister, Ruth Kramer of Los Angeles; and many cousins, nieces and nephews.



Captain paramedic Chris Klein, acting fire chief John Cooper, secretary Ellie Kositch, president Jeanne Kirsch, vice president Carol Porterfield. Not pictured: treasurer Gordon Nathan.

Rescue One backs up firefighters

"Many thanks are due the numerous Moraga residents who have so generously donated funds to our successful paramedic service," said Jeanne Kirsch, newly elected president of the Rescue One Foundation. "All Moraga residents have benefited from the purchase of additional equipment which renders our rescue service the finest in Northern California."

Other new foundation officers include: Carol Porterfield, vice president; Gordon Nathan, treasurer; and Ellie Kositch, secretary.

This month marked the seventh anniversary of the highly successful

paramedic program which has grown from three paramedics in 1977 to the current 10.

The Rescue Foundation will have a booth in this year's Fiesta de Moraga on May 26 and 27. Information concerning Medic-

Alert and Vial of Life will be available. Paramedics will also hold a free blood pressure screening.

Other directors of the Rescue One Foundation include Jerry Meyer, Glen Furlow, Linda Borrelli, Bill Diffenderfer and Julie Fisher.

Weather

5-23-84
"Sun"

Warmer



Sun photo/David Allen

Carol Porterfield, Assistant Chief John Cooper, Chief Don Skinner and Jeanne Kirsch display Lifepak 5.

The beat goes on: Moraga's Rescue One

By JEANNE KIRSCH
Sun correspondent

An \$8,000 heart monitor-defibrillator has been purchased by Moraga's Rescue One Foundation, a non-profit citizen support group for the Paramedic Program. It was presented to the Moraga Fire Department as a gift to all citizens in the Moraga Fire District.

Contributions by people who have been helped by Moraga's rescue team made the purchase of the Lifepak 5 possible, according to last year's Treasurer Gordon Nathan. Since the first Rescue Unit went into service in 1971, over 6,000 calls for medical aid have been answered by the Moraga Fire District Paramedic/Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technician/Firefighters.

Letters accompanying donations from \$10 to \$500 by individuals, and to over \$1,000 by organizations, all express "appreciation for help from the well-trained, competent and caring men on the Paramedic Team."

"This is what citizen contributions means to the community," Moraga Fire Chief Don Skinner said. "Everyone who has donated over the years can be proud of being a part of the purchase of this life-saving machine."

The state-of-the-art Lifepak 5 unit has the capability of saving lives of heart attack victims and in any "Code-Blue" situation when there is no heart beat and no breathing. It will be carried in Rescue One, Moraga Fire District's newest ambulance.

With dual video functions, the unit can monitor the heart on a

screen, and concurrently tape a permanent record on a strip. When the ambulance is enroute to the emergency room, two-way radio communication permits hospital doctors to evaluate the patient's condition.

As Moraga Paramedics' priority purchase, Lifepak 5 is 25 percent lighter than the 1977 Amb Pack monitor-defibrillator it is replacing. It is compatible with hospital emergency room equipment, and its cardioscope can be removed for transportation.

Since its organization in 1979, Rescue One Foundation has spent over \$21,000 in citizens contributions for vital medical equipment when conventional funding is unavailable. Previous purchases include: a \$6,000 heart monitor/defibrillator in 1980, Recorda-Anne and Resusci-Baby for C.P.R. classes, and films and video equipment for training personnel.

Some of the donations which have made these purchases possible have come from the Moraga Fire Department staff, Moraga Fire Commissioners, and Rescue One Foundation directors. One \$10 check came with a letter from a six-year-old girl after a bicycle accident. A \$100 check was donated by a couple as a living memorial to their father who had required help from the Rescue Team three times in six months, while a resident who had recently been transported to a hospital with critical injuries sent a \$500 donation.

Enough cash and checks to fill a firefighter's large red hat are donated each Christmas by the Lazy Dai-

sy Golf Group and Moraga Women's Golf Association. And each year the Miramonte Homeowners Association also play "Santa" by making sizable contributions to the foundation. The Moraga Service League donated the proceeds from their "Disco" fund-raiser, but most of the checks are from individuals in amounts of \$10, \$15 or \$25.

"Good equipment is vital to the success of our Paramedic Program," said Assistant Chief John Cooper, officer-in-charge of the Moraga Fire Department medical emergency program. "The continuing support of the Rescue One Foundation helps us achieve our goal to provide the highest quality emergency medical care to the community."

Rescue One Foundation Directors Linda Borrelli, Bill Diffenderfer, Jerry Meyer, Glen Furlow and Julie Fisher were led in 1984-85 by President Jeanne Kirsch, Vice President Carol Porterfield, Secretary Ellie Kositch, and Treasurer Gordon Nathan.

Incoming officers for 1985-86 are President Carol Porterfield, Vice President and Secretary Ellie Kositch, and Treasurer Julie Fisher. The new director replacing retiring Glen Furlow is Ellen Long.

Fiesta - bright parade cold Memorial weekend



Rescue One Foundation board members rode in a vintage hook-and-ladder fire truck in spirited parade

The cold weather in Moraga Valley did not deter the Moraga Service League's spirited Fiesta de Moraga parade Saturday morning, marching along Moraga Road from shopping center to shopping center.

There were 31 entries including community service groups, town officials, cheerleaders, bands, horses, vintage cars, and Boy Scout Troop 212's "Pooper Scoopers."

MSL's Allyn Morton was parade chairperson, and her husband Wright Morton was announcer. Pat Warren was general chair of the two-day Fiesta featuring a Dunk It booth, food and game concessions, exhibits, demonstrations and concerts.

Among the marchers were: Moraga Fire District's rescue unit, Junior Horsemen's Color Guard, Sixth Army Band, Grand Marshal Bill Combs, Brownie Troops 336 and 57, Woodsie the Owl and Smokey the Bear, the current council followed by the council emeritus.

Also, Foothill Community Church, the fire and park/rec commissions, Moraga Juniors, Hacienda Seniors, Joco the clown, LMYA, Campolindo and Televents bands, planning and safety commissions, Paso Fino horses, Chamber of Commerce.

Also, Lamoreem Gymnastics, Rescue I in vintage fire truck, Soroptimist kazoo clown band, Cub Scout Troop 505, Parks Foundation, Sue Avanzino driving a vintage SPCA truck, and the Navy Band, San Francisco.



Fire warning Co Co Sun 6/14/86

The Moraga Fire District anticipates one of the driest summers in California history and recommends that residents look to reducing the fire hazards around their homes.

Capt. Les Wandel, fire prevention coordinator, said many home-threatening fires have raged uncontrolled through grass and brush areas and that well-planted, green hillsides reduce the possibility of this happening. He added that by planting lawns and other ground covers erosion on hillsides will also be reduced.

Top fire protection choices of ground cover for irrigated hillsides include Algerian Ivy, Trailing Rosemary and Small Leafed Ice Plant, Wandel said. Pine trees and chapparal plants have proven to be highly flammable during hot summer months and are not recommended within 25 to 50 feet of any house.

Wandel said the district will be surveying all hilly areas for possible weed abatement problems and will be enforcing the weed abatement ordinance.

Moraga fire chief to retire; five apply to take post

MORAGA — Don Skinner is retiring March 28 as chief of the Moraga Fire Protection District. Five officers in the department have applied to succeed him.

The five are Assistant Chiefs John Cooper and Ed Lucas, and Capts. Chris Klein, Les Wandel and Robert Ortland. The

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors will choose Skinner's successor after receiving a recommendation from the district's board of fire commissioners.

Skinner, 60, has been chief since 1968 and receives an annual salary of \$65,016. He lives in Moraga.

His department has 24 uniformed employees and serves a 32-square-mile area that includes the town of Moraga and nearby unincorporated land. Besides firefighting, it also provides paramedic and ambulance services on a \$1.6 million annual budget.

3-20-86

Tribune



FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE

Rescue Unit in Moraga Formed

MORAGA — A first of a kind foundation to aid the community's fire department emergency medical services has been established.

The formation of the Rescue I Foundation was announced recently by Marion Devin, widow of former fire commissioner Ray Devin.

Mrs. Devin explained the Ray Devin Memorial Fund, established after Devin's death in 1974, has been dissolved. The \$2,500 in the fund was used as seed money for the new non-profit foundation.

Fire Chief Don Skinner said this is the only foundation of its kind.

"The foundation is set up to buy equipment and supplies, train paramedics for the district and improve our medical services. The money will not be used for salaries," Skinner said.

He envisions the principle use of the money to train additional paramedics which would enable the district to have two paramedics on duty at all times. Currently part-time service is available with one paramedic and one emergency medical technician on duty.

Mrs. Devin also concurs



Marion Devin, president, left, Yvette Nance, secretary-treasurer, Fire Chief Don Skinner look at Rescue I Foundation's charter.

that the money is especially needed to train paramedics. "It costs \$14,000 to train a paramedic," she said.

And, like other residents of Moraga, she thinks emergency medical service is a necessity.

"We live at the end of the line," Mrs. Devin said. She related how congested the main roads into town get at peak commute times, making it difficult to get an ambulance into the community. And, she noted there are no nearby ambulance companies.

The Moraga Fire Protec-

tion District just spent \$30,000 for an ambulance for paramedic service. In addition, the district annually spends \$150,000 for emergency services personnel and \$10,000 for supplies.

Mrs. Devin explained there is some fear that these expenses might eventually be considered a frill, especially if the Jarvis-Gann initiative passes. The Rescue I Foundation can help the district meet some of the expenses for emergency medical service, she said.

Paramedic and emer-

gency medical service care was conceived in 1971 when Devin was a fire commissioner.

That year the community, through the Moraga Service League, asked the district to man a rescue vehicle. The necessary \$10,000 for purchase of the vehicle was raised through donations by the service league and others and a matching state grant.

In 1974, residents voted to tax themselves up to an additional 25 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation for ambulance and paramedic service.

Full-time ambulance care became available in mid 1974 and 87 persons were transported to the hospital. However, residents had to wait until 1977 for paramedic service.

In 1975, there were 299 medical calls with 198 transports; 1976, 377 calls and 233 transports and in 1977, 431 calls and 213 transports.

Donations to the foundation can be sent to the main fire station, 1280 Moraga Way. The foundation officers are Mrs. Devin, president; Donald E. Anderson, vice president; Yvette Nance secretary-treasurer and Skinner, consultant.

|| dans who were retiring to their "castle in Spain"



'RESCUE ONE' LAUNCHED — When the Rescue One Foundation was announced Friday at the Moraga Liaison Committee, it had the personal endorsement of local leaders (from left); Mayor

Barry Gross; Fire Chief Don Skinner; Moraga Service League President Linda Borrelli; County Supervisor Chairman Robert Schroder.

Photo by Jane Putnam

Town salutes Moraga Fire Chief Don Skinner

Chief toasted and roasted by 250 at last week's retirement dinner

By Juanita Maloney
Correspondent

Chief Don Skinner, Ret., Moraga Fire District, was roasted and toasted by more than 250 residents and friends who attended his retirement dinner Wednesday night at St. Mary's College.

The handsome 60-year-old firefighter is the first of the young town's specialists to retire from public service and the townspeople gave him a standing ovation in appreciation of 18 years of devoted service to Moraga and a total of 32 years in fire service in Contra Costa County.

Salutes and barbs were sung by a dozen spokesmen for town, county and state dignitaries, including Contra Costa County Supervisor Nancy Fahden; Sue Phelan for State Assemblyman Bill Baker; Don Truhett from the State Fire Marshall; Gerry Meyer, chairman of the Moraga Liaison Committee; Ellie Kositch and Jean Kirsch from Rescue One Foundation; and Kathy Sullivan from Senator Nick Petris' office.

First speaker to toast the chief was former Moraga Fire Commissioner and Moraga resident Hazel McClearn who now resides in Truckee.

Chief Skinner's dedication to the game of golf as well as fire protection was touched on by several speakers including the Honorable Sam Hall, Superior Court judge, retired, who acted as master of ceremonies.

Judge Hall was joined in the banquet crowd by Chief Skinner's golfing buddies from Contra Costa Country Club.

Some of the more touching tributes came from Chief Skinner's son, Tauby, a firefighter with the county Consolidated Fire Protection District, who presented his father with a poster-sized portrait signed by all attending the banquet. The cover portrait of Skinner in a fire hat was done by Orinda artist Joe Cleary; and the presentation of a firehouse bell clock from the entire Moraga Fire District personnel who were in attendance. (Two engines were parked in front of the college chapel in case of a call.)

The retiring chief and his wife Jan were presented with a check for \$1,000 from "The Friends of Don Skinner."

Mingling for no-host cocktails before dinner at Dryden Hall were the full complement of Fire Commissioners and their wives including Art and Mary Comerford, Walt and Bev Tibbits and Dick Olsen.

Carol Lucas, Andi Freeman and Jodi Cooper received the well wishers at the door, socialsetters Dick and Carol Porterfield, George Fisher, Alan and Eleanor Clark, Stan and Maggie Skinner personally lauded the retiring chief, along with Mayor Al Dessayer and wife Alice; Mike and Sarah Cory, Bill and Norma Combs, Merle and Betty Gilliland and developer Clark Wallace.



Don and Janice Skinner enjoy a moment together



Fire Commissioner Art Comerford and Chief Skinner



Hazel McClearn



Ellie Kositch and Jean Kirsch of Rescue One with Chief Skinner



Capt. Bob Lunardini shows Chief Skinner the gift from the Moraga firefighters



Program cover depicts chief

Lucas named Moraga fire chief

MARTINEZ — Edward L. Lucas, who became a Moraga firefighter 27 years ago, was elevated to chief of the department yesterday by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors.

The appointment was made on the recommendation of County Administrator Phil Batchelor and the district's board of commissioners to replace Chief Don Skinner, who retired Friday.

Oakland Tribune 4/2/86

Wednesday, April 9, 1986

Contra Costa Sun—Page 3

Lucas appointed chief for Moraga Fire District

By Tom Hoffman

Staff writer

Ed Lucas was named chief of the Moraga Fire Protection District last Tuesday. He replaces Don Skinner, who retired March 28 after serving as chief for 18 years.

Lucas, 49, joined the district in 1959 as a firefighter. He was promoted to assistant chief in 1972.

The new Moraga fire chief was unanimously selected by the district commissioners and County Administrator Phil Batchelor. The Board of Supervisors confirmed his appointment.

"Don's done a good job running this department," Lucas said Thursday, adding that he was planning no immediate changes. He complimented his staff and Assistant Chief John Cooper, calling him "excellent."

Cooper, Lucas and three captains from the Moraga district sought the position of chief. Fire Commissioner Dick Olsen said the commission and Batchelor reached their decision after interviews with three finalists.

Lucas has served in the Moraga district since 1959, but his family's ties with the community stretch back even farther. His father, the youngest of 12 children, was born in Moraga.

And Lucas grew up in Orinda, graduating from Acalanes High School. After school he served in the Air National Guard as a medic and firefighter.

He and his wife, Carol, live in Moraga and will have been married 30 years in September.

"We're thrilled," Carol Lucas said of her husband's new post. She



Fire Chief Ed Lucas

is the director of donor research at St. Mary's College.

The two have three children: Greg, 25, who is married and lives

in Pleasant Hill; Dina, 23, a recent graduate of Long Beach State University; and Steve, 20, a junior at UCLA.

Sun photo/David Allen

Moraga Beautiful Week starts

Moragans are spring housecleaning between the rains during the fourth annual Moraga Beautiful Week April 7 - 13.

The Moraga Garden Club has offered to plant the entrance to the Moraga Commons on Saturday, April 12, with annuals furnished by the town. Garden clubbers will also plant the urns in front of the library.

Several service organizations have volunteered manpower and/or supplies for the refurbishing of town areas.

Councilwoman Margaret DePriester originated Moraga Beautiful in 1983 when she was mayor. She wore her yellow "Minnie Pearl" hat, bought for 25 cents at an auction, then — and still does it for the annual event.

Not only is Moraga Beautiful a clean-up effort, but also to improve and enhance the town, she said.

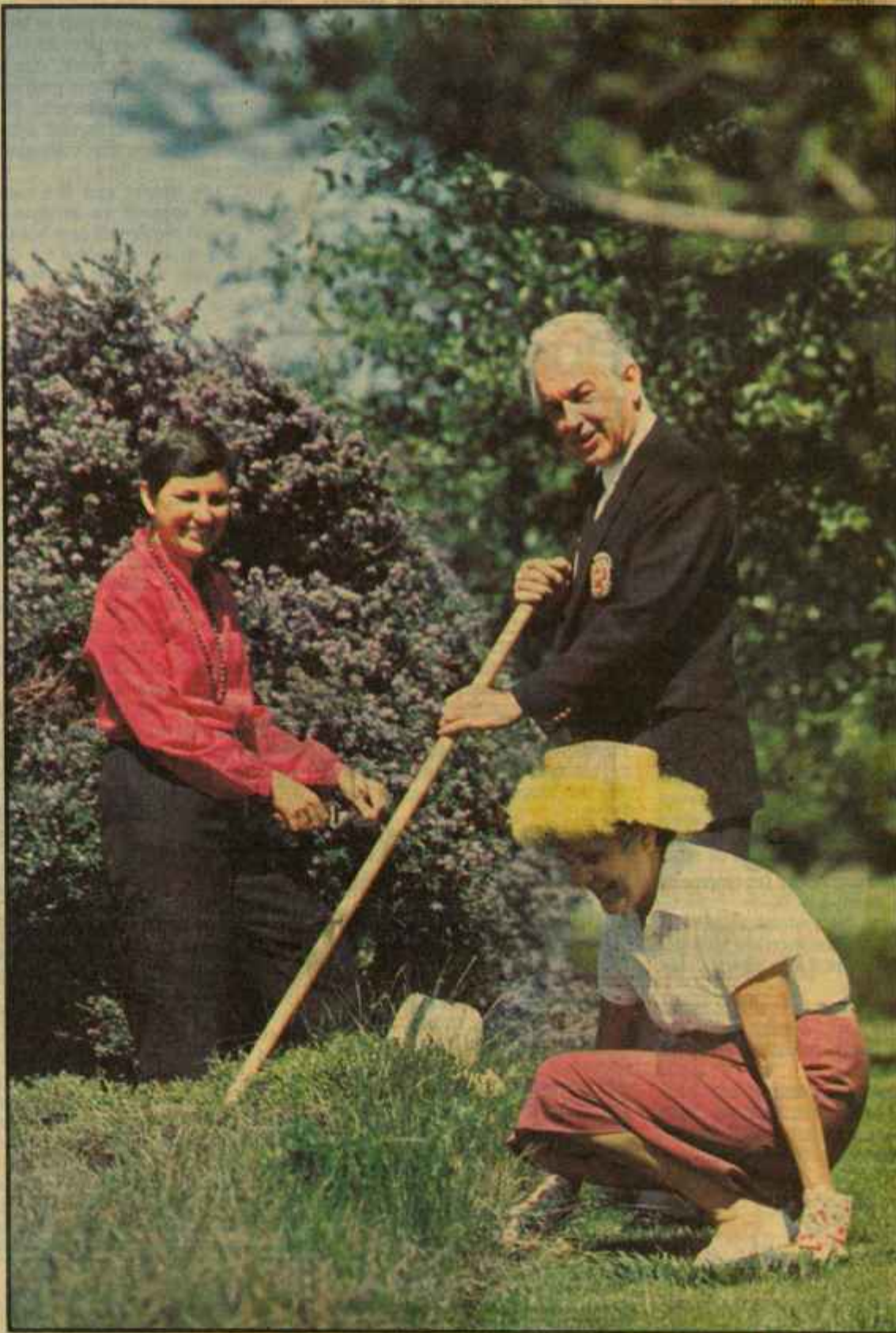
The Orinda-Moraga Disposal semi-annual free pick-up day coincides with Moraga Beautiful Week. Extra loads should be placed at curbside on the regular pick-up day.

Additionally, an Orinda-Moraga Disposal truck and attendants will be available for residents to dump overflow clippings and refuse from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday in the parking lot next to the Rheem Bowl.

Only Moraga residents will be allowed to use this facility and drivers' licenses will be checked.

Driving through the streets of town, evidence of the spring housecleaning is in plain sight. Old mattresses, tires, bird cages, bags and bags of clippings and other unwanted items can be spotted at curbside.

And after 8 last night, a stack of campaign signs were probably added to the heap.



Sun photo/David Allen

Pat Haley, Moraga Garden Club's horticulture chair, Fire Chief Ed Lucas, and Councilwoman Margaret DePriester dig in

Golden hillsides not pleasing to all

Firefighters warn about the danger of weeds near homes

By Jon Bashor

Staff writer

ORINDA — As Contra Costa's rolling green hills start their annual fade to brown, it's almost enough to make Ron Garland see red.

As the fire inspector for Orinda Fire Protection District, Garland is gearing up for the toughest part of his job — weed abatement. And his counterparts in other departments are doing likewise.

In Moraga, notices were mailed to property owners last week. Firefighters will follow up in-person with visits and show pictures of last summer's Lafayette fire to convince people that they need to clear their property. On June 29, flames swept over grass-covered hills, destroying two houses and damaging eight others.

Consolidated Fire District, the first district in Northern California to have a weed abatement program that is now in its 20th year, sent out some 20,000 notices in January and is now surveying parcels to see where follow-ups are needed.

In May and June, hillside homeowners will be urged to clear weeds at least 30 feet from their resi-

dences. Ideally, they should clear a 100-foot wide buffer zone, Garland said. Between now and May 1, Orinda's 7,000 households will get a "first and final notice" from Garland directing them to remove fire hazards from their property.

"We're trying to achieve reasonable safety," Garland said, "and protect their investments that they've worked for all their lives."

The cost of clearing weeds from hillsides, whether in sweat or cash payments to someone else, pays off for residents, firefighters and the community as a whole, Garland said. And because state fire codes require clearing, not complying can be more expensive.

Most people go along with the program, Garland said, but some are reluctant.

"Most people do not believe it's going to happen to them," Garland said, or they point to a neighbor's overgrown lot and ask, "Why should I? That guy hasn't."

Consolidated Fire District Senior Inspector Dave Emery said his district usually has about 1,200 property owners who don't comply, so the district has a contractor come mow

or plow under the weeds. The property owner is billed for the work on the next property tax bill.

This year, Emery said, things are starting to dry out early and weeds can already be cut in Clayton. But in areas like Orinda and Lafayette, which get more rain, things are still green and shouldn't be cut until late May.

"If you do it too soon, it'll come right back," Garland said.

Moraga Fire Capt. Les Wandel said most people in his district are "super-cooperative" and when the hazard is pointed out, they are willing to do their part. For emphasis, firefighters will show pictures of last June's fire in Lafayette.

In that fire, flames raced up weed-covered hills so fast that only the tops of the dried grasses burned, Emery said. The flames then swept back over the hills, burning down to the ground.

Clearing the weeds gives firefighters extra time to fight the fire before it burns houses, Garland said.

"Often we have to make a last stand in front of the house," Garland said. "A buffer zone protects

both the house and firefighters."

Orinda is specifically targeting ridgetop homes and weeds along roadways where fires can easily start, Garland said.

Orinda residents who don't want to clear their own property can get a list of college students whose work is up to district standards from the fire department, Garland said. The cost can vary from \$50 to \$200 or more, depending on the size of the lot and terrain. If they don't clear the weeds, the district will hire a contractor and assess the homeowner for both the work and administrative costs.

If uncleared weeds contribute to a fire, the property owner can be held liable and face civil penalties, Garland said. Under state law, fire districts also can assess property owners for the cost of fighting fires if they are found to have violated fire codes.

Even with good weed abatement, living in the wildlands is always accompanied by fire hazard, inspectors said.

"We're not eliminating the grass fire hazard, but we are cutting it down," Emery said.

Wednesday, April 30, 1986

Contra Costa Sun—Page 5



MORAGA PARAMEDICS ASSIST AN ACCIDENT VICTIM while Officer Mark Ruppenthal, right, fills out an accident report. An 87-year-old woman, Irene Citron, was taken to John Muir Memorial Hospital in Walnut Creek after the vehicle she was riding in was struck by another car Wednesday at the intersection of Ascot Drive and Moraga Road. No citations were issued, but Ruppenthal said the accident was still under investigation. Ruppenthal said Irene Citron was slightly injured when the driver of the vehicle, Edith Winona Jepsen, 87, made a left turn from Ascot Drive onto Moraga Road. Their car was struck by a Honda driven by a 17-year-old Moraga male.

shake roof ban

By Tom Hoffman

Staff writer

Untreated shake or shingle roofs should be banned on new homes and those to be reroofed because they represent a fire hazard, Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas said.

The newly-appointed chief wants the Town Council to adopt the fire-safe roof ordinance he proposed last August. The council heard Lucas' recommendation, which was endorsed by the Moraga Fire Commission, on Aug. 21 and formed a subcommittee to study the costs of such an ordinance to homeowners.

Councilmember Belinda Kendall, who heads the subcommittee, said a recommendation would be made to the council in early June.

"I'm very frustrated," Lucas said of the time the study has taken. "This has been going on for almost a year now. We do feel it has been sidetracked."

He said the reason given for the delay was that public reaction was needed. But, after Wednesday's hearing in front of five people, Lucas said "you have to wonder."

Kendall agreed that the hearing was not well-attended. "There were more experts and committee members than public" at the meeting last week. She added that all those in attendance were in favor of the ordinance.

Lucas' brief presentation surprised Kendall, who expected more statistics and graphics would be used to bolster the fire district's position. "I was tired of arguing numbers and aesthetics," Lucas said.

Wood shingle and untreated shake roofs are a fire hazard and therefore they should be banned in Moraga, Lucas told the subcommittee.

"A roof fire is a preventable

fire." He said the statistics of past fires and how many are caused or spread by shake roofs are unimportant when the hazard itself is considered.

"We're trying to protect for the future."

Kendall said the fire chief described the Lafayette fire last year and one in Los Altos in which he was able to see wood shingles act as "fire brands" flying off burning roofs and igniting unlit ones. "Faced with that kind of evidence, it's hard to say they're not a hazard," Kendall said.

She said non-combustible roofs last twice as long as shake roofs, but are more costly.

Six cities in the county have passed fire-safe roof ordinances, including Lafayette, which passed in two months an ordinance more re-

strictive than the one proposed in Moraga. Throughout the state, 174 jurisdictions have adopted ordinances regulating what goes on the roof of a private home, Lucas said.

The proposed Moraga ordinance requires non-combustible, Type C roofs on new homes or those to be reroofed. But homes with a roof area under 2,000 square-feet would be exempt.

Lucas said if Moraga is hit by a fire similar to the one that occurred in Lafayette last summer it could be a real problem as the town's fire-fighting equipment is limited. The Lafayette fire destroyed eight homes near Highway 24. Moraga's isolated location and winding access road would slow assistance from other districts in the event of a large fire, Lucas said.

"It is the position of the Moraga

Fire Protection District that non-treated shake roofs do constitute a fire hazard and with this in mind, I would have to question the town's position in allowing the installation of a material which causes an increase to a fire hazardous condition already existing in the community after being so advised," Lucas wrote in a letter to Kendall.

"I would appreciate that when the committee is considering the roofing issue, more thought be given to the justification rather than to the cost factor."

Serving on the subcommittee with Kendall are Sue Noe of the Safety Commission, Rob McSpadden representing the insurance industry, Richard Nordholm of the Planning Commission, and former mayor Merle Gilliland representing the building industry.

Moraga plans to quake-proof its 2 firehouses

CoCoSun
7/28/86

By Chuck Carroll

Staff writer

When Fire Chief Ed Lucas reads about earthquakes such as those that hit Bishop this week, he gets an uncomfortable feeling about Moraga's ability to handle a similar or larger temblor in his district.

And a recently completed preliminary study of the Fire Protection District's firehouses may contain confirmation of those concerns, Lucas said Tuesday.

Although the district carries earthquake insurance, he called that "false security."

"Earthquake insurance will not help us in an earthquake," Lucas said. "It does you no good if the (firehouses) fall down around your equipment."

"Essentially, we want our buildings to be here after an earthquake. We realize that probably Moraga Way and St. Mary's Road in any large quake will be closed" by slides or downed power lines, Lucas said. Should such a quake hit, the town would be isolated for at least a day or two, the chief said.

In anticipation, the district has tucked away at St. Mary's College a mobile emergency hospital unit, Lucas said. District officials believe St. Mary's will be the worst-hit place in town.

A second emergency mobile hospital is kept at the Moraga Way station, Lucas said.

The district will use these as triage units, and has propane-powered generators on hand to run their radio and other equipment, he said.

The San Francisco engineering firm of Forell/Elsesser, which specializes in earthquake studies, estimated that strengthening the walls of the 30-year-old station on Rheem Boulevard and the 18-year-old firehouse on Moraga Way to withstand

a severe quake would cost about \$125,000, based on a visual inspection.

"We don't feel these figures are correct," Lucas said. "And neither does the county, by the way."

While the \$45,000 estimate to upgrade the cinder block Rheem Boulevard station probably hits close to the mark, the condition of the wooden station on Moraga will remain a disturbing question mark until its stucco walls can be removed and inspected for dry rot, Lucas said.

The study's \$80,000 estimate to upgrade the old station may double after further inspection, he said.

"We want to know up front what the problems are going to be," Lucas said. "We don't want to start the work and then find that we have a 100 percent cost overrun."

Lucas said he is working closely with Terry McGraw, Contra Costa County assistant county administrator "to get the wheels moving" on the refurbishment of the firehouses.

"But it will probably be six months until we actually pound nails," he said.

First the district must solicit bids from firms on drawing the project's plans. After the plans are drawn, bids must be taken from construction firms, he said.

Lucas said the county and the district have been working on the project for more than a year.

According to Lucas, Moraga's predicament is probably no worse than many surrounding towns such as Lafayette, Orinda and Walnut Creek.

"We're all on the same fault," he said. He noted that many seismologists warn of the virtual certainty of a major quake in the next 50 years.

Supervisors put off ambulance fee

Contra Costa residents won't vote on issue in November

By Daniel Borenstein

Staff writer

MARTINEZ — While Contra Costans in November will decide the fate of a half-cent sales tax for transportation, they won't be voting on a fee to pay for improved emergency ambulance service.

The Board of Supervisors Tuesday put off until December a decision on whether to submit a fee plan to a countywide advisory vote.

Supervisor Nancy Fahden wanted the supervisors to act before the Aug. 8 deadline for placing measures on the November ballot, but she met opposition from her colleagues.

They said they feared the measure could hurt chances for November passage of the sales tax increase to raise money for transportation.

Instead the supervisors asked County Administrator Phil Batchelor to further review the ambulance fee, and asked that an advisory committee on ballot measures determine if the plan is the most pressing priority.

The plan, modeled after one approved by Alameda County voters in 1982, would increase from 10 to 15 the number of ambulances in the county with paramedics rather than people trained as emergency medi-

cal technicians.

Paramedics in an ambulance, under consultation with a doctor at a hospital, can administer drugs and perform other life-saving procedures such as using electroshock to revive heart attack victims and inserting a tube into the windpipe of a patient who has stopped breathing.

Ambulance communications equipment would be upgraded, and firefighters and 911 dispatchers would receive first-aid training with money raised from the fee.

The amount of the fee has not been set. One plan under consideration would raise \$2 million a year,

by charging the owner of a single-family house \$8.25 a year.

Owners of apartment buildings with two to four units would be charged \$16.50, and owners of larger apartment complexes would pay \$41.25. Commercial buildings would be assessed an average \$49.50.

The ballot measure is not needed to implement the fee, but the county needs approval from all 18 city councils in Contra Costa to establish the plan countywide.

County Health Director Mark Finucane said a favorable showing in an advisory election would provide the needed "political impetus."

Oakland Tribune Saturday, June 21, 1986

C-9

OBITUARY

Thomas E. Carroll

The Tribune

MORAGA — Funeral services were held Thursday for Thomas E. Carroll, prominent developer and former owner of the Carroll Ranch and Swim Club of Rheem. He died in Fresno last Sunday at

the age of 82.

He was a native of Oakland, but was a resident of Moraga for 80 years. He was a charter member of the Moraga Lions Club and the Walnut Creek Elks Lodge.

Donations may be made to Rescue One, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, 94556.

Dear Jeanne,

Thanks so much again for including me in the Rescue One dinner. It was a delightful evening — the food was great and the company even more so.

We are so lucky to live in a community that has an organization like Rescue One with people who are willing to volunteer their time to help it run smoothly.

Thank you for everything!

Love,
Audi

Window to the Past

FLORAGA
FIRE COMPANY



Contra Costa Sun
July 24, 1985

When fires were fought by volunteers

By MARK MERRILL
Sun correspondent

Les Wandel, 13, of Moraga was having a BB gun fight with his friends when he heard the siren sounding from the Moraga Fire House. To most 13-year-olds, living in 1953, such a sound would only interrupt a game for a moment to listen to the scream of sirens and the roar of the fire engine as the sound faded into the distance. But for Les and his friends it was a call to duty.

As volunteer firefighters they jumped on their motor scooters and

raced to the fire station. There, Les and his friends were joined by 30 other volunteer teenagers and adults. Each teenager was assigned a few hand tools and a five-gallon water backpack to fight the fire. Thus equipped they jumped aboard the jeep pumper and power wagon, driven by the full-time firemen, and sped to battle a grass fire located near Canyon.

Now a captain of the Moraga Fire Department with 25 years experience, Les Wandel said about the early firefighting days: "People (volunteers) did what they could to put

out fires with the equipment they had, but they were pretty enthusiastic about fighting fires."

Before and during the operation of the Moraga Fire House, ranchers were often paid to keep and operate fire vehicles on their property to protect the ranches and homes in their area.

When an old storage shed was converted to the Moraga Fire House on June 12, 1946, it was run completely by volunteers who were ranchers of the area. The first equipment the ranchers had was a Willys jeep which had the capacity

to pump 90 gallons of water a minute.

Assistant Chief Ed Lucas of the Moraga Fire Department said a couple of incidents occurred that caused residents to get a full-time firefighter to man the fire house.

On two separate occasions the volunteers could not get the jeep started. The first incident occurred when the building next to the fire house was ablaze. The building consequently burned to the ground.

"Then the Alexander's house caught fire and they tried to push start the truck. . . That's when they

decided to hire someone full-time," Lucas said. It was 1950 when A.J. Baitx was hired as a full-time firefighter.

Baitx worked from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily and was on call 24 hours a day. Retired Captain John Huff said, "Generally when a fire was reported the chief would come down to the station and blow the siren and his wife would call volunteers."

For several years the Moraga Fire House protected 2,200 miles of pastures and farm-

area stretched from the outskirts of Antioch to San Ramon and from Walnut Creek to the Oakland border, Huff said.

Beside the problem of covering so large an area, Huff said they had a few problems with people setting fires.

"The chief would come back to work after dinner expecting a fire and there would be one. It was one of the volunteers who started the fires until he was caught."

Volunteers were paid for their time fighting fires, "that's how he paid for his car," Huff said.

"By 1954, there were four full-time firefighters who manned the station around-the-clock during different shifts. Their equipment comprised of a jeep pumper, a four-wheel-drive power wagon pumper, and a '54 GMC pumper which carried 750 gallons of water and pumped 750 gallons a minute.

As the area grew, more manpower and equipment was supplied.

By 1968, the Moraga Fire House had 14 full-time, round-the-clock employees. Their equipment was updated to include a '68 fire engine which could pump 1,500 gallons of water per minute. This fire engine is still in use and operates out of the Rheem Valley Fire Station.

During 1968 the Moraga Fire Department moved from the one-stall fire house to the six-stall fire station on Moraga Way.

The old Moraga Fire House is still standing. Located on 1000 School Street, it has retired from its fire career and is now appropriately an antique shop to remind us of the times gone by. Captain Les Wandel said, "and the siren is still mounted on top of it."



Moraga Fire House in the 1950s

When disaster strikes, firefighters are here

By MARK MERRILL
Sun correspondent

During May of 1985 a cement truck tipped over near McDonnell Nursery on Moraga Way spilling cement and completely barricading traffic from both directions. Not only was traffic backed up for commuters, but a potential danger existed if emergency vehicles needed to enter or exit Moraga from the Orinda direction.

With only three main roads leading out of Moraga, having one of them inaccessible can mean loss of property or lives if emergency vehi-

cles cannot reach the scene of a fire or injury quickly.

Richard Olsen, chairman of the Moraga Fire Commission said, "If there were a major earthquake, Moraga could be isolated. It is very important that Moraga be self-contained."

In such a remote area as Moraga, Olsen said, where hospitals are not easily accessible, it is important that Moraga residents have good quality service to ensure their safety.

According to Olsen, the Town of Moraga has one of the best fire departments in the state. "The Moraga

Fire District has the lowest fire loss ratio, the fastest response times and the most highly-trained personnel," he said.

The high quality service is mostly a result from community support, service groups and tax increases.

Fifteen years ago an injured person would have had to wait 20-30 minutes for a private ambulance to arrive from Walnut Creek or Oakland since Moraga did not provide ambulance or paramedic service. In many cases, the difference between life or death depends on the response time of emergency vehicles.

In 1970, the Moraga Service League concerned itself with the problem and raised \$7,000 in community donations to provide an ambulance service to town residents.

In 1974, an election was held to raise taxes to provide for the training and service of paramedics. And in 1980 when Proposition 13 threatened to cut fire budgets, 89 percent of Moraga residents voted for a tax increase to ensure the continuation of all of fire district services, particularly the paramedics.

Because of such community involvement, Moraga Fire District is the only district in Contra Costa County that provides its own paramedic rescue and ambulance service. And through continued support, the fire department is maintaining and updating its service by installing an OPTICOM system in traffic lights, passing town fire safety ordinances and continually practicing fire and life saving techniques.

Fire Chief Don M. Skinner said, "This is a community that is really community-minded. There is a lot of service group activity and we want to be part of it."

The department is presently completing installation of an OPTICOM system in all traffic lights in Moraga. This system automatically quickens the light signal to give a green light to approaching emergency vehicles. Legally an emergency vehicle cannot run a red light without stopping before continuing through an intersection.

With the OPTICOM system this problem is avoided, making re-

sponses to emergencies quicker and safer for both emergency vehicles and motorists.

Moraga's fire district is also the first to have a town ordinance passed requiring new houses in secluded areas to have sprinkler systems installed. Sanders Ranch, a new sprinklered development at the end of Camino Pablo, is three miles away from the nearest fire house.

Skinner said getting to a fire within the first five minutes is crucial. "Three miles is a six to seven minute run to get there. We had the option of either building and manning another firehouse, which would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, or having them put sprinklers in."

Other new homes built in secluded areas, or which are located on steep or hilly grades, or are not located near a fire hydrant or other water supply system, may also be required to have a sprinkler system installed under the ordinance.

To further promote the safety of Moraga's residents, firefighters and paramedics have on-going drills working with pumps, ladders, hose-lines, and rescue equipment.

Firefighters are also involved with a physical fitness program. Commissioner Olsen said, "The objectives of the program are to ensure that the firefighters are in peak physical condition for the very strenuous physical work involved in firefighting and rescues, and to minimize the risk of injury which can lead to long absences from duty and early forced retirements."

Co Co Sun 9/10/86



Sun photo/Devitt Allen

NEW FIRE MARSHAL for the Town of Moraga is Les Wandel, a veteran of the district for 26 years, Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas recently announced. Wandel was born and raised in a home on Camino Pablo. After a three-year stint in the Army, he began his fire-fighting career as a hoseman at the old fire station on School Street on Sept. 1, 1960. Since then, Wandel has worked his way through the ranks, and has been active in fire prevention work over the years. He and his wife Ruth live in Concord and plan to move back to Moraga.

Lamorinda briefs

Hospital death rates

The death rates for some major disease types are substantially higher in most Eastbay Kaiser hospitals and both county-operated hospitals than the state average.

These figures are based on Medicare patient reports which the federal government has long compiled but is now releasing for the first time.

Kaiser hospitals in Walnut Creek and Martinez, Oakland Hospital, and St. Rose Hospital in Hayward had the worst death rates in the four major categories including nervous system, digestive, respiratory and circulatory.

Kaiser Walnut Creek had death rates of at least 25 percent above the state average in nervous system, respiratory, and circulatory.

The best rates in the four categories were achieved by Doctor's Hospital in Pinole and Kaiser in Hayward.

"The raw death rates for Medicare patients are useless for trying to evaluate the care at any California hospital," said Daniel Danzig, public affairs director for the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program.

Tunnel case closed

The last active case arising from the 1982 Caldecott Tunnel disaster was closed last week when the last settlement was reached in a wrongful death lawsuit.

The agreement calls for Caltrans, Armour Oil Co. and Clough Equipment Co. to pay the widow of the AC Transit bus driver killed in the crash. Under terms of the sealed settlement, no one involved in the suit can reveal how much money will be paid.

Seven people were killed instantly on April 7, 1982 when a gasoline tanker truck exploded and shot a fireball through the north bore of the tunnel at 12:16 a.m.

Aretha Dykes filed the suit over the death of her husband, John Dykes Jr.

None of the parties admit fault under the settlement, according to Dykes' attorney William Morton of Oakland, who described the settlement as fair.

"All parties were satisfied the settlement was a reasonable one," he said. "It puts an end to that disaster and it's good to put it behind us. There won't have to be a trial."

Other Caldecott lawsuits, settled after seven days of negotiations in August 1985, awarded the state \$2,375 million to repair the tunnel and another \$2 million to the heirs of five of the people killed. AC Transit paid \$2.875 million, Armour paid \$1 million, and Clough Equipment Co., who made the gasoline tanker, paid \$500,000.

Benefits talks begin

Lafayette City Council representatives Mayor Richard Holmes and City Manager Bob Paul met with representatives from the city for the first time yesterday, Sept. 30 at 1 p.m. to respond to the requests for changes in the benefits package for city employees.

Representing the 18 city employees are Betsy Van Popering, Eileen Ward and Brian Lorimer.

Administrator retires

Jack LaSalle, assistant superintendent for the Acalanes Union High School District, announced he will retire in June.

The 57-year-old LaSalle has been with the district for 29 years, 18 of which he has worked as the business manager for the district.

Prior to coming to the district office, LaSalle worked as head counselor at Del Valle High School for three years, and managed the adult education program for one year.

A resident of Danville, LaSalle joined the district in 1957 as a mathematics teacher, football and track coach and counselor at Las Lomas High School in Walnut Creek.

Membership drive

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce kicks off its participation in the third annual joint membership drive with 16 chambers in the county this month. All new members signed up from Oct. 1 to Oct. 23 will count towards the drive. Winners will be based in two categories: percentage of increase, and total dollar amount recruited.

The theme of "community" will highlight the Lafayette Chamber's membership drive emphasizing that the business community brings a strong sense of vitality

to the community as a whole.

Chambers of Commerce county-wide will celebrate the drive at a breakfast on Tuesday, Oct. 21 at the Boundary Oaks, and will host a turn-in party on Thursday, Oct. 23 at the Sheraton in Concord.

The Lafayette Chamber currently has 422 members and has a goal to raise this number by 25 percent. For more information call 284-7404.

Trail closes

Sections of the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail have been closed through Friday, Oct. 31 so that crews of the East Bay Municipal Utility District can complete landslide repair work.

The closed sections are: from Valle Vista Staging Area on Canyon Road to Country Club Drive in Moraga; and from Glenside Drive to Via Los Colorados in Lafayette. Trails will be gravel-surfaced and not paved when they reopen pending allocation of paying funds in the East Bay Regional Park District's 1987 budget.

School board meets

The Acalanes Union High School Board of Trustees will meet tonight, Oct. 1 at 8:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Administration Building.

Among the agenda topics is a master plan of needed improvements at the four high schools, action on the ratification of contract agreements for the 1986-87 school year, an enrollment report, and acceptance of a gift from the Orinda Boy Scout Troop 57 who painted the football bleachers at Miramonte High School.

Golf course stalled

The Moraga Country Club's efforts to lease land from the state for a golf course expansion will be stalled until after the Nov. 4 election on a proposed half-cent sales tax increase for transportation improvements.

Joe Levy, chairman of the state transportation commission, said Monday he supports suspending lease negotiations on a 60-acre parcel of the Gateway Boulevard right of until "we can adequately determine the expressed direction of all Contra Costa County residents."

Middle East talk

David Long, of the U.S. Department of State Office on Counterterrorism, will speak on "Politics and Terrorism in the Middle East," on Monday, Oct. 6 at the Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way.

A reception will start at 7:15 p.m., and the program will start at 8 p.m. The talk is sponsored by the World Affairs Council, and the cost is \$3 members and \$6 non-members. Call 982-2541 for reservations.

Save lives

The Rescue One Foundation and the Moraga Fire District are sponsoring a series of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) classes this fall. Individuals, families or groups are encouraged to sign up for one of the following classes: October 7 to 9, November 4 to 6, and December 15 to 17.

All sessions are from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Fire District Office, 1280 Moraga Way, at a cost of only \$2.

Moraga dinner

Tickets have been mailed to each household in Moraga for a chance to win "An Evening to Remember," the Moraga Parks Foundation's tenth annual Gourmet Dinner for Eight, catered by Michelle Ferrante of Mondello's.

The evening will begin at 7 p.m. with cocktails in the fireside room of Moraga's "Little Hearst Castle" (The Hacienda de las Flores). Dinner will be served by the Town Council and wine steward Jane Putnam, Contra Costa Sun editor.

Tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10, tax deductible. For more tickets, call Dan Rego at 283-6333 or Jim Sweeny at 376-7667 or any other member of the Foundation. All proceeds will be used for the new Botanical Garden at the Hacienda Park site.

Utz sues Times

Orinda resident Jerome Utz, a former state deputy attorney general convicted of land-sale fraud, has filed a libel claim against the Contra Costa Times for its article reporting denial of his appeal.

Attorneys for the Times said last October that the article was an accurate report of legal proceedings in the Ninth Circuit Court.



CPR CLASS Instructors Bob Cox and Terry Stewart, Moraga Fire District paramedic/firefighters, demonstrate proper infant Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation to class participants (from left) Chip Killmar, Richard Kirach and Moraga Rescue One Foundation Board Members Jeanne Kirsch, President Ellie Kositch and Jerry Meyer. Classes are provided as a community service by the fire district paramedic staff. Rescue One Foundation recently donated a new Recordi-Anne CPR mannequin and a new CPR video program and is reconditioning the two Record-Annes now in use. Citizens are urged to sign up for classes which cost \$2 on a first come first served basis. Call 376-5454 for more information.

School nurse saves life, receives commendation

By Monica Cadena-Dygart

Staff writer

A quick reaction and knowledgeable decision by a school nurse saved the life of a Miramonte student recently who apparently suffered an allergic reaction to a bee sting.

Cathy Kissinger, a nurse at the Orinda high school for six years, was awarded a certificate by the Acalanes Union High School District Board of Trustees "for the professional manner in which she responded to a medical emergency" which resulted in the saving of a student's life.

An emergency room doctor at Kaiser alerted Superintendent Joe Anthony of the incident.

According to Kissinger, the student was stung by a bee or yellow jacket on the lip during lunchtime. One of her friends rushed to the nurse's office to get a bag of ice, but returned shortly saying her friend had fainted.

Kissinger, grabbing a blood pressure gauge and a vial of adenalin, rushed to the girl and found her in a semi-conscious state, perspiring, and very pale.

Paramedics were called to the scene and still were unable to get a blood pressure reading, said Kissinger. The girl was given more medication en route to Kaiser Hospital in Walnut Creek where she was treated and released to her parents' care that same day.

"I was scared while it was happening," said Kissinger, "but was glad we had it (adrenalin) on hand."

"It's an unique situation being a school nurse because you're working on your own and need to decide what to do on your own," she said. Kissinger's position was upgraded this year to a full-time position along with the other nurses in the district because of lottery monies,

**Rescue
ONE
FOUNDATION**

1280 Moraga Way • Moraga, CA 94556
(415) 376-5454

September 8, 1986

Dear Moraga Citizens,

The Rescue One Foundation and the Moraga Fire District are sponsoring a series of CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) classes this fall. It is our belief that the citizens of Moraga would greatly benefit from this life saving skill.

Moraga Fire District Paramedic/Firefighters will be conducting the CPR classes. Each session will be held at the Fire District Office, 1280 Moraga Way, at a cost of only \$2.00 (including certification card).

Individuals, families or groups are encouraged to sign up for one of the following classes:

September	16-18	6:30-9:30
October	7-9	6:30-9:30
November	4-6	6:30-9:30
December	15-17	6:30-9:30

A few well-spent hours of your time could make a life or death difference to a loved one or friend.

For further information, please call 376-5454.

Sincerely,

Ellie Kositch

Ellie Kositch
President
Rescue One Foundation



9-86- CPR class

**Rescue
ONE
FOUNDATION**

1280 Moraga Way • Moraga, CA 94556
(415) 376-5454

PRESS RELEASE

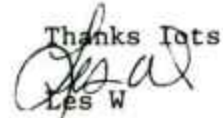
For Immediate Release:

RESCUE ONE FOUNDATION SUPPORTS CPR CLASSES

Ellie Kositch, President of the Board Of Directors of Rescue One Foundation of Moraga and RIF Board Members Jerry Meyer and Jeanne Kirsch recently participated in a CPR class offered by the Moraga Fire District. These classes are provided as a community service by the Fire Districts Paramedic staff. Ellie says, "Rescue One Foundation is encouraging Moraga citizens to sign up for this CPR class. It will only take a few hours of your time to learn this life saving technique, which could help save the life of a child, friend, or loved one." The only cost for the class is \$2.00, which covers the participants certification card. Contact the Moraga Fire District at 1280 Moraga Way, Telephone 376-5454 for dates and times of classes.

Hi! Everybody

Sorry I was unable to attend the meeting as
I have been under the weather, (too much vacation
I guess and eating too much Abalone!!! Please find
your individual packets of assorted handouts and
tentative format for our Open House, Sat. Oct. 11,
1986. If these ideas meet with your approval or
you have some other ideas, please advise John or
call me at my office. I will be available at
your service.

Thanks Lots

Les W

P.S. Say Hi! to Smokey for me.

ACTIVITIES FOR OPEN HOUSE

SAT. OCT. 11, 1986

1. Open House:
 - A. Equipment on display
 1. Rescue 1
 2. Truck 1
 3. Eng. 1
 4. Tanker 1
2. Tour of station
 1. Dormitory
 2. Dispatch center
 3. Kitchen
3. Fire Prev. films (Adm. Bldg. Conf. room)
 1. Home escape plan movie
 2. Various videos
4. Smokey the Bear (G. N.) to hand out literature, badges, etc
5. Literature available in your packets and more in Pub. Ed. Cab.
6. News article in the Moraga Sun all about smoke detectors and what to do in case of fire. e.g. Propose that families practice home escape plan with blind fold in place and establish a meeting area outside their home. (use smoke detector to initiate fire drill.
7. Hand out literature to go home with school children from schools?
- 8.





Moraga Fire District
1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, CA 94556
(415) 376-5454

Ed Lucas, Fire Chief

FACTS ABOUT FIRE

Fire drills are for everyone -- young and old -- and should be practiced at home, at school, at work -- everywhere. This year, let October 5-11 launch your regular fire drill schedule. Here are some tips to practice this year's Fire Prevention Week theme -- Fire Drills Save Lives!

AT HOME

Everyone needs E.D.I.T.H., an Exit Drill In The Home.

Make a plan to be sure that everyone knows two ways out of every room in your home. Have a meeting place outside so that you can account for everyone's safe exit. As you develop your plan, remember that small children and disabled family members will need special assistance in their escape. Older family members may also need special assistance. Anyone needing special assistance should sleep on the first floor or near an exit. Small children's bedrooms should be near an able-bodied adult.

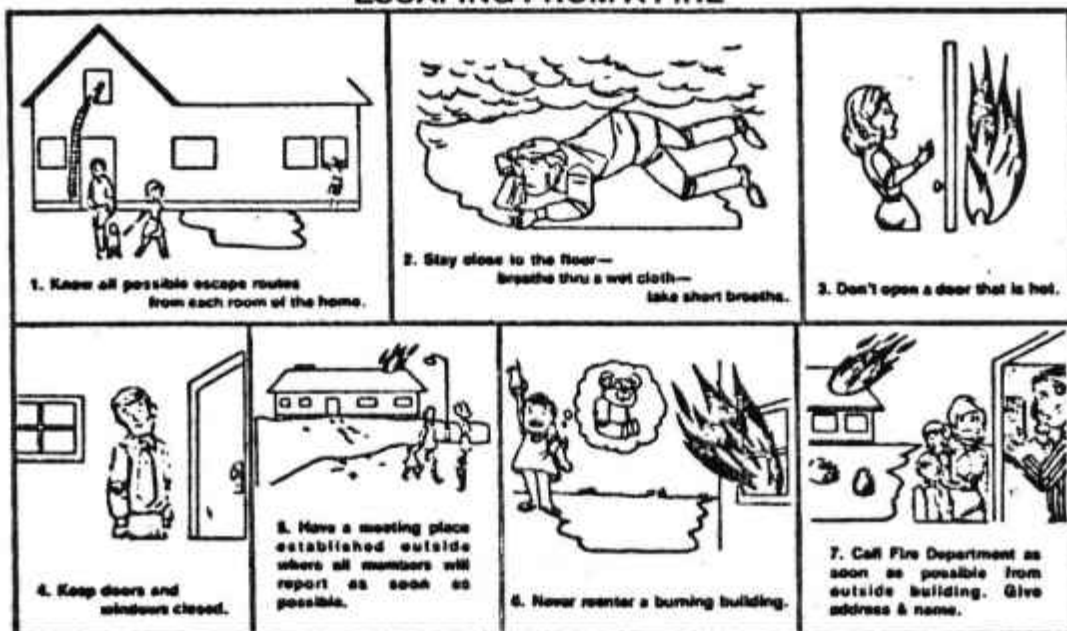
- .Each member of the family should be able to recognize the sound of the smoke detector or other fire alarm signal.
- .Conduct a fire drill periodically.
- .A designated adult should push the smoke detector test button or sound another agreed-upon alarm.
- .Family members should escape using the exit plan and immediately go outside to the prearranged meeting place.
- .Check to make sure that everyone has evacuated safely.
- .Everyone should reenter the home and discuss any problems or questions that occurred during the drill.

Fire drills are not just for single-family homes. Multiple-family dwellings should also conduct fire drills. Work with your landlord, building attendant, other tenants or condominium association to schedule a fire drill. Discuss the evacuation procedure before conducting the drill.

Plan for the unexpected in case you are unable to exit your apartment.

- .Close the room door to keep back smoke.
- .Cover air vents where smoke may be seeping through, stuff any cracks with towels or sheets to keep the smoke out.
- .If possible, stay in a room with a window to the outside.
- .Use a towel or sheet to signal at the window to the rescuers.
- .If there is a phone in the room, call the fire department -- even if fire fighters are already on the scene -- to give your exact location.
- .In a smoke-filled room, try opening a window to see if the open window will improve the smoke situation. If the situation worsens with the window open, close it immediately.
- .Stay low to breathe cleaner air which will be near the floor.

WHAT EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ESCAPING FROM A FIRE

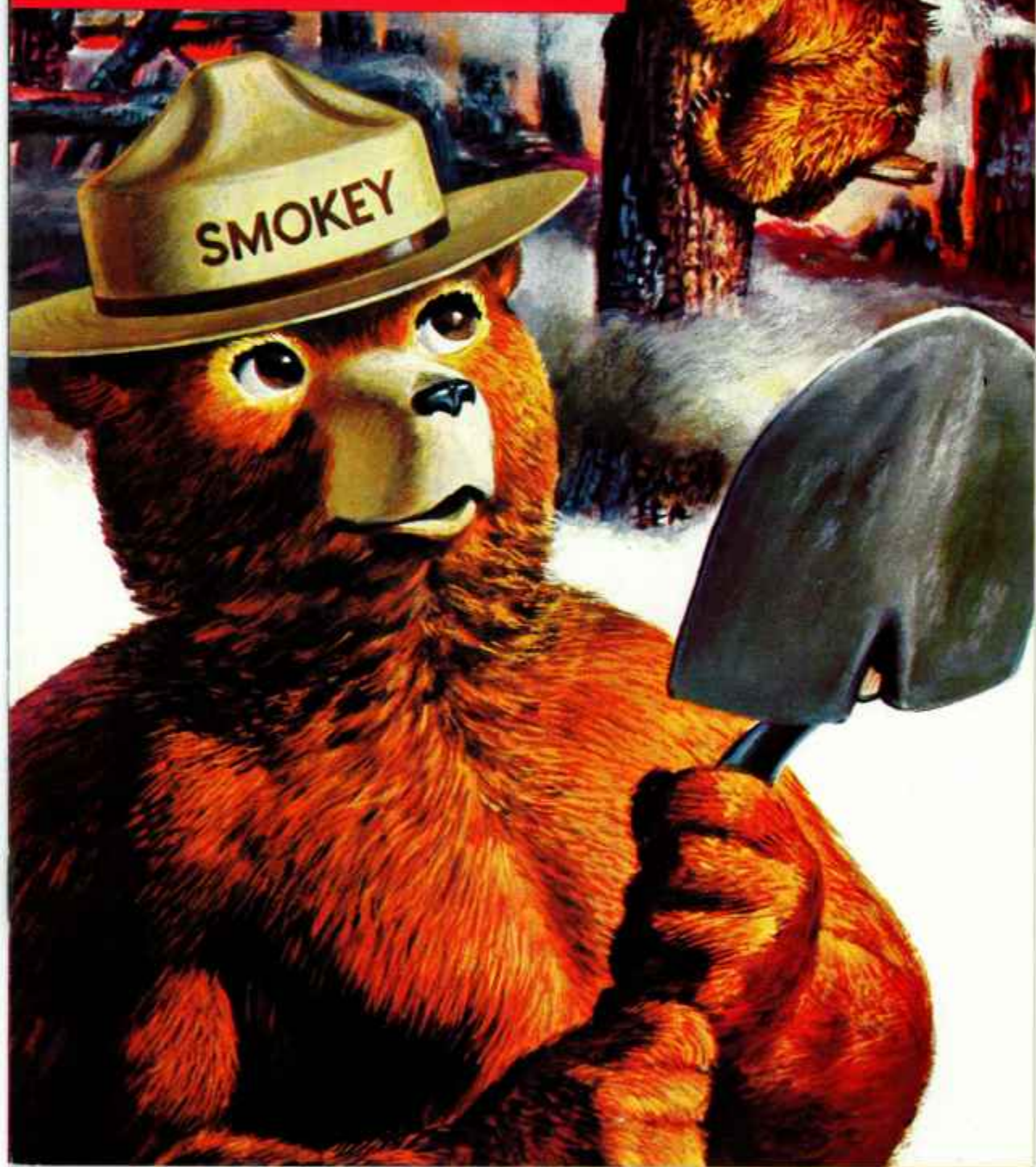


MORAGA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

EMERGENCY CALLS ONLY: 911

BUSINESS & INFORMATION: 376-5454

THE TRUE STORY OF
SMOKEY
BEAR



Protecting your home against brushfire

*Reprinted from September 1983 and September 1985 issues of **Sunset** Magazine*

Copyright © 1983, 1985 Lane Publishing Co.

This reprint is provided by the Committee For Firesafe Roofing

- **Eyeglasses, hearing aids, prosthetic devices** or other personal aids.

- **Valuables** such as credit cards, checkbooks, insurance policies, savings account books, money, jewelry and the like.

DO NOT, AT THIS TIME ATTEMPT TO OPEN YOUR SAFE. A safe involved in a fire may hold the intense heat for several hours. If the door is opened before the safe has cooled down, the entering air, combined with the high inside temperature, may cause the contents to burst into flames.

NOTIFY THE FOLLOWING PARTIES OF YOUR RELOCATION:

- Your insurance agent or adjuster.
- Your mortgage company. Inform them also of the fire.
- Your employer.
- Family and friends.
- Your children's schools.
- Your post office. Have them either hold or forward your mail depending on the length of time you expect to be relocated.
- Delivery services such as those for newspapers and milk.
- Utility companies. These include telephone, heat, power, water and trash collection.

Step 4: Asking Further Questions

Your disaster relief service case worker, local fire department or insurance agent will help you with the many questions you will have in the coming days. In the meantime,

Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made. All damages are taken into consideration in developing your insurance claim.

Do not contract for estimating, inventorying or repair services without first consulting your insurance agent or adjuster.

You can obtain further information and aid in the recovery process from the pamphlet, "After the Fire: Returning to Normal". Ask your fire department for a copy.

After
the
fire...

the first
24
Hours

Prudential

Reprinted with the permission of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Fire Administration.

COMB. 77457 ED. 8-81

The fire is out now and there are a few things you need to know. We would like to help you. Here is a check list for you to follow.

Step 1: Securing The Site

The site of the fire needs to be protected from further damage by weather, theft or vandalism.

If you are the owner, it is your responsibility to see that holes are covered against rain and entry and that outside doors to your home can be locked or secured. The fire department will help with this activity.

Contact your insurance agent. He or she must be notified of the fire and may also be able to help you in making immediate repairs. If you cannot reach your agent or need professional assistance in boarding up your home, a general contractor, fire damage restoration firm or fire service firm can help. Check your yellow pages.

If you plan to leave the fire site, try to remove any valuables remaining in the building. Do not leave until the site has been secured.

If you are a tenant, contact the resident manager, the owner or the owner's insurance agent. It is the owner's responsibility to prevent further loss to the site.

See that your personal belongings are secure either within the building or by moving them to another location, such as the home of a relative or friend.

Contact your own insurance agent to report the loss.

Contact your local disaster relief services such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army if you are in need of temporary housing, food, eye-glasses or medicines destroyed in the fire. Emergency relief is given without regard to income. The fire department or phone book can give you contact information.

Step 2: Cautions

Fire can rekindle from hidden, smoldering remains. Be watchful for signs of heat or smoke.

Household wiring which may have been water damaged should be checked by an electrician before current is turned back on.

Be watchful for structural damage caused by the fire. Roofs and floors may be weakened.

Food, beverages and medicines exposed to heat, smoke or soot should be discarded.

Refrigerators or freezers left unopened will hold their temperature for a short time. However, do not attempt to refreeze thawed items.

The fire department will see that utilities (water, electricity, gas or heat) are either safe to use or are disconnected before they leave the site. If a utility is disconnected contact the utility company or authorized service representative to have the apparatus checked for proper working order, make

necessary repairs and reinstitute service. **Do not attempt to reconnect utilities yourself.**

Beginning now, get receipts for any money you spend. These receipts are important in showing the insurance company what money you have spent related to your fire loss and also for verifying losses claimed on your Federal income tax.

Step 3: Leaving Your Home

This may be your decision or one based on the building inspector's judgment that the residence is unsafe.

Contact the local police. They will keep an eye on the property during your absence.

TEMPORARY HOUSING: Local relief services, like the American Red Cross and Salvation Army, should be able to help you with temporary housing.

If you are insured under a package homeowner's or tenant's policy, a section of your coverage may pay for the extra costs of temporary housing such as a hotel. If you are in need of immediate funds, ask your insurance agent about how soon you might get an advance on your eventual insurance claim settlement.

TRY TO LOCATE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO TAKE WITH YOU:

• **Identification**

• **Vital medicines** such as insulin or blood pressure regulating drugs.



Moraga Fire District

1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, CA 94556
(415) 376-5454

Ed Lucas, Fire Chief

Dear Parents and Children,

The Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation will host an Open House at Moraga Fire District Headquarters, 1280 Moraga Way on October 11, 1986 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

There will be demonstrations and handout materials for adults and children. Also, "Smokey the Bear" will be here to talk to everyone.

Please join the Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation in observing Fire Prevention Week October 5th through 11th. Remember, "Learn Not to Burn...It really works!"

For further information, please contact Les Wandel, Fire Marshal, at 376-5454.

LW/af



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MORAGA FIRE DISTRICT and RESCUE ONE FOUNDATION will be participating in Fire Prevention Week, from October 5 through 11. This year's theme is "Learn Not to Burn...It Really Works!"

MORAGA FIRE DISTRICT and RESCUE ONE FOUNDATION will host an Open House at Moraga Fire District Headquarters, 1280 Moraga Way on October 11, 1986 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There will be on going demonstrations and hand out materials.

MORAGA FIRE DISTRICT joins the National Fire Protection Association, the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week, in reminding you to install smoke detectors in your home or to check the batteries on those already installed.

Remember: "Learn Not to Burn...It Really Works!"

For further information, please contact Fire Marshal Les Wandel at 376-5454.

###

SMOKEY SAYS, 'LEARN NOT TO BURN'

Moragans meet Smokey and firefighters at open house

Smokey the Bear and Moraga Fire Marshal Les Wandel greeted about 1,000 Moraga residents at the Moraga Fire District's first Open House on Oct. 11. Moragans visited with firefighters, viewed fire prevention and paramedic displays, along with posing and preening with Smokey.

This year's theme was "Learn Not to Burn — It Really Works."

It's also the theme for the National Fire Protection Association, Wandel said. His goal is to initiate the program into Moraga grade schools in January.

Teaching children the "stop, drop and roll" method of putting out flames is essential, Wandel said.

"Most kids first instinct is to run when their clothes catch on fire. It fans the flames. We want them to snuff it out," he said.

Wandel has another goal for next year's Open House.

"We want to get our own Smokey costume. We had to borrow this one from State Forestry."



Les Wandel



Smokey was a hit at the Moraga Fire District's first Open House on Oct. 11.

Fire prevention *Seen 10-8-86*

It's Fire Prevention Week (Oct. 5 to 11) and the Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation will be hosting an open house at the district's headquarters, 1280 Moraga Way, on Oct. 11 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be ongoing demonstrations and hand out materials.

The theme of this year's Fire Prevention Week, sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association, is "Learn Not to Burn... It Really Works!" Fire officials are urging residents to install smoke detectors in your home or check the batteries on those already installed. Call Fire Marshal Les Wandel at 376-5454 for more information.

Holiday tree blaze

Co Co Sun 12/31/86

By Monica Cadena-Dygart
Staff writer

Electrical wiring on or around a seven-foot Christmas tree may have caused a fire that seriously damaged a condominium at 153 Via Joaquin in Moraga, according to Assistant Fire Chief John Cooper.

Moraga Fire Department responded to the two-alarm Sunday morning fire at 5:55 a.m. and brought it under control within 15 minutes, but not before the fire was able to cause extensive heat and smoke damage amounting to \$35,000 worth of damages to the structure, and another \$45,000 of damages to the contents of the condo.

Cooper strongly urges residents to take down Christmas trees as soon as possible to prevent such fires. Christmas trees can easily turn into torches as they dry out from being inside a house.

Neighbors alerted the fire department of the fire when they heard popping sounds from the condo which were the windows popping out from the heat, said Cooper.

No one was injured, and no one was at home at the time of the fire. Firefighters prevented the fire from spreading to other units.

According to Cooper, the residents, when contacted, claimed they had unplugged the lights to the Christmas tree before they left. Firefighters did however, find a timer unit attached to a nearby plug.

Friday, August 22, 1986

Rescuers jar cat out of pickle

Paramedics do slick job on pet

CARDIFF BY THE SEA, Calif. (AP) — Curiosity didn't kill Lola the cat but it sure got her in a pickle.

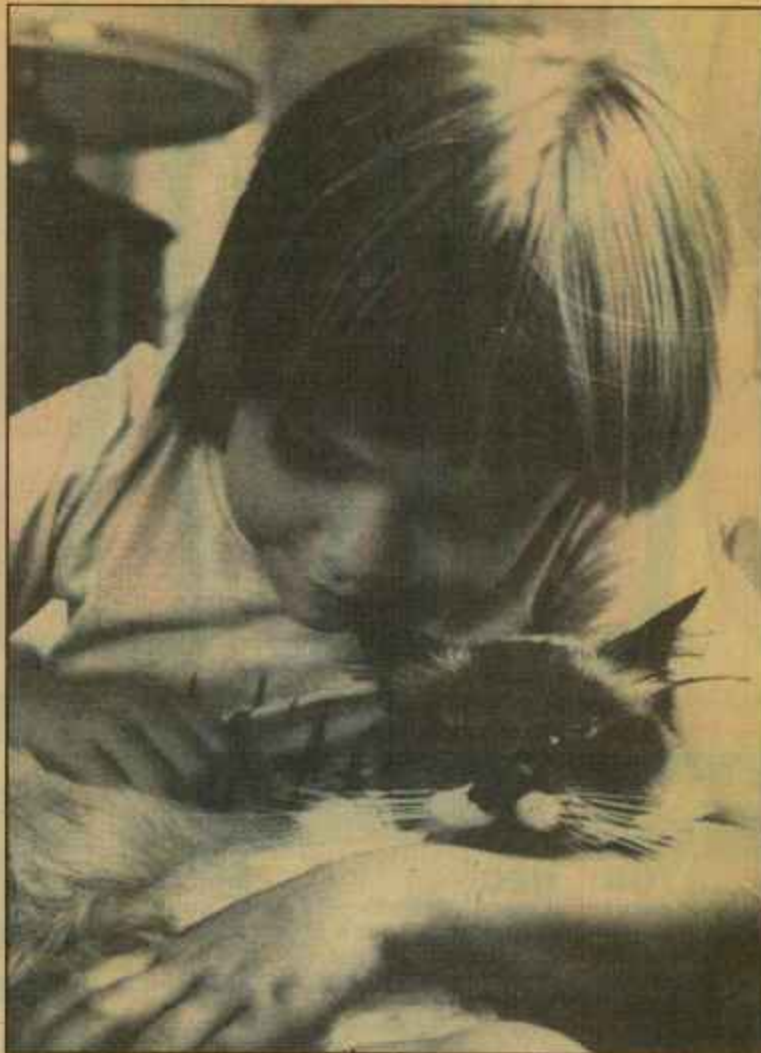
The 3-year-old tan and chocolate Himalayan cat, missing for two days, returned home Wednesday with her head stuck firmly in the mouth of a glass pickle jar, said her owner, Joni Parker Roach.

"She was banging the jar against the wall of the house trying to get it off her head," said Roach, who took the pet in her arms and dashed across the street to a fire station.

Paramedics Gerry Cooper and Jon Fredericks went to work on extricating the cat from the jar. After a futile attempt to maneuver the cat's neck out of the narrow glass mouth, Cooper came up with the solution that ultimately freed Lola from her glass prison.

A fan of the television show "Emergency," Cooper recalled an episode in which paramedics rescued a child trapped in a coffee table by first greasing the child with lubricant.

Fredericks and Cooper smeared the cat's neck with jelly normally used on the electric



Associated Press

CHANDRA ROACH strokes Lola after the cat's head was extricated from a pickle jar in Cardiff Thursday.

shock paddles to keep the electrical current from burning the patient's skin.

Using the "paws of life," as the paramedics put it, they gently

eased Lola's head out of the jar.

After a two-hour nap and some strenuous bathing to get the lubricant off of her fur, Lola was her old self, Roach said.

Christmas tree fuels Moraga condominium blaze

MORAGA — A two-alarm fire fueled by a big Christmas tree damaged a condominium early Sunday morning, firefighters said.

"We just want to urge safety with the dry trees now," said Capt. Rob Goodyear of the Moraga Fire Protection District.

A neighbor reported at 5:55 a.m. that the condo at 153 Via Joaquin was on fire, Goodyear said, and firefighters controlled the blaze 15 minutes later.

No one was injured in the fire, which caused \$35,000 damage to the building and \$45,000 damage to property in the home, Goodyear said.

Faulty electrical wiring, possibly in a timer plugged into an outlet, apparently started the fire, he said.

"We believe that it was wiring somewhere very close to the Christmas tree which caught the tree and

spread to the room contents," he said.

The residents, who were not home during the fire, told firefighters they had remembered to unplug the lights on the 7- or 8-foot tree before leaving, he said.

Firefighters kept the blaze from spreading out of the living room, but much of the home was damaged by smoke, he said.

SHEPARD, Richard A. M.D. D.D.S. in Moraga, November 17, 1986; husband of Helen Shepard; father of Thomas C. Shepard of Del Mar, CA; Susan Shepard Akre of Reedsport, OR; grandfather of Erin and Ethan Akre. A native of Chicago, Ill.; aged 80 years. A diplomat of American Board of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Fellow American College of Surgeons, past president of California Society of Plastic Surgery and Medical Staff of Peralta Hospital, Medical Director of Bay Area Tumor Institute. A plastic surgeon in Oakland for 25 years.

Friends are invited to attend funeral services at Mountain View Cemetery on Friday, November 21, at 1:00 p.m. Interment at Mountain View Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to the Bay Area Tumor Institute or the Rescue One Foundation, Moraga.

Chapel of the Chimes 654-9123

Oak Tribune 11-19-86

Co Co Times 1/2/87

Moragan burned when gasoline ignites

MORAGA — A Moraga man using gasoline too close to a hot water heater Wednesday night was burned over a third of his body when the gas ignited.

William Sidara, 2 Sparrow Court, was taken to Alta Bates Burn Center by Moraga Fire Department paramedics and treated for second- and third-degree burns over 34 1/2 percent of his body where he is in seri-

ous condition, a hospital spokeswoman said.

Sidara was apparently cleaning machine parts in his garage at 8:11 p.m. Wednesday when a can of gasoline standing near a hot water heater caught on fire, a Moraga Fire Department spokesman said.

Moraga paramedics rushed Sidara to Alta Bates. Damage to the house was minor, the spokesman said.

Firefighters' New Year's Eve Ball tonight



Sun photo/David Allen

In jest, to publicize the Firefighters' Ball, Liz Sepe of Moraga is carried on back board by local senior firefighters/paramedics: Capt. David Vanni, Bob Cox, Capt. Bob Lunardini, Darrell Lee and Bob Bratton

Ring out the old year at the Rheem

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot. . ." will be sung with gusto at the Rheem Theatre in Moraga tonight at the fifth annual Firefighters' New Year's Eve Ball.

The event, sponsored by firefighters throughout Contra Costa County was started by Consolidated Fire District Capt. David Vanni and Moraga Senior Firefighter/Paramedic Bob Bratton.

The ball has become a popular way for the general public, as well as firefighters, to spend a safe New Year's Eve close to home.

Mitch Woods and His Rocket 88's will provide '50s rock'n'roll live entertainment. Dancing will be encouraged although the floor is in the process of remodeling, according to theater manager Mark Miller.

Only a few reserved tables remain at \$32.50 per person. General admission seats are available at \$19.50.

Tickets include a catered, light buffet, party favors and champagne at midnight.

Beer and wine will be served from the no-host bar.

Doors will open at 8:30 p.m. and the music will start at 9 p.m.

Tickets are available at BASS, Video City in the Rheem Shopping Center, or at the theater. Call 376-1490 for more information or reservations.

In the beginning, the ball used to go in the red, according to Bratton. "But last year, we broke even and this year, we expect to make something." Any profits will go to either the Alta Bates or Brookside burn centers, he said.

Three security officers at the door watch departing guests to make sure they are able to drive safely. If anyone needs a ride-along, they will call the county sheriff's department. (See page 6 for editorial on safe driving.)

Foundation seeks 2 to serve on board

TIMES
1-18-87

MORAGA — The Rescue One Foundation is seeking applicants for two openings on its nine-member board of directors.

The foundation was formed in 1978 to receive and administer contributions to the Moraga Fire Protection District emergency ambulance service.

People interested in serving on the board should submit applications by Feb. 1 to: Rescue One Foundation, in care of the Moraga Fire Protection District, 1280 Moraga Way. Those seeking further information should call Ellie Kositch, board president, at 376-2061.

The board will elect new directors to two-year terms from among the applicants. The new directors will replace Bill Diffenderfer and Linda Borelli, who have resigned.

Co Co Times 1/17/87

IN BRIEF

Moraga OKs law on fire retardant roofs

MORAGA — New roofs must be fire retardant under the law that has been approved by the Moraga Town Council.

The new law, which applies to new homes and new roofs on old homes, would allow almost any roof covering except untreated wooden shakes.

Moraga fire officials have lobbied for the ordinance since a grass fire destroyed two Lafayette homes almost two years ago, saying that the town's few access roads, rolling hills, and grassy open lands make Moraga buildings vulnerable to fire.

Fire retardant roofs will help protect buildings and guard against fire being spread by wind-borne burning shakes.

Mayor Margaret DePriester said Wednesday the council asked the town staff to make some revisions and clarifications of the language before the second reading of the ordinance on Feb. 4.

Co Co Times 1/18/87

Unattended candle causes \$5,000 fire

MORAGA — An unattended candle in an upstairs bedroom erupted into a fire that caused \$5,000 damage in a house at 1133 Rimer Drive Saturday, firefighters said.

A teen-age girl living at the house was the only one home at the time of the fire, and she was alerted by a smoke detector and called firefighters. Eight Moraga firefighters controlled the 11:38 a.m. fire within six minutes of their arrival.

Moraga will pay tax for fire protection

MORAGA — Moraga homeowners will pay a tax in the 1987-88 fiscal year for fire protection services.

The tax, based on the amount of water needed to put a fire out and the size of homes and commercial buildings, will cost the owner of a 2,600-square-foot house \$50.91 for the year. The district did not levy a tax for the current fiscal year.

Commissioners of the Moraga Fire Protection District voted 4-0 Thursday night to set the tax rate at 3.7 cents for each gallon it takes to put out a fire.

The tax or "fire-flow" rate is based on a national formula developed by insurance companies, according to Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas. Under the formula, 1,376 gallons would be needed for a fire in the 2,600-square-foot home.

The tax money will help pay to upgrade fire service buildings to meet earthquake safety codes.

Voters in April 1980 gave the commission authority to set the tax rate each year to help pay for fire and paramedic services. C.C. TIMES
3-18-87

Page 2—Contra Costa Sun

Wednesday, March 18, 1987

Lamorinda briefs

Moraga fire tax

Moraga homeowners will pay a tax in the 1987-88 fiscal year for fire protection services.

The tax, based on the amount of water needed to put a fire out and the size of homes and commercial buildings, will cost the owner of a 2,600-square-foot house \$50.91 for the year. The district did not levy a tax for the current fiscal year.

Commissioners of the Moraga Fire Protection District voted 4-0 Thursday night to set the tax rate at 3.7 cents for each gallon it takes to put out a fire.

The tax or "fire-flow" rate is based on a national formula developed by insurance companies, according to Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas. Under the formula, 1,376 gallons would be needed for a fire in the 2,600-square-foot home.

The tax money will help pay to upgrade fire service buildings to meet earthquake safety codes.

Voters in April 1980 gave the commission authority to set the tax rate each year to help pay for fire and paramedic services.

sun news, use this set of briefs, not sulamb1

Tribune April 25, 1987

Moraga office fire was accidental

MORAGA — A fire that caused more than \$1 million damage to a Moraga office building Friday was "purely an accident" caused by an electrical malfunction, a fire official said yesterday.

Insurance investigators traced the blaze at 1042 Country Club Drive to "some type of electrical malfunction" in a second-floor office in the two-story structure, said Fire Marshal Les Wandel.

He said a circuit may have

been overloaded, perhaps leading to overheating of a copying machine or computer equipment, or there may have been a problem in one of the machine's cords.

Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas had speculated Friday that the blaze may have been intentionally set, noting that at least one door that reportedly had been locked Thursday night was found unlocked after morning blaze broke out early Friday.

Rescue I openings

Rescue I Foundation has two openings on the Board of Directors in the upcoming election. Bill Diffenderfer will not seek re-election, and Linda Borelli has been appointed to serve on the Moraga Fire Commission.

Rescue I is the support foundation for the Moraga Fire District's Paramedic Program. Recent donations have enabled the group to purchase a new Recorder-Annie and to refurbish two old ones to aid the Paramedics with their CPR class instruction for local residents.

Anyone interested in applying for the vacancies on the Board may write to Rescue I Foundation, c/o Moraga Fire District, 1280 Moraga Way in Moraga, 94556. Deadline is Feb. 1. For more information, call Ellie Kositch, president, at 376-2061.

2001 1-14-87

Co Co Sun 1/7/87

Moragan serious after burns

A Sparrow Court resident in Moraga remains in serious condition at the Alta Bates Burn Center in Berkeley a week after he received second- and third-degree burns over more than 34 percent of his body, according to a hospital spokesperson.

William Sidara was taken to Alta Bates Burn Center by Moraga Fire Department paramedics after the gas he was using too close to a hot water heater ignited and burned his body.

Sidara was apparently cleaning machine parts in his garage at 8:11 p.m. last Wednesday when a can of gasoline near a hot water heater caught on fire, according to a Moraga Fire Department spokesman.

Fire damage to the house was minor, he added.

Co Co Times 1/9/87

Moraga fire chief wants sprinklers, retardant roofs

MORAGA — Fire Chief Ed Lucas wants the town's amended General Plan to require fire retardant roofs on homes and fire sprinklers in more large commercial buildings.

Merle Gilliland, project manager for developer Clark Wallace and a former Moraga town councilman, says those requirements aren't justified and wants them taken out.

The chief said Moraga is growing but his six-firefighter force is not. The problem is countywide but Moraga's location, at "the end of a 7-mile cul-de-sac," makes it tough to get additional firefighters if needed.

"When you can't have manning, you have to have built-in fire protection," he says.

He wants commercial buildings 5,000

square feet and larger to have sprinklers. The town currently requires sprinklers in buildings 10,000 square feet or larger. "The builders are circumventing the ordinance by building 9,999-square-foot buildings."

Six firefighters and two engines are not enough to control a fire in buildings that large, Lucas said. "Today, when 90 percent of the building interior is finished with petroleum products, fires burn hot and fast. We have to get there before the fire expands."

Lucas also wants to ban untreated shake roofs on homes larger than 2,000 square feet because wooden shakes catch and spread fire, he said.

Gilliland says Lucas doesn't have numbers to back up his statements. "These are arbitrary numbers. This is just making it more difficult to build a building," he said.

Co Co Sun 1/7/87

'Vial of Life' answer for home emergencies

Designed to help senior citizens in emergency situations in the home, the "Vial of Life" program is sponsored by local physicians' wives and several Contra Costa County hospitals. The program is particularly helpful to those who live alone or have any chronic illnesses such as diabetes, epilepsy, or kidney disease.

The "Vial of Life" is a plastic tube-like container holding important medical information. The vial contains an information form, and two red and white "Vial of Life" stickers. The form has a place to identify the family doctor, current medications, allergies, hospital preference, the name of a relative to contact in an emergency, as well as other pertinent medical information. This form should be filled out completely, accurately and neatly so it can be read easily by emergency personnel.

Once completed, the form is put into the plastic vial, and one of the stickers is placed on the vial's cap. The vial is then placed in a specific location inside the refrigerator. The second sticker is placed on the outside door of the refrigerator where it may be easily seen by paramedics,

firemen, or ambulance crews responding to an emergency.

The free "Vial of Life" is available at the reception desk in the

main lobby at John Muir Memorial Hospital, 1601 Ygnacio Valley Road, Walnut Creek.

For more information on the

"Vial of Life" program, call John Muir Memorial Hospital's Tel-Med health information service at 932-6100 and ask for tape # 5046.

Co Co Times 1/14/86

Two ambulances, paramedics to be added to emergency service

MARTINEZ — Regional Medical Systems will add two new ambulances with paramedics as part of its new contract with Contra Costa County for emergency ambulance service.

County supervisors Tuesday directed the Health Services Department to negotiate the contracts with the Fremont-based Regional and two fire districts, all of which already provide emergency ambulance service to the county.

The two new ambulances will increase the number with paramedics in the county to 12. Regional ambulances will continue working in Central, West and East county, while the Moraga and San Ramon Valley Fire Protection districts will continue to handle calls in their areas.

Regional in November became the only private emergency ambulance company under contract to the county when it purchased Cadillac Ambulance Service, which operated in West County.

The board decision to continue service with Regional came after a committee of law enforcement and health officials rejected plans by two other companies. Allied Ambulance of Oakland had proposed serving Central, West and East county, and Valley Ambulance of Castro

Valley had proposed serving East County. There were no competing proposals for the San Ramon Valley nor Moraga.

The committee said Regional's plan to boost its paramedic ambulances to 10 and equip all of them with cellular telephones, along with a satisfactory working relationship in the past, led to its recommendation.

The cellular phones will ease air traffic on the county's emergency medical radio system. No date was given for operating the two new ambulances.

The only other private company in the county, Antioch Ambulance, does not contract with Contra Costa to receive 911 assignments. It responds only to calls it receives directly from local residents.

Regional claims to be the third largest ambulance company in the state. Besides Contra Costa, it operates in most of Alameda County south and east of Oakland.

It started with one ambulance 23 years ago in Fremont, and now has nearly 60 ambulances in the East Bay.

Ole' for battling the blazes

Mexican firefighters visit Orinda and Moraga



MEXICAN FIREFIGHTERS George Benavente (left) and Felipe Hanlahusen commemorate the Bombero Mexican fire-fighting program with Contra Costa County Supervisor Nancy Fahden and Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas. The program, held every other year in Northern California, teaches Mexican firefighters American firefighting techniques. It is sponsored by the California Fire Chiefs' Association.



BOMBEROS Gerardo Diaz Correra (right) and Erasmo Gonzalez stand with Orinda Fire Chief Dave Evans and Contra Costa County Supervisor Nancy Fahden

Blaze wrecks office building

Arson thought to be cause

By Rachele Kanigel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Fire investigators believe a blaze that nearly destroyed a medical office building early Friday morning may have been purposely set.

"It's still under investigation, but arson is our best guess at this point," said Senior Firefighter Ken Consiglio of the Moraga Fire Department.

The fire, at 1042 County Club Drive, which was reported at 2:40 a.m. Friday, caused more than \$1 million in damage to the 2-story medical office building. The top floor of the building was destroyed and most of the rest of the building was damaged by fire, smoke, heat and water, Consiglio said.

No one was injured.

The blaze apparently started in an unoccupied suite on the second floor of the building. Much of the roof was already destroyed by the time firefighters arrived on the scene, and air-conditioning and heating units stored on the roof had fallen through the second story to the ground floor.

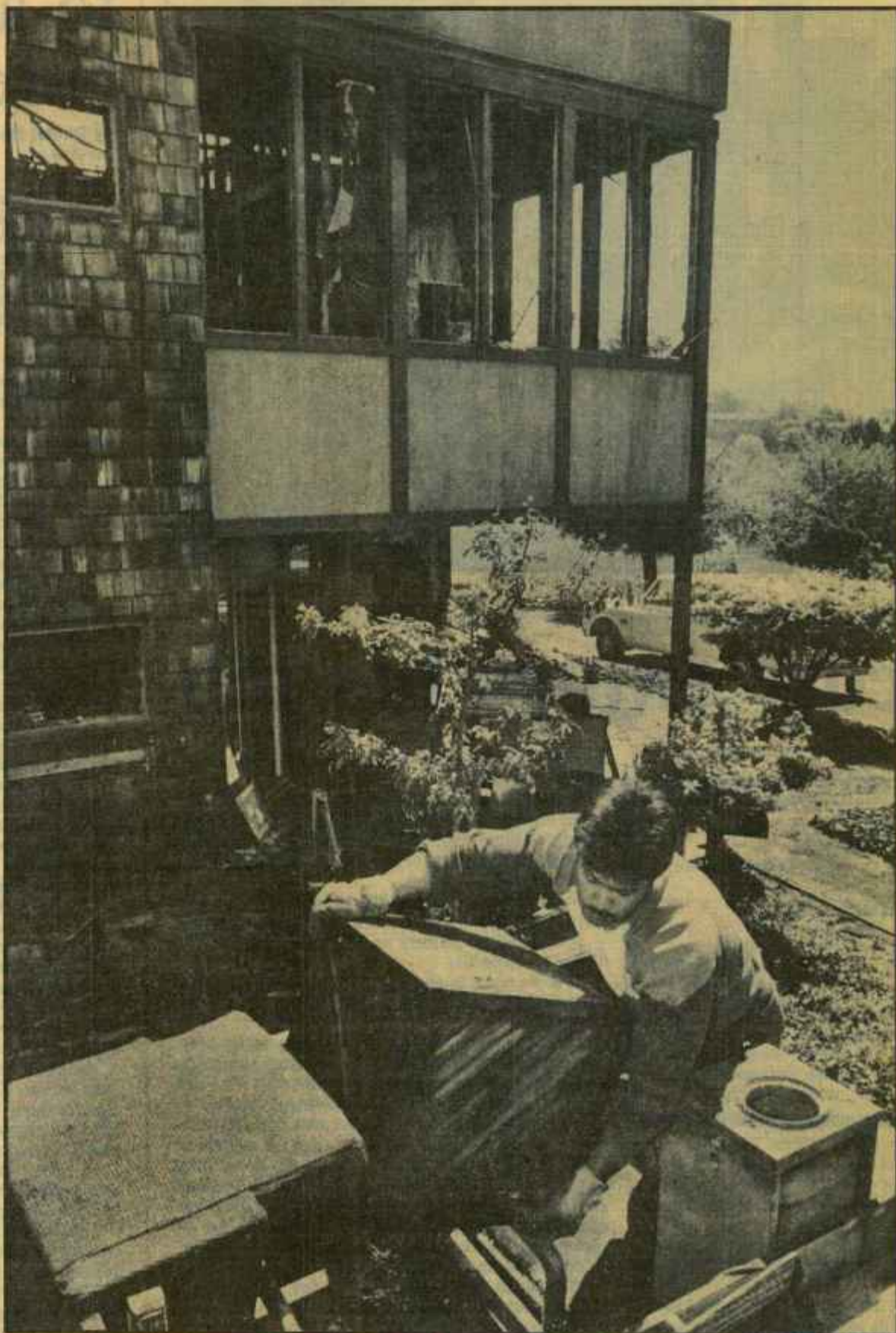
"It was cooked before we got there," Consiglio said.

About 25 firefighters from the Moraga, Orinda and Consolidated fire departments had the blaze contained an hour after it was first reported.

"We tried hard to save medical records and patient billing records, but we lost a lot," Consiglio said.

James Nichols, a chiropractor who worked out of an office on the first floor of the building, said he was thankful that records kept in his reception area were salvaged.

"I was very, very lucky," he said Friday evening after salvaging his ledger cards and a couple of smoke- and water-damaged chairs from the burned-out office. "But otherwise, I was totally wiped out."



Staff photo/Randy Becker

JAMES NICHOLS LOADS a few items he was able to salvage from a fire that destroyed the office building where he practiced

Nichols, who operated his practice at the building for 10 years, said he has arranged to rent temporary quarters in the office building next door.

No neighboring structures were damaged, but firefighters had to

protect one medical office building next door by spraying water on it so flying embers from the blaze wouldn't ignite it.

The fire "was spitting out a lot of embers," Consiglio said.

A grassy field separates the

burned building from a group of houses.

"We were really lucky," Consiglio said. "If it had been a few months later and that field wasn't green, we could have had a real problem out there."



Photo/Chris Baker

A NEIGHBOR battles a blaze at 1333 Rimer Drive in Moraga, which began at 4:30 p.m. Monday, May 4. An electrical short-circuit in a light fixture probably caused the \$100,000 worth of damage, according to Moraga Fire Marshal Les Wandel. The neighbor originally saw the flames, called firefighters and tried to put the fire out with a garden hose. The fire would have been minor if the house had had a sprinkler system or a fire-resistant roof, Wandel said. He blames the untreated roof shingles for the fire that started in the attic.

Moraga fire

Used barbecue briquets left in a plastic garbage can overnight are to blame for a fire that caused \$25,000 worth of damage to a duplex Saturday morning, according to a fire official.

The fire, which was reported at about 8:15 a.m. damaged a garage, attic and roof of one unit of a duplex on the 1900 block of Ascot Drive, said Moraga Fire Capt. Chris Klein. The adjoining unit had only smoke damage.

The fire, which was brought under control within about 25 minutes, started in a storage area between the

garage and house, he said.

CC Sun 5/13/87

CC paramedics celebrate 10th year

Original 18 lifesavers, 20 ICU nurses will be honored today at reception

By Nilda Rego

Staff writer

CONCORD — County paramedics will have a 10th year birthday party at 4 p.m. today at the Sheraton Hotel.

The county's original 18 paramedics and the 20 intensive-care nurses who gave directions by radio from hospitals will be honored at the reception.

County Supervisor Tom Powers of Richmond will give the keynote address, and Art Lathrop, director of the County Emergency Medical Services Office will be master of ceremonies.

Tickets for the reception will be sold at the door for \$5 each. The proceeds will go to a fund to hold events to honor paramedics, said Lathrop.

Contra Costa County was one of the first counties in Northern California to establish a paramedic system.

Paramedics in an ambulance, under consultation with a doctor at a hospital, can administer drugs and

In May 1977, the Moraga Fire Protection District and Pomeroy Ambulance Company of Walnut Creek started the first paramedic services in the county

perform other life-saving procedures. For example, they can use electroshock to revive heart attack victims or insert a tube into the windpipe of a patient who has stopped breathing.

In May 1977, the Moraga Fire Protection District and Pomeroy Ambulance Company of Walnut Creek started the first paramedic services in the county with John Muir Memorial Hospital as the base hospital, Lathrop said.

Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas recalled that Jean Kirsh in 1970 helped start the drive for paramedic service.

Kirsh's husband was in an accident in Moraga and almost bled to death before an ambulance reached

the community.

"It took 45 minutes," Lucas said. Because there were no ambulances based in Moraga, it would often take more than an hour before an ambulance could get an emergency patient to a hospital.

Kirsh, working with the Moraga Services League and other community groups, raised money and convinced Moraga residents to vote for a tax to pay for paramedic services, said Lucas.

Paramedic service started in Concord four months after Walnut Creek and Moraga when Michael's Ambulance Company added a paramedic team in September 1977 with Mt. Diablo Hospital as its base.

During that first year of opera-

tion the three paramedic teams applied their life-saving skills on 1,000 people. In 1978 Cadillac Ambulance Company in Richmond added a paramedic team. Six years later residents of East County and the San Ramon Valley were able to get paramedic services from the East County Ambulance Company and the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District. Los Medanos Hospital in Pittsburg became a base hospital for East County in 1986.

Today the county has 11 paramedic teams with 91 certified paramedics and 62 mobile intensive care nurses. Moraga and San Ramon Valley Fire Protection Districts each have a team and the Regional Ambulance Company, which provides emergency medical care to the rest of the county, has nine teams.

Last year, the county paramedic system provided emergency care to 7,000 people, said Lathrop.

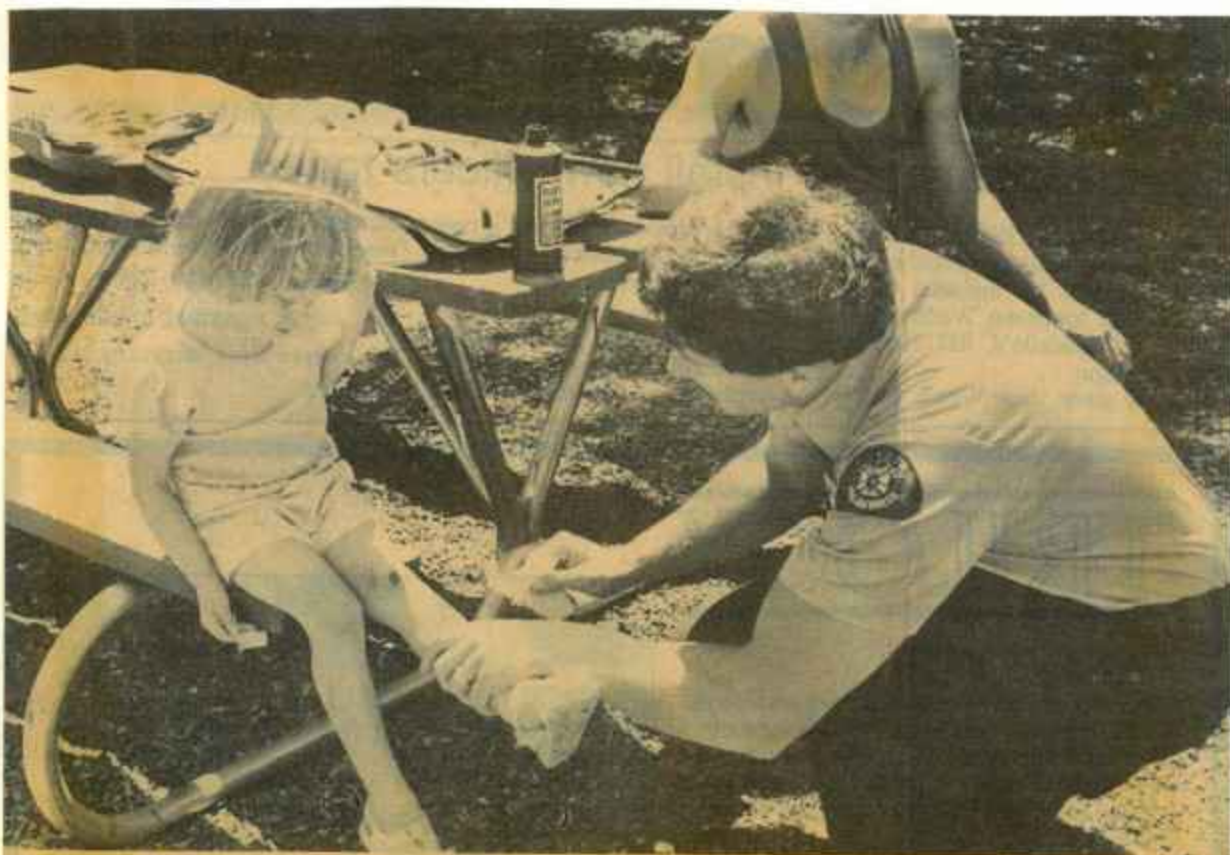
When a person called for emergency medical care, a paramedic team with advanced life-saving skills, was available 75 percent of the time, said Lathrop.

HONORING PARAMEDICS



Staff photo/Eric Rahkonen

MORAGA FIRE CHIEF ED LUCAS congratulates Capt. Bob Lunardini, one of the four Moraga firefighters who became the town's first paramedics. Also honored at the 10th anniversary celebration of Contra Costa's paramedic system on Tuesday were, from left, Senior Firefighter Bob Bratton, Capt. Rob Goodyear and Senior Firefighter Bob Cox. At the podium is Moraga Assistant Fire Chief John Cooper, who had received a surprise plaque from Lucas. Lucas told the group that without Cooper, Moraga probably would never have been able to develop a paramedic system. The birthday party honored the three original agencies that started the county system in May 1977: John Muir Memorial Hospital, Mt. Diablo Hospital and the Moraga Fire Protection District. More than 100 people attended the event.



FIRST AID — Christina Bryant, 4, gets her skinned knee cleaned by Senior Firefighter/Paramedic Bob Cox at the Moraga Commons Park during the Fourth of July festivities.

CC Sun 7/8/87

Grass fire threatens Moraga clubhouse

MORAGA — Youngsters playing with matches started a grass fire Sunday afternoon at the edge of a tennis and swimming club, police and firefighters said.

The fire blackened about 30 acres behind the Moraga Tennis and Swim Club, 1161 Larch Ave., sending a pall of yellow-gray smoke over parts of Lafayette and Walnut Creek.

The fire came within 200 yards of houses on Larch Avenue, but firefighters said no homes were seriously threatened. No one was injured.

Witnesses said the fire broke out at about 2:55 p.m. near a grove of pine trees that borders the club's tennis courts. A westerly breeze swept the fire uphill, away from the club.

"If the wind hadn't been blowing that way, the club would've gone," said Robin Dickson, the club's sales director. The blaze began 35 feet from the tennis courts.

Dickson said club members were told to leave the pool and the tennis courts as the fire started.

Please see **FIRE**, Page 2A

One member climbed onto the clubhouse roof and began hosing it down.

"We have a lot of kids out here and our main concern was their safety," Dickson said.

Moraga police Cpl. Mike Sloane said police interviewed the three children who were thought to have set the fire and released them to their parents. Police were still investigating and the cause of the fire had not been formally determined, he said.

Firefighters from Orinda and the Consolidated Fire District helped put out the fire, guided by a helicopter crew from the East Bay Regional Park District. The fire was declared under control at 4:22 p.m.



Staff photo/Brad Mangin

FIREFIGHTERS pull a hose uphill to fight a grass fire between the Moraga Tennis and Swim Club.

CC Times 7/13/87



CC Sun
7/15/87

LC photo/Brad Mangin

FIREFIGHTERS battle a 30-acre blaze near the Moraga Tennis and Swim Club

Moraga grass fire scorches 30 acres

Juveniles playing with matches started a grass fire Sunday in Moraga that scorched 30 acres but damaged no buildings, police and firefighters said.

The fire started about 2:55 p.m. behind the Moraga Tennis and Swim Club, 1161 Larch Ave., and sent clouds of smoke over parts of Lafayette and Walnut Creek.

"It was a horrendous plume of smoke," said Moraga Officer Ted Todd.

Firefighters said no homes were threatened, although the fire came within 200 yards of houses on Larch Avenue. No one was reported injured.

Three juveniles, aged 9, 10 and 11, are reported to have started the fire, Todd said.

The case has been referred to the fire department for further action, he said, adding that the juveniles' parents were "very cooperative."

Witnesses said the fire broke out near a grove of pine trees that borders the club's tennis courts. A westerly breeze swept the fire uphill, away from the club.

"If the wind hadn't been blowing that way, the club would've gone," said Robin Dickson, the club's sales director.

Dickson said club members were told to leave the pool and the tennis

courts as the fire started. One member climbed onto the roof and began hosing it down.

Meanwhile, according to Todd, two unidentified teenage girls rounded up horses on the nearby pasture land and led them to safety.

The burned areas were partly owned by the club and partly ranch land, Todd said.

Todd said police closed off Sanders Ranch and the tennis club area due to "a number of spectators."

Firefighters from Orinda and the Consolidated Fire District helped put out the fire, guided by a helicopter crew from the East Bay Regional Park District. The fire was declared under control at 4:22 p.m.

Moraga attic fires cause could be insulation type

8/26/87
CC SUN

The Moraga Fire District has experienced a rash of attic fires over the last several months.

"Spread of these fires in the attic area has been attributed to a cellulose type insulation that was introduced in the early '70s and is still being installed," said Fire Marshal Les Wandel.

Cellulose is made from ground and chemically treated newspapers and other scrap paper and is a loose, organic insulation meant to be blown or poured in place. It is the most commonly used contractor-installed attic material due to its low cost, according to Wandel.

The chemical used as a fire retardant in the cellulose material is apparently leaking out of the insulation or was improperly applied when manufactured, therefore creating a potentially dangerous fire situation that could have devastating consequences to homeowners, said fire officials.

The fire districts in Contra Costa County are working with the State Fire Marshal's Office on this "serious problem" until they can come up with a solution.

The Moraga Fire District has taken the position that it will not recommend the installation of this product and will advise the residents of the community that there may be a problem.

However, many other products are on the market that are reasonably fire safe.

The Moraga Fire District advises that in order to prevent a continuous fire problem, the homeowner check in the attic area and determine the type of attic insulation material that exists.

If the cellulose type material does exist, make certain that it is not lying on or near any type of recessed lighting fixture or heating duct in the attic area. If the home-

owner has any doubt in determining the type of insulation in the attic, a representative from the Moraga Fire District will come to the residence

to inspect and test the product.

Moragans may contact Wandel at 376-5454 and he will make arrangements for the inspection.

Comment

Fire retardant roofs urged by chief

To Moraga Town Council:

I am writing this letter at the request of the Moraga Fire Commission. At its meeting of Aug. 13, 1987, a discussion took place regarding an issue which has been a continuing item in the community for the past two years, that of fire retardant roofs. The Commission strongly feels the Council should reevaluate its position on fire retardant roofing at this time.

Since the onset of the issue, more and more communities (55) in the County and Bay Area have upgraded their roofing standards. It should be noted that Contra Costa County and the State of California have adopted ordinances governing fire retardant roofing. Moraga is one of the few communities in the area without such an ordinance; even Orinda is in the process of adopting such an ordinance.

Moraga's reluctance to adopt such an ordinance is having a negative impact on fire district operations. We have requested additional funds from the County to increase the on duty manpower, due to the isolation of the community and its topography. These funds have mainly been detained over one issue, that of the roofing ordinance.

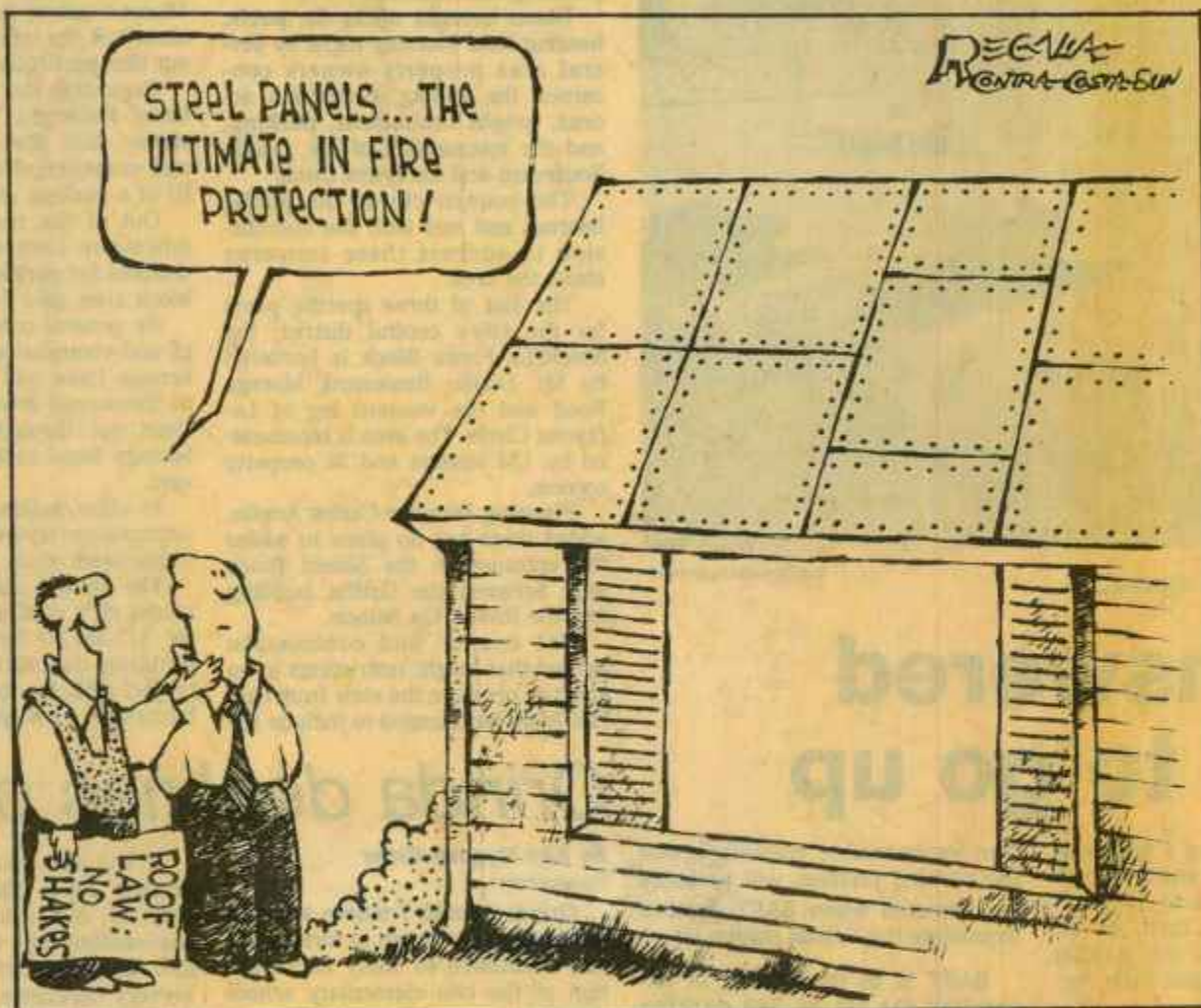
The first question asked is why isn't the community helping itself with a roof ordinance? Moraga is asking us (the County) to help upgrade its fire protection but in turn, Moraga doesn't want to attain a higher degree of fire safety through an ordinance. The County has a good point. The community has a means to help itself and since its council has not seen fit to do so, why should the County do it?

We would like to comment on the Fire Retardant Roof Committee's final report, dated July 1, 1986, as follows:

Recommendation 4, regarding the zoning of some areas as high risk with roofing restrictions in these areas, may sound like the answer, but in truth, does not solve the problem. Topography is only part of the problem. When a tract of homes with a sea of shake roofs is built (as was done with Carroll Ranch or Moraga Place), you build your own high risk area. The County and the State realize this and have done something about it, why hasn't Moraga? In short, because of its shake roof situation, there isn't an area in Moraga which can't be considered high risk.

Recommendation 7 states basically that the UNIFORM Building Code should not be adopted piecemeal. I agree. However, the Uniform Building Code is a National Code and the same conditions that exist in New York City are not necessarily the same in Moraga or in Contra Costa County. For this reason, the Code has a built-in mechanism for this type of needed amendment. It should be pointed out that the State of California and the County of Contra Costa have used this mechanism to adopt the ordinance for all jurisdictions under its control because they were aware of the need. Why is Moraga so different?

There have already been several major fires in the state this year where combustible roofing has played a major factor in the destruction of portions of communities. It should be pointed out that in two of the last four structure fires in Moraga during the month of July, the



roofs played a major part in the destruction of the homes. These two preventable fires cost the District and, in turn, the community, over \$5,000 in overtime costs due to injuries sustained at the fires. This money would have been put to better uses if we had the choice. This does not include the \$175,000 in fire damages and living expenses incurred by the residents and their insurance companies which could have been avoided.

The argument that the climatic conditions in Moraga are different went up in smoke with the Pebble Beach fire since the normal moisture content in the fuel in that area is two to three times greater than in the Moraga area during the summer months. However, one small camp fire was responsible for the loss of 38 homes. Moraga does not need that type of headlines.

The council has to understand that while the fire department is out fighting these preventable roof fires, it is without paramedic service to a community in which more than 60 percent of its responses are medical. This becomes a very important consideration. Additionally, the Town's two-man, on-duty police force is tied up on traffic control when it could be out on patrol.

The argument that a man's home is his castle and consequently, if he wants to have an unsafe roof it is his business, is unrealistic. When that castle is on fire because of an unsafe roof and we are fighting the fire, it has a direct impact on the community in the level of service being provided. The rest of the residents are without paramedic service and have very limited backup fire protection during this time. It is a sad commentary for a community which has always been in the forefront when it comes to safety issues, to be so backwards when it comes to this fire safe roof issue.

There are two commissions appointed by the county (the Fire and Safety Commissions) who represent the community and are knowledgeable in their respective fields. The commission members spend many, many hours of their own time, without compensation, because of their community interest. I would suggest that they have them study the question and abide by their recommendation as other communities have done.

ED LU
Moraga Fire C

Contra Costa Sun
9/30/87



SMOKEY THE BEAR, with Moraga Fire Marshal Les Wandel and two friends at the Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation open house last year, will make a return appearance. Smokey will be back at the Moraga Fire District Open House Saturday, Oct. 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Demonstration and handout materials for adults and children will be dispersed. The main fire station, site of the event, is 1280 Moraga Way. The public is invited.

THE LONG, DRY summer drags on, and members of the Orinda, Moraga and Consolidated (for Lafayette) fire departments are holding their collective breaths that the rains will come and ease the threat of grass fires. '87 has been devastating for Northern California as far as wildlands fires, but Lamorinda has escaped almost uncharred. Moraga Fire Marshal Les Wandel reminds Moragans that the fire district and Rescue One Foundation will host an open house at district headquarters, 1280 Moraga Way on Saturday, Oct. 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Circle your calendar.

Contra Costa
Times 10/6/87

Fire melts man's socks onto his ankles

ORINDA — An Orinda man who was trying to refuel his chainsaw Monday spilled a bucket of fuel in his garage, starting a fire so fierce that it melted his socks onto his ankles, firefighters reported.

Gordon Wright, 59, was in fair condition Monday evening in the burn ward of Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley, said Pat Munson, nursing supervisor.

Wright was carrying a bucket full of gasoline mixed with oil about 12:30 p.m. when the handle of the bucket broke, said senior firefighter-paramedic Bob Cox of the Moraga Fire Protection District.

The fuel quickly caught fire, probably as vapors reached the pilot light of a water heater or furnace, Cox said.

As firefighters rushed to Wright's house at 24 Whitehall Drive, he managed to escape his burning garage, Cox said. Outside the house, someone grabbed a garden hose and sprayed Wright with water, he said.

"He had burns on probably 20 to 25 percent of his body surface," he said.

Wright's legs and his right hand suffered first- and second-degree burns, Cox said. The victim's ankles received third-degree burns when his socks, which were made from a synthetic fabric, melted onto his skin, Cox said.

"It singed the hair on his head, too," he said. "He's fortunate he didn't have any respiratory burns."

The fire caused \$5,000 to \$8,000 damage to the garage, he said.

Orinda man injured in fierce fuel fire

cc Sun 10/14/87

An Orinda man who was trying to refuel his chainsaw last Monday spilled a bucket of fuel in his garage, starting a fire so fierce that it melted his socks onto his ankles, firefighters reported.

Gordon Wright, 59, was taken to the burn ward at Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley, where he was reported in fair condition, according to a hospital spokeswoman.

Wright was carrying a bucket full of gasoline mixed with oil at about 12:30 p.m. when the handle of the bucket broke, said senior firefighter-paramedic Bob Cox of the Moraga Fire Protection District.

The fuel quickly caught fire, probably as vapors reached the pilot light of a water heater or furnace, Cox said.

As firefighters rushed to Wright's house on Whitehall Drive, he managed to escape his burning garage, Cox said. Outside the house, someone grabbed a garden hose and sprayed Wright with water, he said.

"He had burns on probably 20 to 25 percent of his body surface," he said.

Wright's legs and his right hand suffered first- and second-degree burns, Cox said. The victim's ankles received third-degree burns when his socks, which were made from a synthetic fabric, melted onto his skin, Cox said.

"It singed the hair on his head, too," he said. "He's fortunate he didn't have any respiratory burns."

The fire caused \$5,000 to \$8,000 damage to the garage, he said.





Moraga Fire District

1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, CA 94556
(415) 376-5454

Ed Lucas, Fire Chief

Dear Parents and Children,

The Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation will host an Open House at Moraga Fire District Headquarters, 1280 Moraga Way on October 10, 1987 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

There will be demonstrations and handout materials for adults and children. Also, "Smokey the Bear" will again be here to talk to everyone.

Please join the Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation in observing Fire Prevention Week October 4th through 10th. Remember, "Play It Safe -- Plan Your Escape!"

For further information, please contact Les Wandel, Fire Marshal, at 376-5454.

LW/af



When each second counts

CPR helps add 'golden moments'

By Jeanie R. Wakeland

Staff writer

CONCORD — When Red Cross volunteer Jim Friberg talks about "golden moments," he's not talking about happy memories. He's talking about life and death.

"Golden moments" to a cardiopulmonary resuscitation instructor like Friberg are the four-to-six minutes between the time a heart stops from a heart attack, accident or drowning, until irreversible brain damage — and death — sets in from lack of oxygenated blood.

The difference between life and death can be the use of CPR on an ailing heart, said Friberg.

Friberg, who has completed emergency medical technician training and occasionally rides shotgun in an ambulance with his son, a certified EMT, has personally helped in three cases of heart failure. Two of the three people survived with the aid of CPR and timely intervention.

"One guy was dead when we arrived, and five minutes later he was sitting up, talking," he said.

In 1985, the most recent statistics available from the California Department of Health Services, 22 percent of the 2,256 deaths in 1985 Contra Costa County were from cardiovascular failure. Evidence on how many of these deaths were preventable are hard to come by, said Tom Hall, executive director of the local Heart Association.

"There's no standardized way of getting the information from the hospitals on who had CPR before the victim was taken into the hospital," Hall said.

The Red Cross estimates that of the 1.5 million people who have heart attacks in the United States, 350,000 people die before they can get help.

"Of these, 100,000 could be saved if someone knew CPR and started it in the first three minutes," Putnam said.

Not all studies back that one-third figure. A study of 1,905 cardiac-arrest victims in Milwaukee, from the Medical College of Wisconsin showed no difference in survival between those who got CPR from a passer-by (15 percent), a fireman (14 percent) and those getting no CPR (15 percent). However, Dr. Richard O. Cummings of the University of Washington in Seattle said that response time for ambulances with defibrillators was five minutes in Milwaukee. In Seattle, where CPR has been heavily promoted, a study showed that in areas with longer ambulance response times, the survival rate was 32 percent when CPR was applied immediately, but only 22 percent when a passer-by saw someone collapse and did not do CPR.

The Diablo chapter of the Red Cross and the Contra Costa chapter of the American Heart Association, the only two agencies that teach the eight-hour CPR certificate courses, trained 11,500 people in 1986. Nationwide statistics from the American Heart Association show that 50 million people have learned CPR in the last 10 years.

Putnam would like to see 50 percent of the adults in Contra Costa County trained in CPR, a goal she admits is far off. Lack of interest, fear of contracting AIDS and even questions over CPR's effectiveness block that goal.

"Most people say they're too busy unless something forces them, like their husband having a heart attack or having a new baby in the house," Putnam said. "Human nature being what it is, people don't act unless they need it."

Red Cross publicity on CPR classes is limited. The chapter has just one paid promotion staffer whose job it is to acquaint the public with all Red Cross safety and emergency programs.

Still, the Diablo chapter of the Red Cross taught 7,500 people CPR last year at its Concord office, adult schools and in businesses. Students range from family



Staff photo/Kathy Baker

LISA SMITH LEARNS CPR techniques from Red Cross volunteer Jim Friberg

members of previous heart attack victims to those who are required by employers or the Occupational Health and Safety Administration to have the training, such as firefighters, some chemical workers and playground supervisors.

In recent years, Friberg said, some trainees have worried about legal liability and the threat of AIDS. California's 1977 "Good Samaritan" law protects people who have completed a certified CPR course from civil lawsuits stemming from giving emergency help.

As for AIDS, said Friberg, "We tell them what the federal Center for Disease Control has told us: There is no recorded case of anyone contracting AIDS by casual contact."

A Red Cross official put it more bluntly to Putnam. "He said you'd have to swallow five gallons of saliva to get the virus from mouth-to-mouth contact."

During CPR training, students are taught methods of opening a breathing airway, giving artificial respiration and heart compression with the hands. They're instructed to give CPR for one minute, call for an ambulance or other medical help and then continue with breathing and heart compression.

Nationally, a small controversy is growing over whether the call for emergency help should be done be-

fore CPR. Only about 5 to 30 percent of the blood normally circulated by the heart is moved during CPR. This is enough to maintain vital organs for about three minutes. After that, they begin to deteriorate.

The key to restarting the heart, say emergency physicians, is the use of the defibrillators used by paramedics or in emergency rooms. This machine runs an electric shock through the heart which enables it to re-establish its normal rhythm and beat again. According to Dr. Robert Huszar, medical director for New York State Emergency Medical Services, clinical studies have shown that CPR in cardiac arrest is less than 5 percent effective without defibrillation.

Kenneth R. Stults, a nationally recognized authority in emergency care on the staff of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, believes that given the choice of doing CPR and calling for paramedics, people should call for the paramedics first.

Dr. Cummings disagrees. "I don't think there is any evidence that CPR has been exaggerated in the public mind," he told Newsday. "Most people are aware that a multitude of interventions have to be done. The thrust of training is, you have two tasks: Do CPR and get help."

Locations of CPR classes

Here are some of the places to obtain state certified CPR classes:

Contra Costa

- Concord Leisure Services, 671-3270
- Pleasant Hill Recreation Department 676-5200
- Walnut Creek Recreation Department 943-5858
- Moraga Fire Department 376-5454
- Lafayette Recreation Department 284-2232
- Pittsburg Recreation Department 439-3440
- Mt. Diablo Hospital (Education Dept.) 674-2290
- Ward Chiropractic Clinic Danville 837-5503
- Martinez Adult Education 228-3276
- YMCA 687-8900
- Kaiser Hospital, Walnut Creek 943-2771 or 943-2188

Tri-Valley

- American Red Cross, Twin Valley Branch — 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Oct. 27 and 29. American Red Cross, 373 N. "L" St., Livermore. \$25. 443-3910.
- Valley Memorial Hospital and Dublin/San Ramon Fire Services District — 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Nov. 17 and 19, Family Medical Center, 9260 Alcosta Blvd., San Ramon. \$20 per person or \$35 per couple.
- Danville Fire Department — Generally one class per month; call for dates and times. Station 1, 800 San Ramon Valley Blvd., Danville. \$10.

Reserves Augment Moraga Fire Fighters

In the old days, fires in the town of Moraga were put out by neighbors working together to fight the blaze.

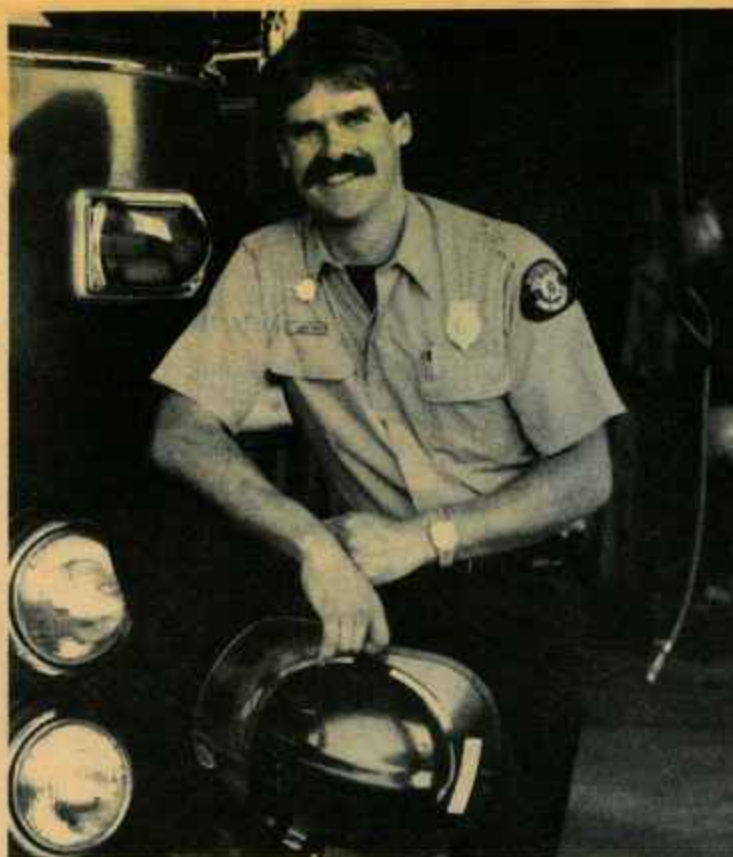
Over the years as the population grew, the town recruited full-time paid fire fighters to augment the volunteer system. Eventually the entire fire department consisted of qualified, thoroughly trained, professional paid fire fighters.

Now the story has come full circle—members of the community once again serve in the Moraga Fire Department as on-call Reserves.

Captain Rob Goodyear ("yes, just like the blimp," he says) supervises the reserves program and praises all 12 men who serve in it.

"We call on the reserves both for emergency and non-emergency situations," he explains, "to augment our on-duty staff. It might be a large fire. Or, as happened once recently, it might be an automobile accident where there are several people trapped inside the vehicles and we need extra help from in-town people who can get there quickly. They are paid for their time, of course."

Captain Goodyear says the department does not actively recruit reserves. Although there are only 12 positions



Captain Rob Goodyear ("yes, just like the blimp"), of the Moraga Fire Department Reserves Program, supervises the Reserves Program in addition to his regular duties. The reserve volunteers can be called into action for both emergency and non-emergency fires and accidents to augment the regular department staff.

available, filling an empty post has never been a problem. "People usually hear about it just by word-of-mouth."

Nor are the reserves limited to men. "All of our current 12 reserves are men. But we welcome women," he notes.

How does one join the reserves? When a position becomes vacant, applicants take a physical agility test and then an oral test. Once accepted, basic training in fire fighting and first aid follow. Afterwards, all reserves attend twice-monthly drills for fire fighting and

other training.

"I think the reserves do a fantastic job," Captain Goodyear says. "Their service benefits the community enormously. And there's a benefit for them, too—many like the work so much that they're actively taking tests to pursue fire fighting careers."

"So this is a program that's good all the way around—for the town of Moraga, for the people who serve and for the fire service in general."

C.C. Sun
11/18/87



Sun Photo/Bill Hutchinson

Construction crew works on Rheem Boulevard fire house

Earthquake proofing project in progress

Construction crews have been working on a \$278,000 earthquake proofing project of the Moraga fire stations on Moraga Way and Rheem Boulevard, according to fire Chief Ed Lucas.

Lucas said earthquake proofing is being done to comply with state requirements.

Work being done at the Moraga Way station includes reroofing, and minor remodeling.

The 30-year-old Rheem Boulevard Station, according to Lucas, is being extensively remodeled. He also said the engine room is being expanded and \$36,000 worth of steel is being placed in the walls and ceiling for support.

The Rheem Boulevard station is still operational. "Although it may not seem that way," Lucas said.

The money for the earthquake proofing project is coming from the Fire District Fund tax, Lucas said.

The fire district opted to proceed with the project after annual insurance rates on the stations jumped from \$1,300 to \$20,000 in less than four years, Lucas said.

"Besides, if there's an earthquake, insurance isn't going to do you a bit of good," Lucas said. "It isn't going to help the community if our rescue units are buried under rubble."

"During an earthquake you have to have your equipment ready to go, because if the entry ways to the community are closed, which they'll probably be, you won't be able to get outside help."

The project, which began Aug. 26, was scheduled to be completed by the first of the year. Since weather conditions have delayed construction, Lucas said the project will probably be completed sometime in February.



Photo by Gordon Nathan

Rescue One Foundation President Ellie Kositch presents gift to Paramedic Tim Bartolomei, right, Fire Chief Ed Lucas and Paramedic Ken Consiglio, left, of the Moraga Fire District. In background is the newly refurbished rescue unit.

Rescue One Foundation paramedics gift

One of the highlights of the popular annual open house celebrating Fire Prevention Week was the presentation of a new Life-Pak 5 EKG monitor/defibrillator to the Moraga Fire District by the Rescue One Foundation.

Ellie Kositch, president, stated that this is "truly a gift from the community," as all funds expended for paramedic equipment comes through donations. The Moraga Fire

District paramedics submit a "wish list" to the Rescue One board of directors who then purchase the equipment as funds become available.

Dr. Ben Ho and Alan Miller were recently elected to the board.

Directors completing the board are: Jerry Meyer, Julie Fisher, Gordon Nathan, Jeanne Kirsch, Carol Porterfield, Ellen Long and Ellie Kositch, president.

Solicitors get funds with false pitch

By Bill Hutchinson
Staff writer

A Modesto-based paramedic association has solicited contributions from an undetermined number of Orinda and Moraga residents by falsely saying the donations will be used locally, according to authorities.

Ellie Kositch, president of the Moraga Rescue One Foundation, said Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas has contacted officials of the California Fire and Paramedic Rescue Association and told them to stop soliciting contributions under false pretenses.

"Because of the special regard the citizens of Moraga have for their paramedics, many people might feel their donations to this company would directly benefit this town's paramedics," Kositch said. "The fact is, Moraga and Orinda Fire Districts do not belong to this associa-

tion and would therefore not benefit in any way from this solicitation."

In reply to Lucas' request, the association has agreed to refund all donations upon request and send a letter out to all donors in Moraga and Orinda expressing regret for any "misunderstanding that may have occurred during the solicitation process."

Kositch said the only way to give funds to directly benefit Moraga's paramedics is to donate to the Moraga Rescue One Foundation, a local citizen's support group endorsed by the State of California in 1979.

Funds received by the Moraga Rescue One Foundation, according to Kositch, are used to purchase equipment and supplies for the Moraga paramedics which are not available through conventional funding.

Officials investigating the solicitation by the California Fire and

Paramedic Rescue Association said the group is legitimate. Several of its solicitors, however, were "overzealous" in their pitch to raise funds, according to officials.

In a similar case in Walnut Creek recently, solicitors convinced donors that their contributions would go to support a local suicide prevention group. The donations, however, were spent elsewhere.

Solicitors, according to officials, are usually paid based on a percentage of what they raise. In some cases solicitors have received 80 percent from each dollar they raised.

Anyone who has made a donation to the California Fire and Paramedic Rescue Association and does not receive a letter from the group should contact the Moraga Fire District at 376-5454.

CC Sun
11/11/87

C.C. Sun
12/2/87



Christmas baby didn't wait for paramedics

By Rachele Kanigel

Staff writer

MORAGA — A baby girl was so eager to spend Christmas with her family that she struggled out of her mother's womb before paramedics arrived to help.

Arianna Reidelberger arrived 12 days before her due date and

WALT AND PENNY Reidelberger cuddle their Christmas baby, Arianna.

Staff photo/Brad Mangin

minutes before firefighter-paramedics from the Moraga Fire Department got to her grandparents' home to bring her into the world.

Walt Reidelberger, father of the 6-pound, 7-ounce baby, said he and his wife awoke about 2 a.m. Christmas morning when their 2½-year-old daughter, Alexandra, woke up and couldn't go back to sleep.

Please see **BABY**, Page 2A

C.C. Times
12/26/87

NEW BABIES and the new year go together, and Bob & Molly Reidelberger received an unexpected gift when their daughter-in-law, visiting for Christmas, gave birth to a 6-pound 7-ounce baby girl on Christmas morn. Walt & Penny Reidelberger's second daughter arrived 12 days early and minutes before Moraga Paramedics Bob Bratton & Terry Stewart responded to a 911 call at the Corte Pinon home shortly after 3 a.m. They cut the umbilical cord and drove mother and child to the hospital in Walnut Creek where both were pronounced in great shape. The younger Reidelbergers returned home to Mountain View to see in the new year.

C.C. Sun
12/30/87

BABY

From Page 1A

The Mountain View family was visiting for Christmas at the Moraga home of Walt's parents, Bob and Molly Reidelberger.

About 3 a.m., Walt's wife, Penny, started having short, rapid labor pains.

She had been due to give birth Jan. 6.

"Her doctor had said she would make it through Christmas," Walt said.

He telephoned her obstetrician in Sunnyvale. After hearing the description of the pains, the doctor said it was probably false labor and they shouldn't worry.

When the pains continued, Walt called 911 and was connected with the Moraga Fire Department.

By the time firefighter-paramedics Terry Stewart and Bob Bratton arrived at the Corte Pinon home, the baby had been born with the assistance of her grandmother, Molly Reidelberger.

"The baby came so fast that we couldn't do anything else but have it right there," Walt said later Friday. "My wife had gotten dressed to go to the hospital, but by the time I got off the phone she couldn't even get out of bed.

"It was very exciting."

Bratton said he and his partner arrived just in time to cut the baby's umbilical cord.

After firefighters cut the cord and cleaned up the infant, they drove the mother and child to John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek.

Both were doing fine Friday night.

Sanders Ranch homeowners to Rescue I



C.C. Sun
1/27/88

Rescue I Foundation Director Jerry Meyer, Senior Firefighter/Paramedic Ed Borden; Priscilla Rosenberg and President of Sanders Ranch Homeowners Association Joe Eckhart with new, child-size mannequin

When Priscilla Rosenberg realized that the location of her home in Sanders Ranch required extra response time to emergencies from the Moraga Fire District, she did something about it.

She presented a plan to the Sanders Ranch Homeowners Board of Directors so the residents themselves could be

trained to handle emergencies until help arrived.

She arranged for monthly Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) classes to be given by the Moraga Paramedics at the fire station. Over 100 residents were involved.

To express their gratitude to Paramedics Darrell Lee, Pete Nowicki and Mark Watson of

the "C" shift for both their time and expertise, the homeowners board voted to donate a child mannequin to Rescue I Foundation for the Fire District.

Only adult and baby figures had been available.

"Now we have them all, thanks to Priscilla," said Ellie Kostich, president of the Rescue I board.



C.C. Sun
2/24/88

MORAGA FIREFIGHTERS use the "Jaws of Life" to rescue a 19-year-old Berkeley woman who was trapped in her car after a head on collision on Canyon Road Thursday. The victim was treated at the scene and transported by paramedics to the trauma center at John Muir Memorial Hospital in Walnut Creek, where she was admitted in serious but stable condition. A 25-year-old Moraga man, riding in the other car, was treated and released for minor injuries received in the accident.

Fire prevention saves lives

Oct 12, 1988
Contra Costa Sun

The Moraga Fire Department reminds Lamorinda residents that Oct. 9-15 is Fire Prevention Week. This year, the fire department is emphasizing one of the most basic fire safety behaviors--detecting a fire earlier, thus reducing the risk of death.

The theme for this year is "A sound you can live with ... test your smoke detector." According to Fire Marshall Les Wandel, "Moraga fire fighters have some special activities planned to make sure all Moraga homes are protected by smoke detectors."

"Having a smoke detector in your home is one of the most important steps you can take," said Wandel, "but it's not enough. You need to take good care of your smoke detector, so it can take good care of you. Proper installation and regular maintenance and testing are critical. That is what Fire Prevention Week is all about this year."

According to Wandel, people are at the most risk from fire in their own homes. There were five fires in Moraga last year, all of them in the home. Nationwide, roughly 80 percent of all fire deaths occur in the home. Wandel emphasized that very



Smokey the Bear and Moraga Fire Marshall Les Wandel stand with two friends in front of a fire truck

young children and the elderly are at special risk. Also, he pointed out, the majority of fatal home fires occur at night, when families are asleep and need smoke detector protection the most.

The Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation will host an

open house the the fire district headquarters, 1280 Moraga Way on Oct. 15 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be ongoing demonstrations and handout materials.

For more information on Fire Prevention Week, call the Moraga Fire District at 376-5454.

Nine dalmatians



MORAGA RESIDENT DON FRANKLIN (second from left) recently brought the offspring of his two dalmatian dogs down to the Moraga Fire Department to show firefighters. Pictured above (left to right) are Senior Firefighter Ken Consiglio, Franklin, Jennifer Franklin, Kelly Morris, and Firefighter Bob Bratten. The two larger dogs are the parents, Skipper (left) and Cricket.

Contra Costa Sun 6-15-88

Moraga firefighters do more than fight fires

The Moraga Fire Department, considered a "sacred cow" for the "town at the end of the cul-de-sac," provides fire protection services as well as an efficient and highly skilled paramedic team and ambulance service.

Because of Moraga's location, its citizens



Ed Lucas, fire chief

depend chiefly on the Moraga Fire Department for emergency services.

Ten paramedics and 10 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), all of whom double as firefighters, man the only fire department in Contra Costa County which provides a Paramedic Emergency Ambulance System.

More than two-thirds of all Moraga Fire Department calls are for emergency medical care, and response has been made to more than 6,200 rescue calls since 1971.

In 1950, the small red Moraga Ranch firehouse became the first station. The Rheem station was added in 1957, and the main station, at 1280 Moraga Way, was dedicated in 1968.

Because Moraga had no ambulance service, the Moraga Service League sponsored a fund drive in 1970 to purchase a rescue van. "Rescue One" was manned by firefighters who trained to become EMTs on their own time. In 1973, the Moraga Service League donated a heart-lung resuscitator for the "Rescue One" unit, and since then the Rescue One Foundation has made many valuable donations.

Ed Lucas is Fire Chief; John Cooper, assistant Fire Chief; and Les Wandel, Fire Marshal.



Main fire station on Moraga Way with meeting room next door



Herbert Andrew Bonner

Herbert Andrew Bonner, 75, of Moraga died Monday at Merritt Hospital in Oakland.

He was in the insurance business for 52 years and had an office in Orinda. A member of the Masons, he belonged to Yerba Buena Lodge

DEATHS

403. He was born in Berkeley and lived in the Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga areas for 45 years.

He is survived by his wife, Dorothy Bonner of Moraga; son, Michel Bonner of Jacksonville, Ore.; daughter, Karen Wiles of Santa Fe, N.M.; sister, Ethel Hinman of Oakland; and one grandchild.

There will be no services. Arrangements are by the Neptune Society of Walnut Creek.

The family prefers contributions to Rescue #1 Paramedic Unit, in care of the Moraga Fire Department, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, 94556.

Paramedic service debated

By Gayle Vassar Melvin

Staff writer

Paramedic service. Everyone wants it, and they want it fast.

How fast is fast enough was the subject of a recent meeting between Orinda city council and fire commission members. Inspired in part by a report presented to the council by former council member Joe Harb, the joint meeting was the first since incorporation.

City Manager Tom Sinclair said the session was to serve as "the opening of dialogue between the council and the fire district board."

All council and commission members were present, as well as Fire Chief Dave Evans, Fire Marshal Ron Garland and representatives from Regional Medical Systems, which provides ambulance service to Orinda and Lafayette.

An article written last year in the New Orinda News by Ann Nye had pointed out that Orinda did not have paramedics within the city limits. Unlike Moraga's Rescue One program, fire fighters in Orinda are not trained paramedics; the closest paramedic service is in Lafayette.

Talking about Nye's article, Harb said "As I looked into it, I did not find one person in Orinda that did not believe we had paramedics. That illustrates the problem."

Harb's report said that Orinda could set up a program similar to Moraga's with fire fighters doubling as paramedics, for about \$100,000 a year. Start-up costs would be about \$90,000, Harb said.

"As long as the county is in control of the fire/medical services in Orinda, we can not expect the Orinda District to provide paramedics," Harb said.

"It is up to the Orinda City Council to take the initiative," he concluded.

Not everyone agreed with Harb's conclusions. At issue was whether the paramedic support Orinda was already receiving was adequate.

Orinda's firefighters are trained in emergency medical procedures.

They can not administer intravenous drugs, but they can administer oxygen and CPR.

In addition, the Orinda Fire District was the first in the county to get defibrillators, which can restart a heart in the event of certain types of heart failure. Dr. Howard Conklin, a member of the fire commission, said that the emergency training that Orinda's firefighters do have, combined with the defibrillators, was sufficient in most cases. In cases where paramedics were required, the firefighters' emergency medical services could keep a patient alive until the paramedics arrived, Conklin added.

Why add extra expenses to the budget when city residents were already getting acceptable emergency care?, asked fire officials.

"We are not as exposed as it might appear," said Fire Commissioner Charles Blue.

Fire Marshal Ron Garland agreed with Blue. "The whole city has paramedic service available through the private sector," he said.

Dennis Bolt, vice president of Regional Medical Service, said that his company's response time to call in Orinda was "less than optimal" but well within the county prescribed standard of ten minutes.

Of the 36 Orinda calls for emergency service in January, 21 were medical emergencies requiring treatment, Bolt said. 12 of those required transport to a hospital; seven required paramedic-level assistance.

Because of the low numbers of calls per month, critics of the combined firefighter/paramedic suggestion said that the paramedics would not receive enough calls to maintain their skills.

"It would be a very complex issue and create problems," said Conklin. "With about eight patients per paramedic per year, the skills would not stay proficient."

Aldo Guidotti agreed with Conklin. "It would be like a great chef cooking a meal only one time a year," he quipped. "He wouldn't be

proficient."

The fire commission preferred to continue utilizing the private sector for paramedic service to Orinda.

Whether paramedic service remains in the private sector or becomes part of the Orinda fire district's service, more money is available for funding the program.

As a result of the passage of Advisory Measure H by an overwhelming margin, the county has created a Measure H implementation task force.

Sinclair said that each city would have to agree to be part of the program before they would receive any Measure H funds. If Orinda were to agree, each home would be assessed up to \$10 for emergency medical services.

Sinclair said that the county would prefer to use the money towards supplementing the private sector's present service, rather than using it for individual fire districts.

Regional Medical System's president applauded the passage of Measure H, and said that he was one of the measure's original proponents.

"We are an open book," he told the council. "We are the ones who brought the issue (of increased needs for paramedic service) to the county."

Gail Porto, attending the meeting as an interested resident, urged the council to consider implementing city-specific paramedic services. "We have chosen to live in a part of the county that is fairly sparse and far from hospitals," she said.

"We have a real significant problem here," Porto told the council.

Others said that even if paramedics were located in the heart of the city, lack of street and house signs and the twisty Orinda roads made locating homes hard.

"It isn't just getting here, it's find the home," said Guidotti.

The council moved to form a committee to examine all aspects of the paramedic issue. The topic will appear on a council agenda in the near future.

Our readers say:

66 Sun 4 '89

Rescue I publicity

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jane Putnam and the Sun for 'Coming to the rescue' of Rescue I Foundation regarding the bogus solicitation of funds for our organization.

Because of your articles, the donors were notified and given the opportunity to seek refunds.

We are so very proud of our Moraga Fire District personnel and deeply appreciate the publicity you have given to both them and us.

JERRY MEYER

President, Rescue I Foundation



Moraga *Contra Costa Sun* 5-24-89



Sun photo/Sandra Harris

Moraga's fire commissioners and fire chief proudly stand in front of the town's new, state of the art, fire truck. From left are Fire Chief Ed Lucas, Fire Commissioners Gordon Nathan, Sue Noe and Art Comerford, fire fighters Tim Bartolomei, Ron Goodyear and Dan Romero

Moraga firefighters do more than fight fires

The Moraga Fire Department, considered a "sacred cow" for the "town at the end of the cul-de-sac," provides fire protection services as well as an efficient and highly skilled paramedic team and ambulance service.

Because of Moraga's location, its citizens depend chiefly on the Moraga Fire Department for emergency services.

Ten paramedics and 10 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), all of whom double as firefighters, man the only fire department in Contra Costa County which provides a Paramedic Emergency Ambulance System.

More than two-thirds of all Moraga Fire Department calls are for emergency medical care, and response has been made to more than

6,200 rescue calls since 1971.

In 1950, the small red Moraga Ranch firehouse became the first station. The Rheem station was added in 1957, and the main station, at 1280 Moraga Way, was dedicated in 1968.

Because Moraga had no ambulance service, the Moraga Service League sponsored a fund drive in 1970 to purchase a rescue van. "Rescue One" was manned by firefighters who trained to become EMTs on their own time. In 1973, the Moraga Service League donated a heart-lung resuscitator for the "Rescue One" unit, and since then the Rescue One Foundation has made many valuable donations.

Ed Lucas is Fire Chief; John Cooper, assistant Fire Chief; and Les Wandel, Fire Marshal.

Historic Moraga fire commission is keeping up with the times

By Sandra Ann Harris

Correspondent

Times have changed since the Moraga Fire House was located at 1000 School Street 21 years ago, but the Moraga Fire District's acute concern for the community's welfare and safety remains the same.

These days old Moraga Fire House on School Street is home to the Country Store, an antique store owned and operated by Bob and Barbara Edgren of Orinda. A crisp red and white striped awning and paned windows have replaced the garage doors. A black dancing horse swings from a sign reading "Country Store."

It's easy to miss the white letters behind reading "Moraga Fire Company," or to dismiss them as a quaint touch added by the proprietors.

But this was the home of the Moraga Fire Department from its birth in 1946 till 1968.

For the first 14 years, the Fire Department was part of the East Contra Costa Fire District, which included Pittsburg, San Ramon, Tassahara, Moraga and everything in between for a total of 216 square miles. All of the areas were unincorporated.

Moraga broke from the pack in 1960 and formed the Moraga Fire District, covering 32 square miles.

80 percent of the Moraga Fire District boundaries are contained by Moraga's city limits. 20 percent lie outside the town. The neighborhoods surrounding Ivy Drive and

Del Rey are one example of the conflicting boundaries. These areas are Orinda city territory, but the Moraga Fire District's responsibility.

The Fire Department prides itself on speedy response times of under 5 minutes for 90 percent of their calls, Chief Ed Lucas said. The outlying areas from Canyon to the crest of Skyline are the exception since the roads are unusually windy and the terrain is hilly.

Prior to the inception of the paramedics program in Moraga, the city was serviced by a private Walnut Creek-based service. Citizens felt they weren't able to respond quickly enough. The response time was as long as 25 minutes, not including the 25 minutes travel time from Moraga to the hospital. One resident nearly bled to death, as a result of the delays.

"Moraga being at the end of a cul-de-sac, it takes a long time to get here. It's simply too far away," said Rescue One's past president Julie Fisher.

A group called the Moraga Service League felt the community's need would be better met by local paramedics, so they pushed to acquire an ambulance and some Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) in the early seventies.

"The program evolved from the EMTs to a full blown paramedics program," Fisher said.

In 1976 the paramedics program called Rescue One began, and currently 13 full-time paramedics are employed in Moraga. Last year the

paramedics administered aid to Moraga residents in response to 520 emergency calls. A number of other calls were responded to, but upon arrival it was determined paramedic assistance was not necessary. Of the 520 calls, 113 involved cardiac or respiratory trouble, 182 involved trauma (broken arm, a car accident, etc.), 29 involved strokes, and one involved a birth, in addition to other miscellaneous emergencies.

"It's probably the most successful program in Northern California," said Fisher. "I think the town is fortunate to have such quality service and personnel."

Rescue One is a non-profit organization that collects donations without soliciting. The money generated is used specifically for the paramedics service, including equipment upgrades and other niceties that aren't funded by the county. Over \$35,000 of equipment has been purchased since 1980. Donations average \$8,000 each year.

Rescue One meetings are held on the first Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the District Office, located at 1280 Moraga Way. Jerry Meyer is currently president of Rescue One.

At a time when the flow of county money has slowed to a trickle, the Moraga Fire Department is anything but stagnant.

April 1, 1989 marked the day Moraga's new fire engine was put into operation. State of the art equipment, like a new defibrillator weighing only 10 lbs., instead of 50

lbs. like the older models, and a powerful generator make the new engine another notch on the Moraga Fire Department's golden belt.

The Moraga Fire Commission was instrumental in persuading the county to purchase the engine. Five commissioners are appointed by the county at the recommendation of two city council members. Commissioners have no part in the selection process. Sue Noe serves both as a commissioner and a Moraga city council member.

Noe said, "I act as a liaison basically. Our town has never had a council member on the commission before. I can see some point in the future when there might be a definite advantage" to sit on both, she said.

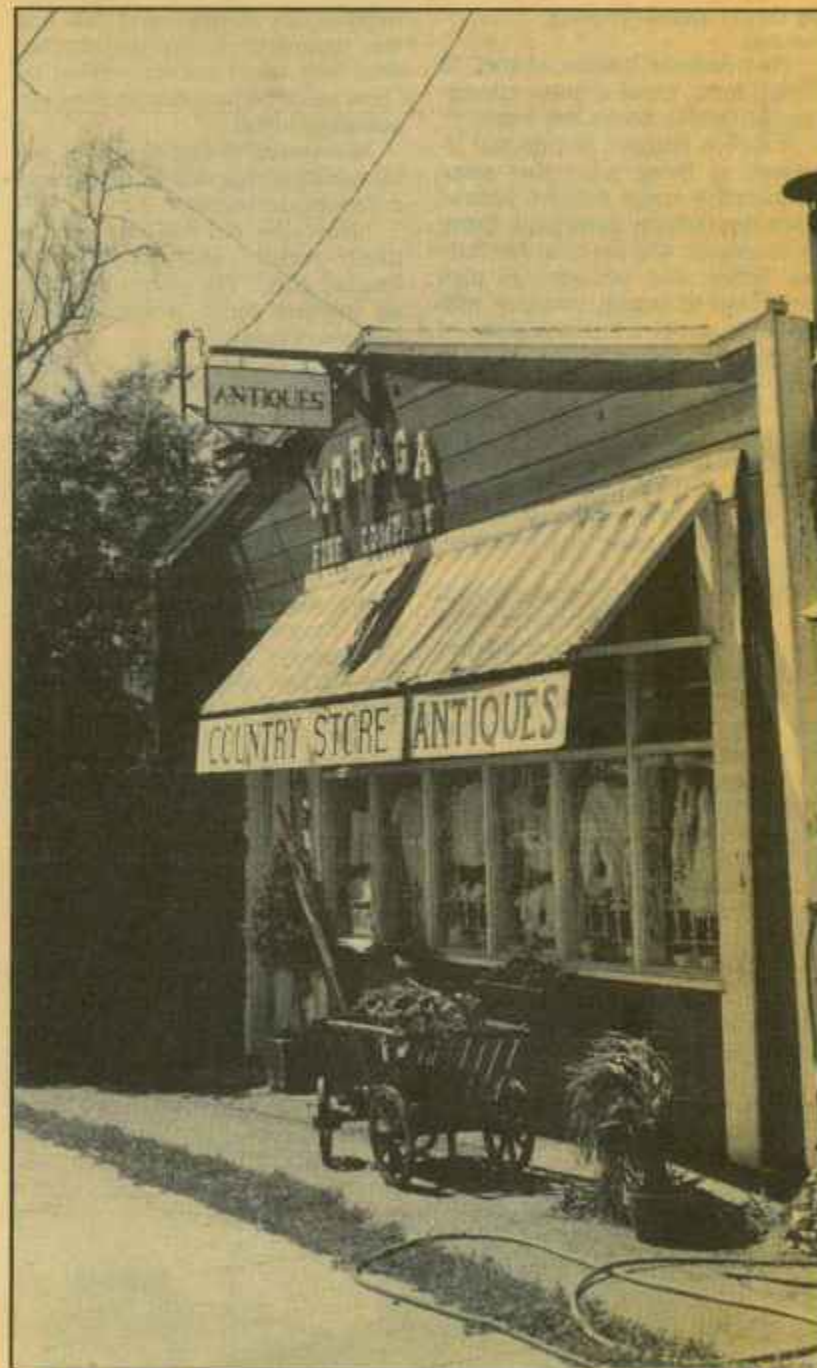
"If I felt there was a conflict I would have resigned (from the commission)," she added.

"I think it's great!" said Lucas. "I wish it had happened years ago." Walnut Creek, Pittsburg and Antioch all have citizens serving both as city council members and fire commissioners. "It's nothing new," he said.

Fire Commission meetings are held at 7:30 on the second Thursday of each month at the District Office, located at 1280 Moraga Way.

Lucas has been Moraga Fire Chief for three years, but his career with the Moraga Fire Department dates back to 1959. At that time, Lucas was offered a job with the Walnut Creek Department too, but he chose Moraga because of the growth potential, and "I loved the area," he said. At that time the Moraga Fire District serviced only 254 homes. Now there are 625 Moraga homes.

Lucas was born and raised in Orinda where his father served as a volunteer fireman. Fire fighting runs in the family, and in addition to his father's involvement, Lucas' father-in-law and cousins are also fire fighters.



The first fire house is now an antique store owned by Bob and Barbara Edgren

Sun Photos/Sandra Ann Harris



Moraga's new, state-of-the-art fire truck, with (from left) proud Fire Chief Ed Lucas, Fire Commissioners Gordon Nathan, Sue Noe, and Art Comerford, firefighters Tim Bartolomei, Ron Goodyear and Don Romero. Commissioners not pictured are Walt Tibbitts and Linda Borrelli

Moraga fire officials warn about solicitation

Citizens of Moraga have again reported receiving telephone calls from a soliciting company asking for donations to benefit a paramedic association.

Because of the special regard the citizens of Moraga have for their paramedics, many people might feel their donations to this company would directly benefit their town's paramedics, according to Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas.

"The fact is, Moraga and Orinda fire districts do not belong to this association and would therefore not benefit in any way from this solicitation," Lucas said.

Jerry Meyer, president of the Moraga Rescue One Foundation, pointed out that the only way to give funds to directly benefit Moraga's paramedics is

to donate to the Moraga Rescue One Foundation. It is a local, volunteer citizen's support group endorsed by the State of California in 1977.

Funds received by this Foundation are used to purchase

equipment and supplies for the Moraga paramedics which are not available through conventional funding, she said.

Call 376-5454 for further information.

Moraga fire officials warn about solicitation

Citizens of Moraga have again reported receiving telephone calls from a soliciting company asking for donations to benefit a paramedic association.

Because of the special regard the citizens of Moraga have for their paramedics, many people might feel their donations to this company would directly benefit their town's paramedics, according to Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas.

"The fact is, Moraga and Orinda fire districts do not belong to this association and would therefore not benefit in any way from this solicitation," Lucas said.

Contact the fire districts or the associations and the refunds will be made to those who thought their money was going to benefit the local paramedic services.

Call 376-5454 for further information.

Moraga fire officials warn about solicitation

Citizens of Moraga have again reported receiving telephone calls from a soliciting company asking for donations to benefit a paramedic association.

Because of the special regard the citizens of Moraga have for their paramedics, many people might feel their donations to this company would directly benefit their town's paramedics, according to Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas.

"The fact is, Moraga and Orinda fire districts do not belong to this association and would therefore not benefit in any way from this solicitation," Lucas said.

Jerry Meyer, president of the Moraga Rescue One Foundation, pointed out that the only way to give funds to directly benefit Moraga's paramedics is to donate to the Moraga Rescue One Foundation. It is a local,

volunteer citizen's support group endorsed by the State of California in 1977.

Funds received by this Foundation are used to purchase equipment and supplies for the Moraga paramedics which are not available through conventional funding, she said.

Lucas has contacted the California Fire and Paramedic Rescue Association. Due to any misunderstanding that may have occurred during the solicitation process, the association will refund all donations from Moraga and Orinda area residents at their request.

Contact the fire districts or the associations and the refunds will be made to those who thought their money was going to benefit the local paramedic services.

Call 376-5454 for further information.

Fabulous Fourth-Comings

6/28/89
Contra Costa Sun



Orindans and Moragans took time out from planning their separate celebrations to pose for this joint Fourth of July picture. From left are Suzy Bagg, Harmony Herman, Ken Hodges and Trombone, John Fazel, Eve Bagg, Darcy Grant, dog Rocky, Diane Kahle, Courtney Grant, Natalie Serota, Shelley Bagg and Cherie Grant. Hanging in front of the gazebo is one of the posters from Orinda's poster contest, created by Orinda Intermediate School student Chris Yen.

Old-fashioned Fourths in Orinda, Moraga

Residents of Orinda and Moraga won't have to drive far on the Fourth of July to enjoy a day of activities and fun.

Moragans will meet at the Moraga Commons, where the first event of the day is an 8 a.m., 1 kilometer run for runners up to 12-years-old, followed by an 8 kilometer, 8:15 run for those 13 and over. Registered runners in the 8 K run will receive free T-shirts, while those running in the 1 K run will receive American flags.

Children's games will begin at 1 p.m., while volleyball and horse-shoe pitching will begin at 9:30 a.m.

Three popular contests will be held again this year in Moraga. The dog show judging will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Bandshell, while the pie judging contest and children's bike parade will begin at 10:30 a.m.

Blood pressure checks will be given by the Moraga fire district and Rescue One Foundation from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. near the Bandshell.

Music lovers will be treated to two concerts at the Bandshell. From noon until 2 p.m., the Special Delivery Band will be playing bluegrass, country and western, and oldies. The Lamorinda Community Band will wrap up the day with marches, show tunes and light classics from 2:45 to 4 p.m.

Lucky Orindans can start off their Fourth with a gourmet pancake breakfast sponsored by the Orinda Trails Council from 7:30 until 10:30 a.m. A fun run will start at 8 a.m. at the Community Center. All ages may run, skip, ride or walk.

"Orinda through History" is the theme of the parade which is a highlight of that city's festivities. Ned and Alyson deLaveaga are the Grand Marshals. Would-be parade marchers are welcome; prizes will be awarded and categories include best dressed individual, doll buggies, strollers, skateboards, bikes, most entertaining group, best hat, oldest, youngest and most coordinated pet and owner. Floats and antique cars are also encouraged; the parade assembles in front of the newly reopened Orinda Theatre at 9 a.m.

The second dedication of an Orinda landmark will take place at 12:30 p.m. when the Community Center is presented its plaque by the Orinda Historical Society.

A favorite recipe contest will be judged at 9 a.m. at the Community Center. Cooks can enter their best efforts in the following categories: chocolate chip cookies, muffins, fruit/vegetable/nut bread, fruit pies, pickled fruit or vegetables, and jams or jellies.

Everyone is encouraged to bring a picnic and a blanket to listen to the Radio Flyers, a 50's and 60's rock and roll band which will begin playing at 6 p.m.

Booths are available for individuals or groups who want to earn extra money by selling crafts or food. The Orinda Association has applications available.

Rescue

ONE

FOUNDATION

1280 Moraga Way • Moraga, CA 94556
(415) 376-5454

MORAGA RESCUE ONE FOUNDATION NEWS RELEASE

The Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation of Moraga will co-sponsor a free blood pressure screening at the Fourth of July festivities at the Moraga Commons. Jerry Meyers, President of Rescue One Foundation is shown having her blood pressure checked by paramedics Ken Consiglio (left) and Darrell Lee (right). The Moraga Fire District will display Rescue 41, the Paramedic Ambulance, and provide blood pressure checks from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. near the bandshell at the Commons. Rescue One Foundation invites everyone to stop by for this quick, easy and important test.



Board Game of Moraga to rescue paramedics

When these handsome Moraga paramedics are not rescuing local citizens-in-distress, they enjoy playing "The Board Game of Moraga." The Monopoly-like game, produced by the Moraga Junior Women's Club, enters its second season as a unique fundraising project whose profits will go to the community by way of Rescue One Foundation, Campolindo High School, and the Moraga Education Foundation.

Rescue One Foundation is the citizen support group which receives and administers contributions from the public and service organizations like Juniors. Money collected is used to supplement the Moraga Fire Department budget to provide rescue supplies and equipment for the paramedic program.

A way to support this worthwhile cause, according to Juniors, is to purchase one of the games. They make great holiday gifts.

Instead of Park Place and Boardwalk "The Board Game of Moraga" features Moraga Country Club and Rheem Valley Manor. When a player passes GO, he passes Moraga Tennis and Swim Club. When it's your turn to "go to jail" you end up at St. Mary's College. You can own Moraga Place, St. Mary's Gardens or even Round Table Pizza!

"It's loads of fun to wheel and deal with all the properties around town," claims Billie Cummings, game chairman. "I can even buy all of Sanders Ranch for only \$36,000. What a steal!"

The squares on the game board

represent over 54 businesses and neighborhoods in Moraga. In addition, the center of the board lists one hundred names of residents who contributed to the project by purchasing space on the board.

The game has four different levels of play and all ages can enjoy it. The fourth level is quite a challenge, much more difficult than Monopoly, according to Cummings.

Purchase price is \$15 (tax deductible) and is available at several local merchants including Lightning Bug Gifts, Don's Decorating Center and King's Florist. Orders by mail may be sent to Moraga Junior Women's Club, P.O. Box 462, Moraga, CA 94556. Games will be delivered.

For further information call Billie Cummings, 376-4966.

Wednesday, July 19, 1989

Contra Costa Sun—3

Lifesaving skills help father revive unconscious child

By Gayle Vassar Melvin

Staff writer

What should parents do when they are lucky enough to have both children and a backyard swimming pool?

A week ago, Moraga residents Rick and DeNai Vandenberg would have suggested additional fencing around the pool, never letting children swim alone, and always having an adult nearby when children are in the pool.

After last weekend, they would place taking lifesaving courses at the top of the list.

The Vandenberg, parents of four active children, followed all of the common sense rules for safely mixing children and swimming pools. Yet 10 days ago, their two-year-old son, Michael, lost his footing while playing in the backyard whirlpool, and was under water for about a minute before he was discovered by his big brother John.

John, who had been in the whirlpool with Michael but had moved over to the swimming pool, quickly pulled his little brother out and ran to get his parents.

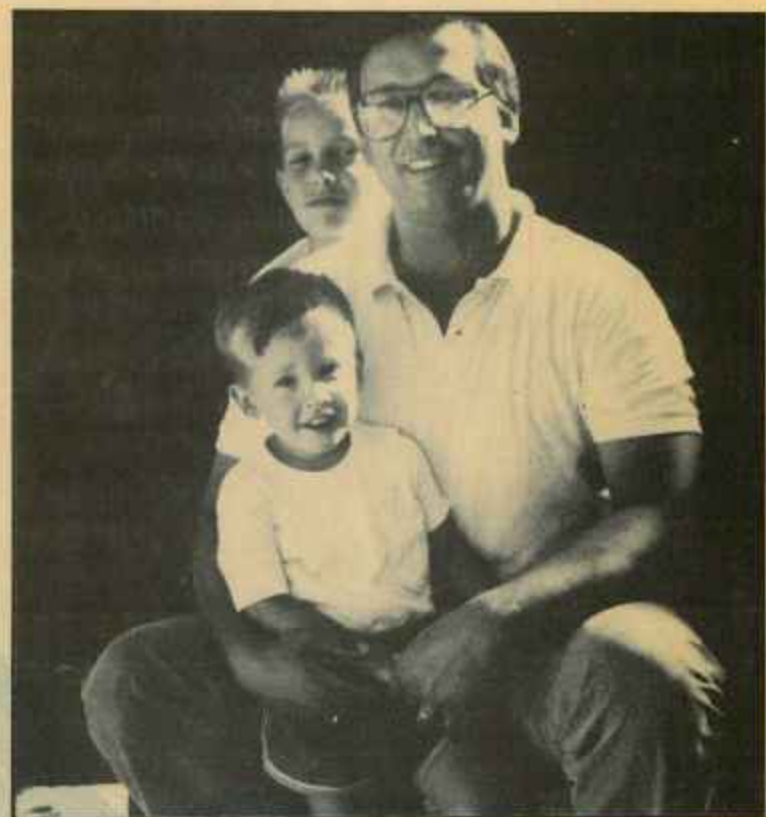
Rick, in the kitchen overlooking the pool with his wife, ran outside and checked Michael's pulse.

He started mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. "By the fourth or fifth breath, Michael started breathing on his own," he said.

In the meantime, DeNai dialed 911. Rescue One, Moraga's paramedics, arrived on the scene minutes later, to find a breathing little boy and two shaken parents.

Firefighter Bob Bratton credited Rick Vandenberg's training in lifesaving skills with saving Michael from any serious harm.

Even in an optimum situation, it can take more than five min-



Sun photo/Gayle Vassar Melvin

Rick Vandenberg holding son Michael, with son John

utes from the time 911 is dialed until the call is relayed and the paramedics arrive, Bratton said.

"The thing about emergency medical services working in a community is that the citizens need to work with the system," he said. "The key to a good EMS program is to have citizens trained in the basics."

Vandenberg has taken lifesaving training three times through his employer, Goldman, Sachs and Company.

Although the Vandenegs did not seek publicity about their son's accident, they agreed to talk with reporters in the hope that their experience would in-

spire other residents to seek lifesaving training.

"If just one other parent takes the course and then saves someone's life after reading this article, then it's worth it," Rick Vandenberg said.

The Moraga Fire Department offers lifesaving training twice a month. Courses can be taken in one six-hour class on Saturdays, or in two evening classes. In addition to mouth-to-mouth and CPR, infant CPR and the Heimlich maneuver are taught. The courses are not offered during the summer, but will start again in September. For further information, call the Fire Department at 376-5454.

Co Co Sun 7/12/89



Photo by Gordon Nathan

Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas, Ellie Kositch, Assistant Chief John Cooper

Rescue One honors retiring member

Rescue One Foundation Charter Member Ellie Kositch recently announced her retirement from the Board of Directors.

At the June 5 meeting, the Moraga Fire District presented Kositch with a plaque and their thanks for her dedicated, long time support of the paramedic program.

Chief Ed Lucas and Assistant Chief John Cooper are shown presenting the award.

Kositch was nominated to the Board of Directors

of Rescue One Foundation in 1977 by Marion Devin, one of the founders of the organization.

Kositch has served as secretary, treasurer, vice president and president of the Foundation.

Jerry Meyer, Rescue One Foundation Board President, said at the recent meeting, "We all admire Ellie's hard work and dedication. She is a tireless worker and we will all miss her very much."

Anyone interested in applying for the vacancy may write to Rescue One Foundation, care of Moraga Fire Department, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga 94556.



President Jerry Meyer & Ellie Kositch



Chief Ed Lucas, Ellie Kositch, Gordon Nathan

In Moraga, where there's smoke, there's Ed Lucas

By Gayle Vassar Melvin
Staff writer

Fire Chief Ed Lucas leaned back in his chair and thought about what made the Moraga Fire District special.

"It's the people," said the silver-haired Lucas. "We talk about technology, but I was thinking the other day that equipment really doesn't change that much. It's the community of exceptional people that has made the district what it is."

That community has benefited from Lucas's expertise for more than three decades. Although he was recently honored by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors for 30 years of service in the district, Lucas has ties to Lamorinda that extend back nearly a century. His grandfather came to the area in the 1890's, he said, settling here to raise a family of 12 children.

His father, the youngest of the 12, "got as far as Orinda," which is where Lucas grew up.

In 1959, the man who is the head of the department today became the district's eighth employee. There

were 256 homes in Moraga, distributed mostly in the section known as "Old Moraga" on Larch, and along Rheem Boulevard, Lucas recalled.

He has seen the community grow to almost 15,000 homes, but says it's been "premium growth" with few problems for the fire department.

"It's been a challenging 30 years. Just as with any department, there have been good times and bad times, but I like to think we've had more good times than most," he said.

Part of the reason for those good times is the unwavering support that Moragans have traditionally granted the district, Lucas said.

Even during the tax revolt election which saw the passage of Prop. 13, Moragans passed a tax in support of the fire district with an overwhelming 87 percent, he said. Two other tax increases to aid the fire district were also easily approved.

"People here are successful and progressive," Lucas said. "They're the go-getters in their professional lives, and that spills over into the community."

Rescue 1, Moraga's acclaimed

paramedic service, is the result of residents "giving 1,000 percent," said Lucas. The town was the first in Northern California to have paramedic service, and fire departments from other Bay Area cities have patterned their services after Rescue 1.

Moraga's firefighting team also pioneered a device that allows approaching firetrucks to change traffic lights from red to green. The device, called Opticom, was purchased 10 years ago for a fraction of its cost from Concord when that city decided to discontinue using them on its public buses.

Opticom permits a firetruck leaving Moraga to go all the way to the Caldecott Tunnel without hitting a red light, said Lucas. When the present implementation of Opticom systems in Walnut Creek is complete, the trucks will be able to travel unimpeded to John Muir and Kaiser Medical Centers as well, he said.

But it isn't the technical advances of the department that makes Lucas smile. He is definitely a "people person" who cares most about his community, his firefighting team, and his family.



Fire Chief Ed Lucas takes time to talk with firefighters Tim Bartolomei and Jake Casey

Just as he always knew that he'd made the right choice in remaining in the Moraga area, he has never regretted choosing a wife after knowing her for less than two months. He met Carole, his wife of 33 years, at a "little 19 cent hamburger joint in Walnut Creek." Six weeks after meeting, he proposed; they were married within the year.

Their three children went through the Moraga schools. "I can't say enough good things about the schools here," he said. Oldest son Greg is married to another Moraga resident and has two daughters; daughter Dina will be married this fall in the same church on the same weekend that her parents were married; and youngest son Steve has one more year to go at Harvard Law School.

The original 12 Lucas children of Moraga have propagated into a virtual clan, most of whom remained within a 50 mile radius of Lamorinda. Annual family reunions bring in close to 150 Lucases, the chief said.

personal life there.

Even 50 miles away from his beloved Moraga could be too far for the man who has never regretted spending both his professional and

"There hasn't been a morning I haven't wanted to get up and go to work," Lucas said with a satisfied smile.

Tax accord reached on ambulance service

San Ramon Valley, Moraga residents spared double bill

By Michael Hytha
Staff writer

MARTINEZ — Moraga and San Ramon Valley residents will benefit from a countywide tax to boost ambulance services without having to pay twice under an agreement approved Tuesday by county supervisors.

A ballot measure approved by voters in November allows for a parcel tax of up to \$10 a year for improving emergency medical services. The county is now

recommending a tax of \$5.35 per household to raise \$2.57 million a year.

That money will be used to add more paramedic ambulance crews capable of performing advanced life-saving techniques. It also will be used to improve communications systems and train emergency crews, said Arthur Lathrop, director of emergency medical services for Contra Costa County.

Seventeen of the county's 18 cities already have approved the tax. The San Ramon City Council has tentatively approved it and was scheduled to make a final decision Tuesday night.

Unlike the rest of the county, the fire departments in Moraga and the San Ramon Valley provide ambulance services, including advanced paramedic services.

Because residents of both areas already pay for those services, officials said it would be unfair to tax them twice.

Under the plan approved Tuesday, residents within the Moraga Fire Protection District will pay the \$5.35 tax, but will receive an equal reduction on the fire protection tax they now pay, said Assistant Chief John Cooper.

Residents of San Ramon, Danville and the unincorporated areas in the San Ramon Valley and Tassajara fire protection districts will pay just under \$2 per parcel. The amount is lower because San Ramon Valley residents will continue to pay for their own paramedic coverage, Lathrop said.

Like all county residents, those in the

San Ramon Valley will still benefit from better dispatching and training.

Dispatchers will be taught to prioritize calls and give life-saving medical advice to the caller. Firefighters will learn to use automatic defibrillators for reviving or stabilizing heart attack patients. It is estimated up to 40 percent more heart attack victims could be saved if firefighters, who normally arrive before ambulance crews, would learn how to use the devices, Lathrop said.

If the assessment area is approved by the county Local Agency Formation Commission in October and given final approval by the supervisors in December, the tax will take effect in July, Lathrop said.



Ed Lucas gets congratulated by County Supervisor Nancy Fahden for 30 years with the Moraga Fire District



Moraga Fire District hosts open house

Sparky the fire dog, Teddy, and Grubby will join Moraga Firefighter Don Romero at the Moraga Fire Station's open house on Oct. 14.

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., fire personnel will present safety programs for children and adults, and the Moraga Police will be on the scene to fingerprint children. Exhibits including poison control, fire-safe roofing, home and fire safety will be open all day.

Demonstrations, including how to use household

fire extinguishers, how firefighters put out fires, and how a fire truck is used, will be held throughout the day.

Rescue One Foundation, a volunteer group, will provide refreshments and be on hand answer questions regarding the local paramedic program.

The Moraga Fire Station is located at 1280 Moraga Way.

Co Co Sun 11/22/89

Moraga Rescue One Foundation co-founder dies at home

Ellie Beck Kositch, who played a key role in launching Rescue One Foundation, died Thursday in her Moraga home after a 1 1/2 year illness.

After majoring in Art, Music and Drama at San Francisco State University, she was trained as a concert pianist. Her career experience included physician's assistant, photographer's model and charm school teacher.

Mrs. Kositch interviewed notables in the Bay Area on "Late Date With Eleanor," one of the first talk shows, which was aired live on Channel 7 TV. She also hosted "Beauty on Parade," a weekly TV show sponsored by Breck in 1952.

A stunning beauty, she was spotted by Howard Hughes who offered her a job at RKO Studios, which she declined.

When she was younger, she rode a palomino with the Sheriff's Posse in parades with her father, John Ralph Beck, Sheriff of Contra Costa County. He also served as Mayor and Police Chief of El Cerrito.



Ellie Kositch

Mrs. Kositch devoted the last 12 years of her life to Rescue One Foundation, the non-profit citizen's support group for the Moraga Fire District Paramedic Program, serving as president, secretary and treasurer.

During her length of service, the \$46,000 in unsolicited donations from the community to Rescue One continues to be used to purchase

equipment for the paramedics.

When she resigned from the board due to poor health, a special ceremony by the Moraga Fire District recognized her singular contributions to the rescue service.

"She was such a special person, a lady of great pride and beauty — beautiful inside and out, whose consideration and love touched many lives, including those in the ALS support groups," said Jeanne Kirsch, a Moraga friend and Rescue One board member. "Her many contributions to Rescue One Foundation will continue to benefit our community."

During the last 1 1/2 years, Mrs. Kositch was a member of several ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) support groups.

She is survived by her husband of 40 years, Dan Kositch, of Moraga, and her son, Greg, of Oakland. A memorial service is planned.

The family requests any donations be made to Rescue One Foundation, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, 94556.

Co Co Sun 12/13/87
GIANT OAKS from little acorns grow, and Moraga Rescue I Foundation, support group for the paramedics, exists on donations from individuals and organizations. A \$670 check was delivered to Rescue I's Jerry Meyer by Thelma Quinley, one of the first principals of the old Moraga School, on behalf of the Women's Golf Association's "18-Holers." That was really an ace. Donations may be sent to Rescue I, 1280 Moraga Way, the main Moraga Fire Station.



President Jerry Meyer at "18-Holers" Meeting

Co Co Times 2/14/90

Our readers say:

Thanks for the donations

This letter of thanks is written to all the citizens of the Moraga Fire District on behalf of Moraga's Rescue One Foundation. Through generous donations from organizations such as the Moraga Junior Women, Miramonte and Sanders Ranch Homeowners Associations, and Moraga Women's Golf Association and Moraga Daisies Golf Group, as well as many, many individuals,

too numerous to mention, the Rescue One Foundation has been able to donate important lifesaving equipment to the Fire District paramedic program.

This equipment includes the Life Pak 5 heart monitor and defibrillator and CPR mannequins for community CPR training. Over the past 12 years, through community contributions, the Rescue One Foundation has been able to donate over \$50,000 in medical lifesaving equipment to the Moraga Fire District Paramedic Program.

Again, this letter is to express the Board's thanks and gratitude to the community for its continued generous support of Moraga Fire District and Rescue One Foundation. We are proud of both the Moraga Fire District and the community it serves.

JERRY MEYER
 Outgoing president
 Rescue One Foundation
 Moraga

Praise for paramedics

On Oct. 27 I found myself in my Moraga home alone while my husband was shopping and I fell with a badly broken femur bone.

I want to let everyone in our community know how well taken I was with the professional and compassionate care I received during my problem.

Here's to Moraga Paramedics and #911 and their speedy care.

Co Co Sun 12/13/87

ESTELLE MORRIS
 Moraga

Sun 2/28/90

Moraga Fire cuts tax and annual losses

By Sandra Ann Harris

Staff writer

The Moraga Fire District tax will be lifted, not levied, this year, and residents will save about \$300,000 in taxes as a result of the fire commission's February decision.

On the recommendation of Chief Ed Lucas, the Moraga Fire Commission, voted at its Feb. 8 meeting not to tax Moraga citizens. It will save every household about \$35, Lucas said. It doesn't seem like a lot, but the total savings to the community is "considerable," he said.

This isn't the first time the fire tax has been lifted. According to Lucas, in the last 10 years, the tax has been levied only five times. The money generated is used for equipment and other needs, but when the money is already sufficient, the tax is lifted.

The Moraga Fire District is "caught up on their needs now," Lucas said. Last year the district purchased a half-acre lot, to be used for training, behind the Moraga Way station. The cost was \$256,000. In 1988, a new, \$188,000 fire engine was purchased. The tax helped fund both expenditures.

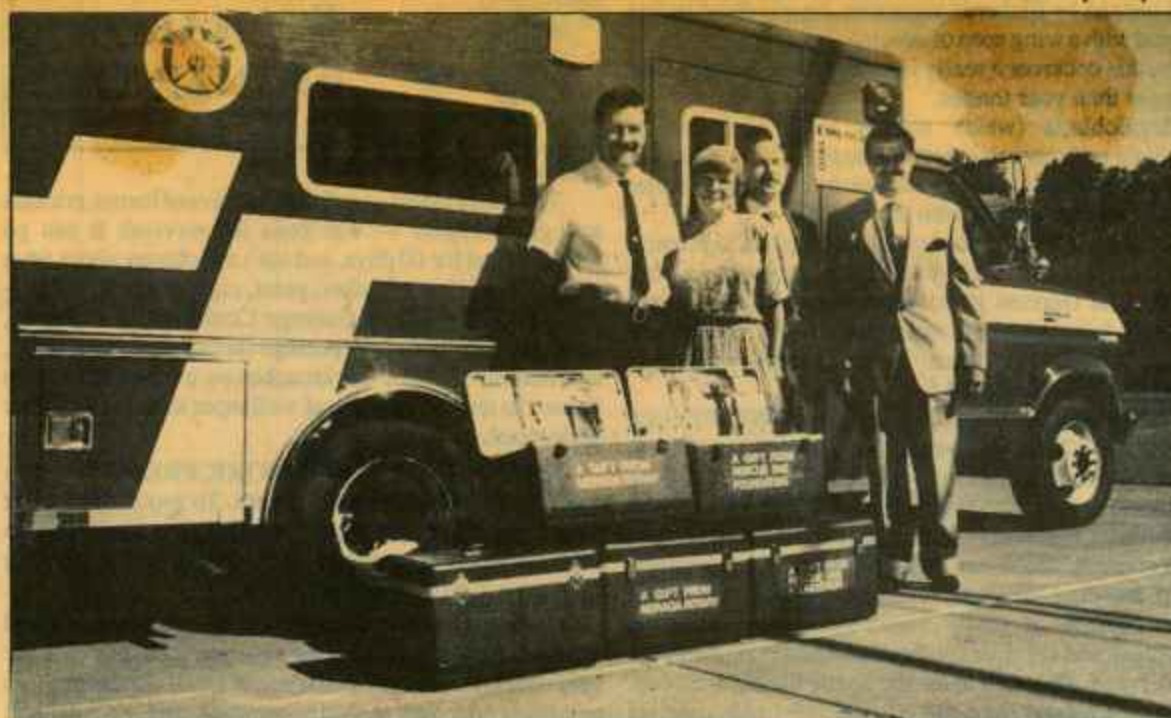
"I don't see any large expenditures in the next couple of years," Lucas said. "We are really able to hold our own now."

Community support from Rescue One has significantly helped the paramedics program over the last 10 years. More than \$50,000 in donations has been generated by the volunteer organization, said Jerry Meyer, one of the group's founders, at a Moraga liason meeting early this month.

Come April 1, the district will have hired three new firefighters. The need isn't new, the district has needed more personnel for many years.

"We've reached a point where we can afford them without dipping into other funds," Lucas said. "We can't do everything at once."

Also, fire losses in Moraga were kept to a minimum in 1989, the lowest since 1983 when losses totaled a mere \$44,000.



John Cooper, assistant Moraga fire chief, poses with Carol Porterfield, president of Rescue One, John Cooley, superintendent of the Moraga School District and Dr. Ralph Filice, president of Moraga Rotary.

Disaster kits, gifts for schools

Moraga schools recently received new medical supplies to be used in disasters.

Donations from the Moraga Rotary Club and the Rescue One Foundation were used to purchase the special disaster medical kits for Joaquin Moraga, Camino Pablo, Rheem School, Campolindo High School and St. Mary's College.

The kits, which cost \$350 each, can be used by school staff and Moraga paramedics to treat large

numbers of casualties.

Moraga schools also received donations from the parents clubs and the Moraga Womens' Association to equip each school classroom with other emergency supplies, said John Cooper, assistant fire chief.

In terms of disaster preparedness, the Moraga Fire Department will be offering first aid and CPR classes to the general public starting in September.

For more information call 376-5454.

Co Costa Sun 8/22/90

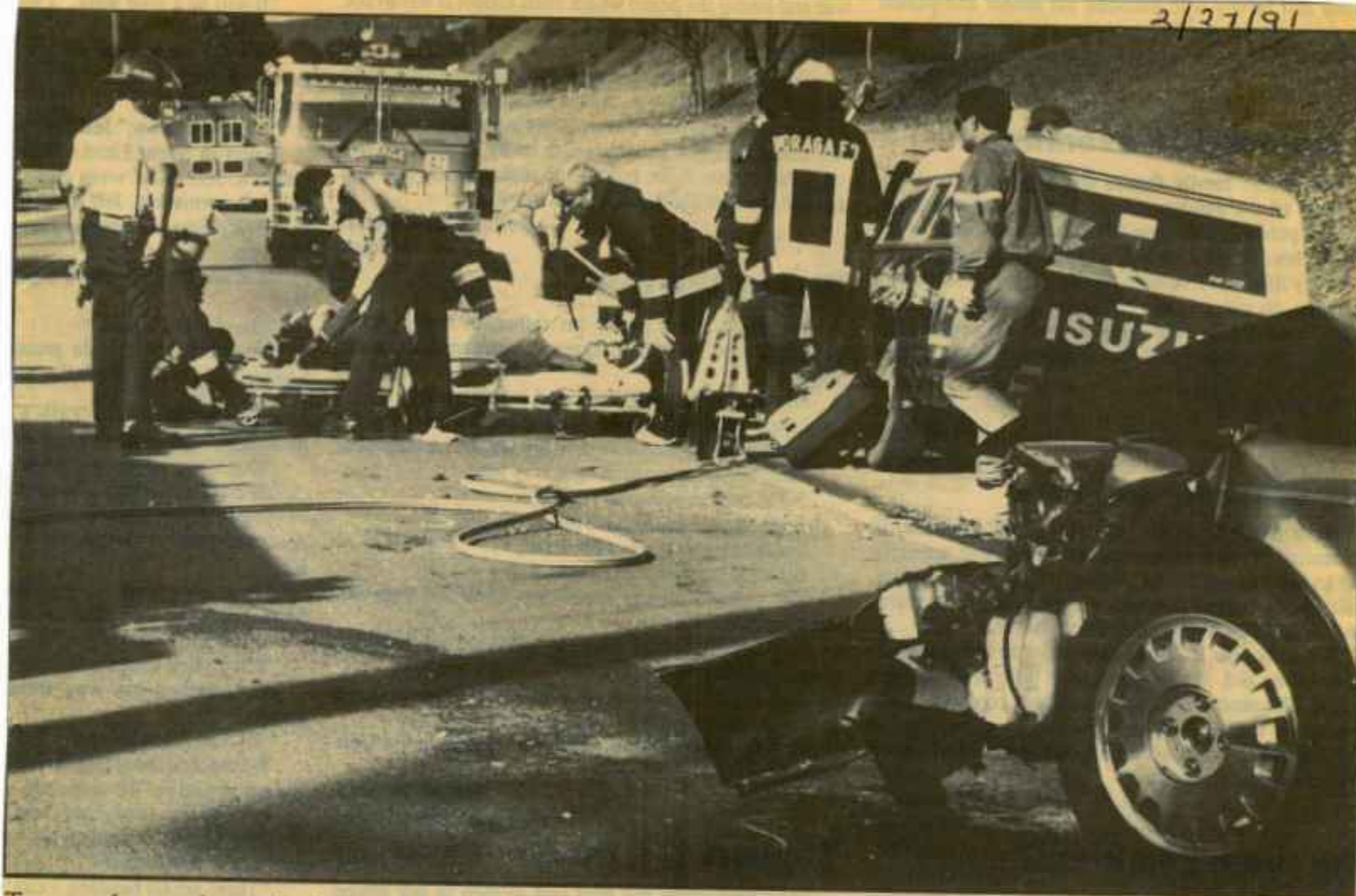


Sun photo/David Allen

SKILLS FOR LIFE: The Moraga Fire Department is offering Saturday CPR classes starting Sept. 8. The all-day classes are taught by Moraga paramedics at the fire district headquarters, 1280 Moraga Way. "These classes are an excellent way to prepare local family members for medical

emergencies or disasters," said John Cooper, assistant fire chief. Call the Moraga Fire Department at 376-5454 to register for a \$25 class, which includes American Red Cross texts and certification cards. Pictured above are CPR instructors Don Romero, Tim Bartolomei and Bob Cox.

2/27/91



Two people were hospitalized after this four-car accident on Moraga Road.

Sun photo/Sandra Ann Harris

Two injured in 4-car Moraga crash

A four-car collision next to the Moraga Commons Park was triggered Saturday when a teenage girl driving northbound on Moraga Road crossed the double line.

The 16-year-old driver, who had a 10-month-old baby in her car, hit a southbound Honda that ran head-on into a northbound Isuzu. She also hit a southbound Escort, said Sgt. Mark Rup-

penthal.

The wreckage closed Moraga Road between Corliss Drive and St. Mary's Road for one hour.

Moraga Fire Department extricated two victims and transported them to the hospital.

John Fingland, 83, who was driving the Honda, was taken to John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek with head and back pain

and released that evening. Fingland is a Moraga resident.

Ruben Dionson, 45, who was in the Isuzu pick-up truck, was extricated from his car with the Jaws of Life and also taken to John Muir Hospital. Dionson, a Concord resident, suffered a broken vertebrae, a broken clavicle, back and rib pain. He was discharged from the hospital on

Monday.

The Moraga girl and the baby escaped physically unscathed.

Earlier this month, another young Moraga driver caused an injury accident on Moraga Road near Campolindo High School.

A 17-year-old female driver crossed the double line and crashed head-on with a southbound vehicle on Feb. 12.



Sun photo/David Allen

Fire Marshal Les Wandel and firefighter Mark Watson.

10-91 Safety open house at Moraga fire station

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran

Staff intern

Fire-safety tips, household poison information, equipment demonstrations and children's fingerprinting highlight the Moraga Fire District's open house Saturday, Oct. 13 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For the third year, 15 Moraga firefighters will act as hosts to the public as the main fire station on Moraga Way is opened to both young and old.

"We want to make people aware of the dangers of poisons and certain roofing materials as well as other fire safety information," said Firefighter Mark Wat-

son, including the ladder truck and ambulances.

Children can participate in an "exit the house drill" that will teach them how to react in case of fire, said Watson.

Other ongoing exhibits include a talking firefighter robot, appearances by Smokey the Bear, a poison control display, a fire-safe roofing video, blood pressure checks and an animated Teddy Ruxpin that talks about fire safety.

CPR class sign-ups will also be open. The one-day classes take place every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and cost \$25. Participants earn a Red Cross CPR certi-

A GOOD PLACE TO BE RESCUED: Moraga's Jerry Meyer, who's been chairman of the Moraga Liaison Committee for nigh onto 20 years, says the Rescue One Foundation is even nearer and dearer to her volunteering heart. The Foundation was formed in 1978 by a group of Moraga residents to support the paramedic services of the Moraga Fire District — would that Orinda and Lafayette were so fortunate!

So far, the Rescue One people have raised more than \$44,000 from community service groups, businesses and just plain appreciative Moraga citizens, to add needed equipment for the paramedics. Jerry says, "We believe the Moraga Fire District is the only one in California with such an active citizen foundation."

"The paramedics submit a 'wish list' and we do our best to fulfill it." (They're still wishing — call Jerry at 376-4939 if you want to know what for). There are nine people on the Foundation's board of directors, one of whom is Dr. Ben Ho, ophthalmologist on the USS Mercy, hospital ship now on its way home from the Persian Gulf. When he gets home he'll find out he was just re-elected, in absentia.

Sun columnist Harriet Ainsworth has lived in Orinda for 40 years.

3-20-91

POLICE WATCH

Moraga

Man, 3 teens injured in head-on collision

Three teen-age girls from Lafayette and a 54-year-old man from Moraga were injured in a head-on collision Tuesday evening on Moraga Road north of Campolindo Drive, police said.

One of the cars swerved over the center line on a straight stretch of road, colliding with the second car, police Sgt. Mark Rupenthal said.

The man suffered a broken ankle and possible head and chest injuries, a spokesman for the Moraga Fire District said. He and the 16-year-old driver of the other car, who also suffered chest injuries, were

taken to Mt. Diablo Medical Center in Concord, the spokesman said.

Two 14-year-old girls were taken to Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Walnut Creek, the fire district's spokesman said. One of the girls apparently broke both wrists and the other suffered a back injury, he said.

The fire district declined to release the names of the injured.

Co Co Sun April 17, 1991



Sun photo/David Allen

MORAGA FIRE DEPARTMENT paramedics teach first aid and CPR classes most Saturdays at the Moraga Fire Department Headquarters, 1280 Moraga Way. Certification costs \$25. In the ideal emergency medical system at least 50 percent of the citizens must be trained in CPR and first aid so that treatment can be given in the first 4 to 6 minutes, according to Bob Bratton, senior firefighter. Call 376-5454 for information and registration. Pictured are (from left) Kent Consiklio, Chris Klein, Bob Bratton and Dennis Aquiline of the Moraga Fire Department.

Fire consolidation bad for Moraga

By Gordon Nathan

IT IS IMPERATIVE that the taxpayers realize the impact of a recommendation by the Contra Costa County Fire District to merge the Moraga and Orinda fire districts into one county consolidated fire district. In simpler terms, the County Consolidated Fire District plans to take over and reduce service to Moraga and Orinda.

Moraga Fire District citizens depend on our fire department paramedic-firefighter team for rapid response to fire and medical emergencies. This help, which is not available through the county, has become increasingly important to our community. In the event of a serious earthquake or other disaster, it is probable that, as an isolated town, we will be totally dependent upon our local Moraga Fire Department emergency teams.

Our residents do not want our fire department swallowed up by the county's bureaucracy in what appears to be a power play by the management of the Contra Costa County Fire District. The Moraga Fire District Commission has strongly opposed any consolidation of our district, either by direct take-over, or by a joint powers agreement.

Consolidation would not reduce local tax rates or result in any rebates to local taxpayers, nor would enforced consolidation better our insurance fire rating, which is currently the same as the Contra Costa County Fire District.

What it would do is reduce our vitally needed services and transfer management of our fire department to an outside entity, the Contra Costa County Fire District, which has absolutely no expertise or experience in managing a specialized paramedic and emergency ambulance service such as ours.

THE MORAGA FIRE DISTRICT is well-managed, has a solid financial position, has more than 21 years of emergency medical service management experience and has total community support. Strongly organized citizens groups have, in the past 21 years, taken the following actions:

- In 1968 resoundingly defeated an attempt to bring Moraga Fire District into Consolidated Fire District.

- In 1974 and again in 1980, sponsored two special tax initiatives, guaranteeing funding for our paramedic program, which passed with a significant 93 percent approval.

- In 1977, established the Moraga Fire District Paramedic Program and chartered the non-profit citizen's organization Rescue One Foundation.

To date, close to 8,500 emergency calls for medical help have been answered by our paramedic-firefighter teams (a number equal to half our population). More than \$60,000 in voluntary contributions by citizens, service organizations, businesses and churches have been administered by Rescue One Foundation to purchase equipment and supplies otherwise not available through conventional funding for our two emergency ambulances.

Moraga Fire District residents have always taken great pride in their firefighting, paramedic rescue and ambulance services, as shown repeatedly by their support of these local programs and continued support of the district's fire prevention program, fire safety education and CPR and first aid certification classes.

THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD of Supervisors is contemplating action to consolidate the Moraga Fire District. Therefore, it is vital for the citizens of Moraga to indicate clearly to the county administration staff and the supervisors their desire to continue receiving service from our unparalleled paramedic-rescue and firefighting service.

Should the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors seriously consider the consolidation, this matter must be put before the citizens of the Moraga Fire District for an advisory vote.

Citizen's groups are already forming to launch a counterattack to this takeover of the Moraga Fire District and the vital services it provides for our residents. When you are contacted by a volunteer, I urge you to lend your support. Also, please call Supervisor Nancy C. Fahden at 696-2080 or write to the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors at 651 Pine St., Martinez, CA 94553 to express your concern over what could be a catastrophic loss to the citizens of the Moraga Fire District.

Gordon Nathan is the chairman of the Moraga Fire District Board of Commissioners.

Fire chief backs off merger: 'I support status quo'

By Paul W. Girard

Correspondent

ORINDA — A number of new developments in the "fire district consolidation war" seem to indicate that the Board of Supervisors would be pushing a rock uphill if it recommends consolidation of the Orinda and Moraga Fire Departments with the Contra Costa County Fire District.

The Board is scheduled to receive a report on the issue at its March 3 meeting.

On Feb. 20, Supervisor Nancy Fahden released a letter dated Feb. 14 addressed to her by Contra Costa County Fire Chief William Maxfield, in which the fire chief said, "The lack of mutual support and willingness to consolidate by Orinda and Moraga does not establish a positive foundation for a successful operation."

Maxfield's letter to Fahden, in which he denies that he was the motivating force behind the consolidation move, concludes, "Absent the enthusiasm and willingness to consolidate the three agencies and, indeed, the expression of major opposition by both the Orinda and Moraga Fire District, I therefore support their position to remain status quo."

Maxfield's letter to Fahden says, "I obviously am aware of the benefits of consolidation and support consolidation of mutually agreeable agencies." The commissioners of both the Orinda Fire Protection District and the Moraga Fire District and the City Council of Orinda and the Moraga Town Council oppose a merger of the districts.

Board of Supervisors clerk Jean Maglio said the supervisors had received 600 letters in opposition to the consolidation as of 10:30 a.m. Friday. She added, "There was one letter in the bunch that was neither for, or against. I guess you'd have to say it was 600-1 in opposition."

While a letter-writing campaign was apparently undertaken by Orinda and Moraga residents and business people, meetings have been taking place all week between representatives of the fire districts involved and County Administrator Phil Batchelor, George Roemer and Terry McGraw, county analysts.

Those meetings have been for the purpose of exploring potential savings that might occur if a successful consolidation of the three fire districts takes place. However, none of the participants in the meetings were willing to talk about specifics. One participant said, "There are a lot of differences in the financial picture alone."

One group that is remaining steadfastly neutral in the consolidation issue is the United Professional Fire Fighters Local 1230, which represents 576 firefighters in Contra Costa County.

Mike Price, president of the union said, "This is a very emotional and politically charged issue. We are going to remain neutral."

Price said that the union has been meeting with firefighters from all of the involved districts so that they would have a "clear understanding of the feelings of all of our members."

On the other hand the Antioch-based Contra Costa Black Professional Fire Firefighters Association endorsed the consolidation issue in a Jan. 17 letter signed by George Smith, its president. The association has no bargaining power with the county, but is a fraternal alliance of black firefighters.

A sampling of the letters to the Board of Supervisors indicates a cross-section of the community supports local control. The letters ranged from mild to comments such as "If it's working don't fix it," written by Doris Gangier of Orinda. She punctuated her letter with the comment, "Board of Supervisors ... BUTT OUT!"

Rita and Igor Sobolev wrote a two page letter to the Board of Supervisors in which they suggest, "The citizens of Orinda have significant control over the amount of our tax funds allocated to the prevention and handling of fire and medical emergencies and have some influence over how such funds will be used." They allege under consolidation that control would not be available locally.

Albert Heiner wrote, "The present fire control arrangements have served Orinda well these many years. Please don't make the mistake of exposing us to unnecessary risk."

George Haynes, chairman of the Mason-McDuffie Financial Corporation voiced opposition to the consolidation.

"As members of the Board of Supervisors, I urge you to recall and examine the recent history leading to the incorporation of the town of Moraga and the City of Orinda," Haynes wrote. "This history was driven by a ever-growing and continuing desire and demand for individual civic autonomy and identity."

We strongly resist any compromise of our goals and objectives which are focused on continuing and enhancing this autonomy and our increasingly strong sense of community," he said.

Moraga mobilizes to resist consolidation

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — They got it started, taxed themselves twice to keep it and now are fighting to save it.

Facing the possibility of losing their unique paramedic emergency service, Moragans have united.

Not unlike 20 years ago when the service began, residents have engaged in a grass-roots campaign against county efforts to consolidate Moraga and Orinda fire districts with those in the rest of the county.

Armed with leaflets urging people to write county supervisors opposing consolidation and resolution, Moragans worked in shifts at local grocery stores last weekend. The leaflets ask that people attend the March 3 County Board of Supervisors meeting.

Linda Borrelli, outgoing executive director of the Chamber of Commerce, stood outside near Safeway carrying a sign reading "Don't fall for a con job."

"Most already know about it," Borrelli said. "Some are surprised to learn there are two different agencies, and that Moraga is under the auspices of the County Board of Supervisors."

During his shift outside Petrini's, Skyles Runser said he encountered only one hostile response when a man told him he had "read an article that gave the other side."

Campaigning is being organized by Citizens to Save Moraga Fire, a residents' group appointed by the Moraga Fire Commissioners.

Council resolution

"What we're doing now is trying to get as many people as possible to write letters to the county supervisors opposing consolidating the Orinda and Moraga fire districts," said James Sweeny, a town councilman and member of the residents' group.

The Moraga Town Council has passed a resolution strongly opposing consolidation for Moraga and Orinda fire districts.

"We think there will be a deterioration or loss to our fire protection service and paramedic program," Sweeny said. "We started many years ago. We created this public service with a lot of hard work...it's something people here hold and treasure very dearly."

Carol Porterfield recalled that one of the women who helped get



Sun photo/Trent Nelson

Sign on Moraga Road spells out the town's position.

the service started once had to wait nearly 2 1/2 hours for an ambulance, and almost died.

"That kind of triggered it. The Moraga Service League went to the fire district to talk them into having some kind of service," Porterfield said.

Moraga Fire Commissioner Gordon Nathan, a volunteer with the district in 1970, tells the same story. "We were only doing basic first aid. Because of the isolation, it took up to a half an hour for an ambulance to get here — people were dying," he said.

"The community came to the fire department," Nathan said, adding the town donated \$10,000 for the first ambulance van.

Long on experience

Now approaching its 15th anniversary, there is a paramedic unit at the Rheem Boulevard fire station and an ambulance reserve unit at the Moraga Way fire station; engine companies are at both locations.

Dick Olsen, a past Moraga fire commissioner of 12 years, noted the experience of the present 26-member fire department.

He said the average length of time with the district is 12 years each, with half trained paramedics and the other half trained at the

EMT1-A level, which is the highest emergency training below a paramedic.

A knowledgeable source of local and county fire service information, Olsen calls his involvement an "avocation," and has served as president of the Contra Costa County Fire Commissioners Association and a trustee for the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

"Since the advent of the paramedic service, they have made 9,000 emergency medical runs. Statistically, with a population of 18,000, they have touched the lives of everyone in the community in some way or another," Olsen said.

Commitment to the fire district led Moragans to vote against consolidation in 1970 and tax themselves twice, to fund the paramedic service, Gordon said. Fire district residents voted for a 25-cent tax in 1974, and replaced that in 1981 by an overwhelming 87 percent vote for the "fireflow" tax.

Threat to reserve fund

The tax, which is levied only in times of need and hasn't been invoked for two years, is based on the amount of water insurance companies say is needed to put out a fire in a building. The maximum amount for a resident is between \$70 and

\$80.

The current reserve fund — which would most likely go to county coffers if consolidation takes place — will near \$730,000 with this year's interest, Nathan said.

Past expenditures include:

- \$342,000 in 1987 to earthquake-proof the walls of both fire stations to comply with state standards.

- \$236,500 in 1988-89 fiscal year to purchase additional property behind the Moraga Way station, squaring off the property providing a land and a building for training and community demonstrations.

- \$55,000 in 1988 to purchase a new ambulance chassis to retrofit an existing ambulance.

The district is planning to replace another ambulance this year, Nathan said.

"The attitude I hear from the people in Moraga is that they don't want consolidation," Nathan said. "There's a caring attitude of the fire district staff toward the community, and I know it's reciprocated."

Fire Chief Ed Lucas retires after 33 years in Moraga

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas stepped down this week, winding up 33 years of service with the Moraga Fire Protection District.

"I've loved the job — it's been a way of life for 33 years," Lucas said last week at the Moraga Way fire station. "I've seen the fire department grow, and I've seen this area grow...I'll miss it."

Lucas, 55, is leaving the department on disability retirement because of stress-related heart trouble. He underwent five by-pass operations last May and had been on leave from the department most of the past year.

Lucas started in 1959 as one of the town's first firefighters in a seven-member department. He became a captain in 1965, assistant fire chief in 1972 and took over as head of the department from Don Skinner in 1985.

Friends and colleagues are invited to a dinner in Lucas' honor May 18, at the Soda Center at St.

Mary's College.

"I think the community owes him thanks for watching out for them 24 hours a day for all these years," said Gordon Nathan, a former volunteer firefighter who met Lucas in the early 1970s and now is chairman of the Moraga Fire Protection District Board of Commissioners.

"He's a great guy — he really cares about the community and his staff. He looks out quite well for both, as is evident from the department, and the way the community supports it," Nathan said.

Assistant Chief John Cooper, who has served as the acting chief, will continue to do so until a replacement is found through the county search process.

As for the town's unique emergency services program, Lucas praised Moraga residents and their initial and continued support of the fire district and emergency paramedic services. He noted that commitment was reinforced once again last month when the community opposed a county proposal to merge

Moraga, Orinda and county fire districts.

"If it weren't for the people, we wouldn't be what we are today," Lucas said. "In the '70s and again in the '80s, the community overwhelmingly approved spending money for emergency services. And it was the same election as Proposition 13...in one breath they were asking for cuts, and in the other they voted to tax themselves for emergency protection services."

He described camaraderie as a significant aspect of firefighting and emergency services work, especially in a job where people work around the clock together.

"Fire service is a funny business, and you have to love it to do it," Lucas said. "There's a lot of time spent together...people get along well — they have to, they're together so much — and you get to know people and their families."

In 1959, the small School Street fire department was part of the Eastern Contra Costa Fire Protection



Sun photo/Travis Nelson

See CHIEF, Page 2

Retiring Fire Chief Ed Lucas: 'You have to love it to do it.'

ccsun 4/1/92

CHIEF

From Page 1

District responsible for a 216-square-mile territory including Antioch, the hills behind Danville and Mt. Diablo State Park. There were 256 homes in Moraga at the time.

"It was a real interesting time," Lucas recalls. "Most of it was ranch area and wild land area — we drove Jeeps with water tanks," he said, describing a large fire at Marsh Creek that, although not hazardous, was so big smoke from it was visible for miles around.

The Moraga Fire Protection District took its name when San Ramon acquired its own fire district in the early 1960s and split with the eastern county department split.

Lucas has vivid memories of the Canyon fire that occurred in the early 1960s after a Shell gasoline pipeline exploded. "We were in right after the explosion, and all of Canyon was on fire. It completely wiped out the store and the post office," he said.

"It (the explosion) was sabotage, and one worker was killed in the explosion. Other than that, no one

'I think the community owes him thanks for watching out for them 24 hours a day for all these years.'

—Fire Commissioner Gordon Nathan

was injured, which was really amazing."

He said five county Sheriff's Department cars were burned from the heat, and a sheriff was blown through a barbed wire fence but not injured.

Moraga had an unexpected role in a three-day fire on Mt. Diablo in 1979, Lucas said. Forestry air support was called to Mt. Diablo after a strike of lightning started a fire at a mobile home park at the base of the mountain.

Meanwhile, Moraga had a grass fire on a ridge of Huntsacker Canyon, located between St. Mary's College and Lafayette, which had also started because of lightning. "They (the foresters) saw our fire — which was really putting out smoke — and put it out. They missed the one on Mt. Diablo," he said, adding that Moraga firefighters were surprised when the air support arrived.

Recent memorable incidents include an Orinda fire on Crest View Drive, which Lucas supervised because Orinda's chief was not available. He said fire was headed up the street when they arrived; with equipment and help from Alameda and Contra Costa County firefighters, they saved 25 houses and lost five.

The Moraga Fire Protection District took its name when San Ramon acquired its own fire district in the early 1960s and split with the eastern county department split.

As for the future, Lucas said he "has some irons in the fire." He has plans to travel with his wife, Carole, who works in the development department at St. Mary's College.

He also intends to spend time at a cabin the family built at Bear Valley in Alpine County. A cabin the family built "for winter use...but we fell in love with summer," Lucas said it is often used by the Lucas' two sons, daughter and four granddaughters.

Asked if he has been involved in the Alpine County community, he said he served as a residents' board member of the fire district.

"If you're going to one of those communities, you have to get involved," he said. "It all gets back to loving your work."

Moraga asks board for fireflow tax

MORAGA — Moraga Fire Commissioners are recommending its fireflow tax be reinstated next year.

Commissioners have asked the County Board of Supervisors to approve imposing the tax for the 1992-93 fiscal year at a "modest 3-cent tax rate" per gallon, acting Fire Chief John Cooper said. The tax is based on gallons of water needed to extinguish a fire.

The district had a shortfall of \$159,000, which was taken from funds that have to be replaced. Part of the shortfall stemmed from lower state funding, Cooper said.

If approved, the tax would result in a \$40 tax on a 2,400-square-foot structure, and a \$57 tax on a 5,000-square-foot structure. It would \$240,000 for the year, Cooper said.

At the end of this year, the dis-

trict will have \$735,000 in the reserve fund, Cooper said. During the next fiscal year the department will spend \$520,000 of that money for a pumper truck, ambulance and department operating costs. It will also need to replace the \$159,000.

"It's unfortunate that we find ourselves in this situation," Cooper said. "We're making every effort to cut costs and maintain service," he said, adding that declining real es-

tate sales have reduced fire district revenues.

The tax, used when needed to support the Moraga fire and paramedic services, is collected when determined it is needed by commissioners and approved by the county supervisors.

A 3.74 cent tax was collected in 1987 and 1988 to earthquake-proof the two fire stations.

cc 547 4/22

Fire district consolidation plan opposed

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

Moraga and Orinda fire officials told county supervisors once, and they're telling them again, that they don't want consolidation.

Representatives of both districts were scheduled to speak before the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors Tuesday against a public forum on consolidation tentatively scheduled for May 19.

This plan, called a functional consolidation, is an alternative to merging the two fire protection services into Contra Costa Fire District. Supervisors turned down the merger last month in the face of strong opposition.

Supervisors are now exploring a plan that would save money by bringing the districts under the management of one chief.

Supervisors agreed March 3 not to merge the two districts with the Contra Costa Fire District or together, which county administrators say would have saved up to

\$126,000 in annual operating expenses. They said they would continue to look at ways to reduce county spending.

In the meantime, the consolidation discussion has put a search for a Moraga fire chief on hold. Moraga Fire Commissioners were dismayed to learn that the county personnel director has not yet been authorized to begin a search for a replacement for former chief Ed Lucas. Lucas, who had been on disability for the last year, retired in March.

Additionally, fears of a merger have not yet been put to rest. "My understanding is that they would like to fully consolidate, or create a functional efficiency operation," said Sue Noe, a Moraga Fire Commissioner and town councilwoman.

"We are concerned, and we are frustrated because we're trying to get a chief," said Noe, who planned to represent the fire district at the meeting.

See FIRE, Page 2

cc 547 4/29

FIRE

From Page 1

Noe said the proposed public forum has no goals and direction and will repeat discussion of what has already taken place between county administrators and representatives of the two Lamorinda fire districts.

Orinda fire officials question the impact of consolidation on the district's taxpayer-financed fire station as well as county use of fire district tax money.

The Orinda Way fire station is

owned by the Orinda Fire District which purchased it through a 1968 bond that was paid off in 1988. District officials are unsure of who would own the station if consolidation takes place. They also want to know if the county would have to reimburse taxpayers the \$2.9 million the station is estimated to be worth.

The fire district has contributed more to the county's special district augmentation fund than the district has received for fire services, according to county records.

The augmentation fund was established after the 1978 passage of Proposition 13, which reduced the amount of property tax money avail-

able. The fund consists of a special fire district property tax paid to the county. Funds are then redistributed to districts based on need.

Orinda has paid nearly \$8.3 million to the county fund over the past five years, and has received \$7.14 million. The \$1.16 difference has been allocated to other fire districts.

"This is an effort to get the county to look at legal issues, and whether the money should rightfully go back to Orinda," Orinda Fire Commissioner Lloyd MacDonald said. "Those districts which paid less and got more are content," MacDonald said. "Orinda paid more and got less."

cc sun 5/6/92

Lucas dinner slated

Tickets are available for a retirement dinner honoring former Moraga Fire Chief Ed Lucas, who left the district last month after 33 years of service.

The banquet will be May 18 at the St. Mary's College Soda Center. No-host cocktails will be served at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 per person, and reservations are requested by Thursday.

Checks may be made out to Ed Lucas Retirement, and sent to Andi Freeman at the Moraga Fire District, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga 94556. For more information or reservations, contact Freeman at 376-5454.

Wednesday, May 6, 1992

Fire consolidation workshop in June

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

A public meeting on Orinda and Moraga fire district consolidation options will be held in June.

The meeting will be an open discussion of cost-cutting options for the Moraga and Orinda fire districts, and officials from both districts are giving county administrators input as to specific issues they would like discussed.

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors members are exploring functional and management consolidation options for fire district services, including the possibility of combining the fire chiefs positions of the districts into one.

A forum that was tentatively scheduled for May 19 was protested by representatives of the two districts appearing before the supervisors April 28.

The date conflicted with a Lamorinda Traffic Study session.

Fire Commissioners from both districts are preparing agenda issues for June in order to get county administrators to answer some specific

questions.

Orinda Fire Commissioners have questioned the county over the use of fire district revenue from a special district augmentation fund that has gone to other county fire districts. Commissioners also question the future of the district-owned fire station. They want to know who would control and own it if consolidation occurs.

Commissioners have asked the City Council to consider a resolution that would allow the city attorney to look into some of the legal questions surrounding these issues, but the council decided to wait until more is known about county intentions.

Moraga Fire Commissioners have asked the county to begin a search for a fire chief, which is expected to take three to four months. The fire district has been under the direction of a temporary chief for more than a year.

Supervisors have said they will not begin searching for a chief until decisions about how the districts will operate have been made.

MORAGA leaps forward!

Firefighter paramedic service: a community lifeline for 22 years

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

Moraga Fire District paramedics have responded to 8,700 emergencies in 22 years.

Started in 1970 as Contra Costa County's first paramedic service (either private or public), the program remains the only one in the county in which paramedic firefighters provide emergency medical service.

Recent discussion of fire district consolidation renewed the commitment of district residents to keep the paramedic program as it is. Earlier this year county supervisors considered merging Moraga's district with the Orinda and/or county districts, and are now exploring possibilities of combining leadership functions; Moragans fear both would result in a reduction of fire protection and paramedic services.

"Our goal is to keep the fire district as it is and to keep doing what we are doing with the paramedic program," said Geri Meyer, one of nine directors of Rescue One Foundation, a non-profit organization that supports the paramedic program. "Moraga's firefighter paramedics have touched everybody's lives."

Before 1970, residents relied on ambulance service from outside Moraga and at times had to wait for up to two hours.

That year, led by the Moraga Service League, residents walked door-to-door and raised \$10,000 to purchase the district's first ambulance van.

Jean Kirsch, president of Rescue One, clearly remembers the wait for paramedic assistance when her husband severed an artery and nearly died.

"It took more than 20 minutes for the ambulance to

arrive, and he was lucky because it (the ambulance) happened to be in Lafayette on another call," she said. "At the hospital, I was told another three minutes and it would have been too late."

Today there is a paramedic unit at the Rheem Boulevard fire station and an ambulance reserve unit at the Moraga Way fire station. Half of the fire district's 26 firefighters are trained paramedics; the other half are trained at the EMT1-A level, the highest emergency training below a paramedic.

Community support started the paramedic program and has ensured its continuation. Although the county funds the fire district, residents passed special tax initiatives in 1974 and 1980, guaranteeing the program's funding.

Rescue One was formed in 1977 and is the only organization of its type in the state. It's managed by a volunteer board of directors and collects and distributes annual contributions made to the paramedic program. In its 14 years of operation, the foundation has collected more than \$65,000. There is currently a \$17,000 reserve.

The foundation began with \$1,600 from the late Marian Devin, a Moraga resident who donated the money as a memorial fund for her husband, Ray Devin.

By 1978 the state had endorsed the group and four individuals — Devin, then Fire Chief Don Skinner, Don Anderson and Yvette Nance — pulled the organization together. Geri Meyer took over later that year for Devin, who was fighting cancer.

"Marion's objective was to get funding and create an organization to handle the contributions from businesses

See PARAMEDIC, Page 3



Sun photo/Trent Nelson

Fire Capt. Robert Goodyear checks the equipment in the paramedic rescue trailer.

PARAMEDIC

From Page 2

and organizations," Meyer said.

She succeeded.

In years since, the foundation has purchased state-of-the-art equipment for the paramedic program. The nine directors meet once a month to review the fire district's "wish list" and the paramedic program's funding needs. There is currently a \$17,000 reserve.

Foundation purchases include two heart monitor defibrillators, resuscitation "Annies" for CPR training, a "stair chair" used when a stretcher can't be carried on a stairway, video equipment, cellular phones and rescue equipment.

Last September, the foundation spent \$12,000 on a heavy rescue equipment trailer,

for use in a natural disaster involving a structural or trench collapse, cave-in or an accident where people might be trapped. Trailer equipment includes jack hammers, heavy duty cutting tools, shelving, lighting and heavy duty air bags that can lift up to 50 tons.

The trailer hasn't been used yet, but is available to the county in case of a major disaster.

Meyer said the foundation receives donations as memorials, and as gifts from individuals and groups. A \$2,000 contribution from Miramonte Gardens came in when the residents decided not to exchange gifts at Christmas, but donate money to the foundation instead.

The Moraga women's golf clubs donated more than \$800 last year, Meyer said. Sanders Ranch homeowners donated a "resusci-child" for CPR instruction after paramedics taught a CPR class to the group, she said.



Times/Bob Larson

MORAGA FIREFIGHTER Steve Campisi, standing on a firefighting vehicle, checks out the tall grass on a Moraga hillside.

Fire crews brace for a long season

By Amy Snider
Staff writer

Remember when Mount Diablo was fresh and green? It was way back when, two weeks ago, along with the grass along the freeways, and in gardens and parks.

That was then. This is fire season.

"Over the past few weeks, you could almost see the hills turn brown before your eyes," said Robert L. Davis, supervising fire inspector for Contra Costa County Fire Protection District.

Fire season was declared open May 9 for the Con-

INSIDE

Mariposa fire brought under control.

11A

tra Costa fire district.

The California Department of Forestry will open fire season June 1 for a region comprising all of Contra Costa and Alameda counties, a spokesman said.

But whenever the official date may be, fire agencies are ready for a season that they say has started full-force and will only become worse.

Central County fire companies got a sneak preview last week of things that might come when a fire raced across 12 acres of grassy, wooded hillside in the Rudgear Road area of Walnut Creek.

The blaze, actually two separate blazes totaling almost 13 acres, is being investigated as arson. It threatened several homes before it was extinguished.

"It's going to be an interesting year," said Chief Joe Rubini of the East Bay Regional Park Fire District, who knows of several other small grass fires in Contra Costa and Alameda counties so far.

Please see FIRE, back page

Fire

FROM PAGE 1A

"The grass is thicker than it's been in five years," Rubini said. "Five to 6 feet in some places. Starting late August, after you've had an entire summer for everything to dry out really nicely. . . . The long-range forecast is supposed to be a little

boosting personnel and equipment at fire stations.

Contra Costa Fire, for example, will add 15 firefighters and three pieces of equipment.

And while they wait for the fires that they know will come, firefighters have been busy surveying lands and trying to prevent as many of the blazes as they can.

From Moraga to the parks, fire officials have been clearing weeds

requires that a clear and reasonable war

Fire

FROM PAGE 1A

"The grass is thicker than it's been in five years," Rubini said. "Five to 6 feet in some places. Starting late August, after you've had an entire summer for everything to dry out really nicely. . . . The long-range forecast is supposed to be a little warmer this summer. Does that paint a picture for you?"

This year, studies are showing grasses are drier than they have been in seven years, said Steve Barrett, a fire captain for the CDF in Sunol.

"The first thing that dries out are the grasses," he said. "Then the brush will dry out, then the woodlands and the timber. It puts you to a critical stage, and it's getting earlier and earlier each year."

Grass fires popped up beginning in March, Davis said. But the first fires usually burn slowly, like controlled blazes, because the vegetation is still green and moist.

As summer progresses, more and more fires will occur. Last year alone, Contra Costa fire responded to 237 grass and brush fires, Davis said.

"Most of them are accidental," he said. "A lot of them are negligence: kids playing with matches, with fireworks. Roadsides are a particular problem, with backfire and that kind of thing."

Most of the fires also are controlled with a single-engine response, he said.

Nonetheless, fire season means

boosting personnel and equipment at fire stations.

Contra Costa Fire, for example, will add 15 firefighters and three pieces of equipment.

And while they wait for the fires that they know will come, firefighters have been busy surveying lands and trying to prevent as many of the blazes as they can.

From Moraga to the parks, fire officials have been clearing weeds and grasses, creating firebreaks and trying to warn people about abatement. They even have employed thousands of goats and cattle to nibble grass down to more benign nubs in some parks and fields, Rubini said.

And because prevention can only take them so far in fire season, firefighters from Alameda and Contra Costa counties have been trained for mutual aid by learning each others' systems and planning for all-out cooperation.

Fire officials all said they believed the public was taking the fire season more seriously this year, in the wake of the Oakland hills fire in October.

"We are hoping those fires raised awareness," said Les Wandel, fire marshal for the Moraga fire department.

Unfortunately, this year might wake up more people if they happen to become victims, officials said.

"It could be a particularly disastrous fire season," Barrett said. "We're hoping it won't be. But we're preparing for the worst."



Senior Moraga firefighter/paramedics Darrell Lee and Bob Bratton demonstrate two-person CPR techniques on Resuscitation Annie, a rubber mannequin.

Lifesaving classes are turning Moragans into everyday heroes

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Residents here are earning kudos from fire department paramedics for their lifesaving aptitude.

Moragans have provided rescue assistance to others in distress three times in the last 30 days, officials say.

In one emergency, the rescue skills had been learned only three hours before in Moraga Fire Department CPR and basic first aid classes.

"It's something everyone should know, and our goal is to teach as many people CPR as possible," says paramedic Capt. Chris Klein.

"It's important to take refresher classes. Most people don't use the skills during the year, and practice on the mannequins," Klein says.

"Even when CPR is performed perfectly, it's only 25 percent as efficient as a heartbeat."

When a Campolindo High School student broke his leg in a compound fracture during a school baseball game April 30, his coach — who had recently completed a first aid class — did all the right things while paramedics were enroute,

Klein says.

"He stopped the bleeding, immobilized the break and made him comfortable — all the things he had learned class," Klein says.

When a woman rushed into her Hacienda office May 6 and said a man was having a heart attack, Patsy Rankin knew exactly what to do.

That very morning, she had completed a two-session CPR and basic first aid class with all Moraga town staff members.

Rankin called 911 and checked on the man, who was sitting in a chair.

"He was hyperventilating, and I was able to calm him and help him breathe more easily," Rankin said.

"I asked him whether he was taking any medication and gave that information to fire department paramedics."

Paramedics transported the man to a hospital, and he has since been released.

Rankin says she was glad for the training, and that it's something everybody should know.

"I feel confident I could have done CPR if needed, even though

the paramedics were here immediately."

Friday, when a man collapsed while walking on School Street near Safeway, a female jogger was the first to his side.

"She tilted his head to open his airway and made sure he was breathing," says Darrell Lee, a senior firefighter/paramedic.

Lee didn't get to talk to the woman after the incident, but commended her for her quick thinking.

The man, who has a history of heart trouble, was treated and released from John Muir Hospital, Lee says.

Fire district CPR and first aid classes are offered every Saturday throughout the school year until June 27. Classes are taught by request during the summer.

The cost is \$25 per person, which includes instruction material.

Klein says CPR students should be at least 13 because of the physical skills required. Classes for seniors that teach how to treat choking victims and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation are available for \$5.

For more information, call 376-5454.

cc Sun
6/10/92

in bloom



SUNBEAMS

By Harriet Ainsworth

Doug Hastings stayed out of this discussion. His hobby is running the little steam trains at the Golden Gate Live Steam Association tracks at the station in Tilden Park off Grizzly Peak Boulevard. These volunteer enthusiasts offer visitors free rides on their scale-model, working "toys," every Sunday afternoon; takes them all morning to get the steam built up! Ahwhooley, Ah-who-cccc.

"FIREMAN, SAVE MY CHILD": "Only Ed Lucas could get this many people together," said Jerry Meyer as she looked about the banquet room at St. Mary's College Soda Center. Jerry and Jeanne Kirsch and Carol Porterfield are leaders of Rescue One Foundation which raises funds to supply paramedic services for Moragans.

Fireman Lucas, born in Orinda and married to Carole in '56, joined the Moraga Fire Service three years later, as one of seven firefighters. He became chief in 1986 when Don Skinner retired; now Don was M.C. of Ed's retirement dinner. Fire officials and chiefs galore were front and center for the event, including Moraga's Acting Fire Chief John Cooper, Orinda Fire Chief Dave Evans; Orinda's Walt Luihn, president of the Contra Costa Fire Chiefs' Association; Capt. Chris Klein, young Moraga firefighter/paramedic, and retired Capt. John Huff who joined the Moraga department when it had just three firefighters and lots of volunteers.

The Lucases may have to add a room for all the plaques presented from prominent politicians — but, "Moraga has not one loss of life due to a fire in 35 years," Ed cited proudly.

"And it was great to be a fireman's son, growing up in Moraga," said the Lucas' son Steve, a graduate of Harvard School of Law.

POINT OF VIEW: Anent Anne Cole's comment that "the bulk of swimwear customers are between age 18 and 40; they buy five suits a year; whereas the over-40's buy one suit every five years." Rita Rudner explains this in her next collection of essays, due out next month. "Women," she says, "look forward to shopping for a bathing suit with much the same anticipation that baby seals look forward to clubbing season."

Sun columnist Harriet Ainsworth lives in Orinda.

COMMENT

er fire season without a permanent chief

city officials are playing calen-
ns are heading into a second fire
nent fire chief.

Ed Lucas retired in March after
year. Although acting chief John
playary job filling Lucas' place, the
t chief is long overdue.

an't happen as long as the spectre
g the Moraga Fire District with
dated districts continues to linger.

consolidation is being touted as
t, which would combine manage-
affecting line firefighting posi-

l sides say they're waiting for an
ween representatives of the county
Moraga and Orinda councils and
districts.

o be able to arrive at a mutually
meeting, and until the groups meet,
ef is in limbo.

r Nancy Fahden, an ardent oppo-
n of Lamorinda fire services, says
y may be tied to her upcoming
rd. Fahden and Supervisor Robert
idation opponent, will be leaving

ans are waiting for Fahden's de-
e to contend with the thousands of
ers who wrote letters earlier this
position to any merge. Nothing has
why not put the issue to rest and
chief?

missioner Bill Gross says Orindans
keep an eye on what goes on in
arts of south Orinda are served by
t, he notes.

e overlap, fires don't stop at city
s Moraga can all too quickly affect
rinda.

y could sap the morale of Moraga
villingly filled in the gaps created

FIRE

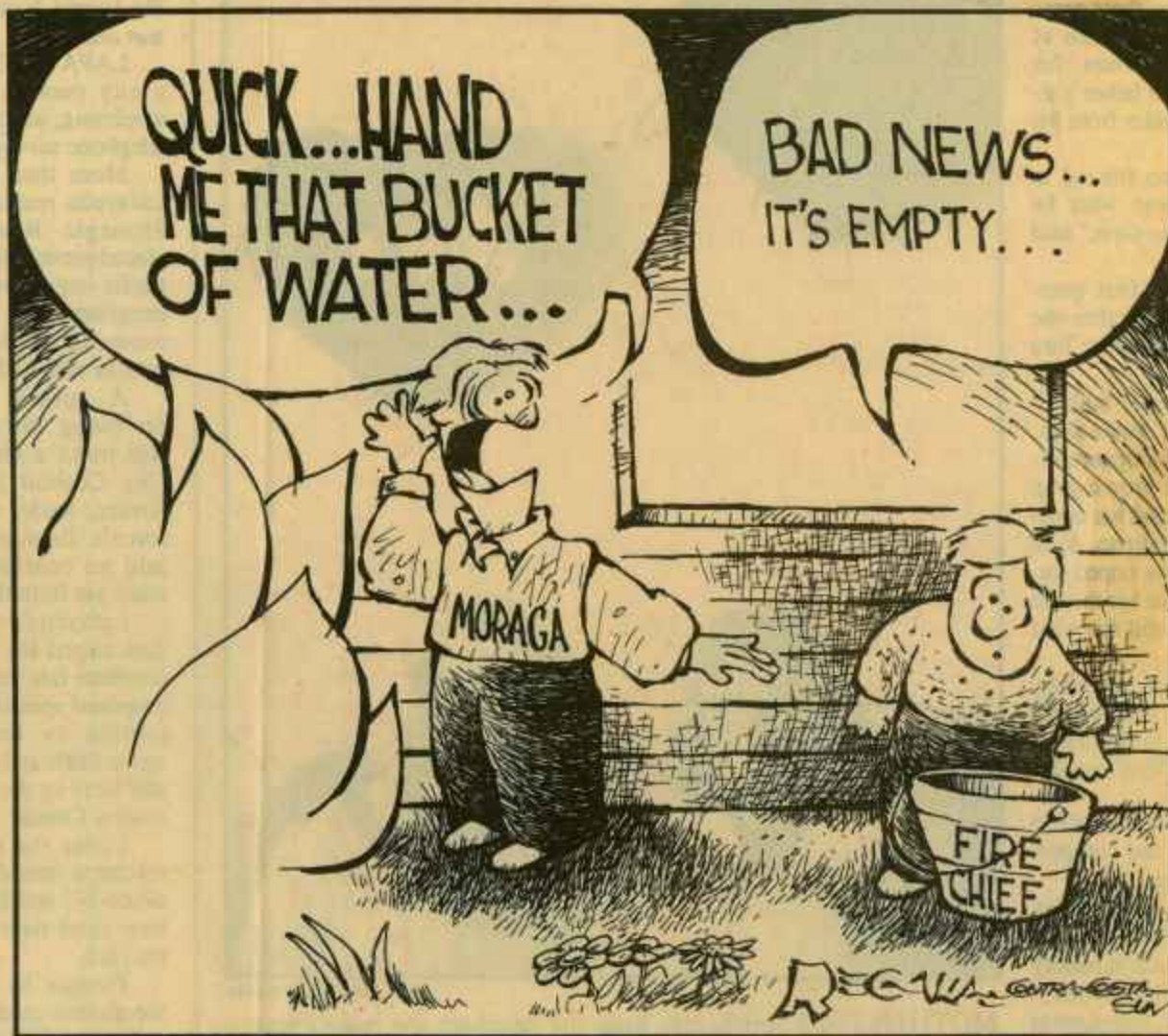
From Page 1

1968 bond that was paid off in 1988,
has an estimated valued of \$2.9 mil-

lion.

Another concern is the county
use of Orinda fire district tax money
that has been paid to the augmenta-
tion fund. Over the last five years,
\$1.16 million that has been paid into
the fund has not been returned to
Orinda.

Moragans also await the start of
a county search process to fill the
permanent fire chief position. The
position has been temporarily filled
by Cooper for more than a year, and
the county personnel director has
not yet been authorized to begin a
search for a replacement.



by the absence of a chief.

It gives the impression that tiny Moraga's problems
aren't worthy of speedy resolution.

The delay could also have more serious effects.

The fire district's administrators don't sit in their
office when a fire breaks out - they are out on the lines,

fighting the flames. The lack of a permanent chief means
the lack of an additional firefighter during times of emer-
gency.

It's time those in charge get moving on this issue.
Fires have a schedule of their own, and are impervious to
the delays and frustration of bureaucracy.

Statewide budget crisis sets off no alarms in Moraga Fire District

By Pam King
Staff writer

MORAGA — Between its substantial cash reserves and money raised by a voter-approved tax, the Moraga Fire Protection District will ride out the state and county budget crisis relatively unscathed.

"This district has prepared for the future," said Gordon Nathan, chairman of the Moraga Fire Protection District board. "I don't know if anyone's in better shape than we are. We've led the way."

Still, Nathan said, the district will make cuts. For example, it was planning to replace a 20-year-old pumper, but will delay that purchase.

"We're not merrily sailing along while everyone else suffers," said Nathan.

While Moraga is attempting to reduce its \$3 million budget by \$967,000, as requested by the county, it plans to use its \$750,000 cash reserves and to levy its voter-approved fire-flow tax to make up that amount. The tax was approved in 1980, and the fire commission has discretion to levy it whenever it thinks the district needs the money.

Ironically, the budget crisis on the state and county levels has quieted talk of a possible money-saving merger of the separate fire districts that serve Moraga and Orinda. At most, the county would save \$200,000 a year and, Nathan said, that's not enough to attract the supervisors' attention in the face of inevitable community outrage.

In March, residents of Orinda and Moraga successfully fought the Board of Supervisors' efforts to ex-

'This district has prepared for the future. I don't know if anyone's in better shape than we are. We've led the way.'

— Gordon Nathan, chairman, Moraga Fire Protection District board

tend the Contra Costa Consolidated Fire District into their communities. Even though the supervisors also voted against merging the two districts, critics were aware that the idea was not dead and were not surprised when the supervisors raised it again in late April.

County administrators met with the two fire chiefs and the city managers two weeks ago, but did not set up any more meetings or set a timetable for more discussions. The budget situation was too unstable, said

Terry McGraw of the County Administrator's Office.

"We see possibilities to improve operations and save money," McGraw said. "It's not that the districts are inefficient, but there is a possibility of combining the management structure and sharing staff."

The time might be right for that move. Moraga is without a permanent fire chief, since Ed Lucas retired in March because of a heart condition. And Orinda Fire Chief

David Evans is a self-described lame duck, since he had planned to retire in March but withdrew his request during the furor over the possible consolidation or merger late last winter.

"As far as I'm concerned, a true merger and a 'functional consolidation' are the same," said Moraga Mayor Sue Noe, who also is a member of the Fire Protection District Commission. "I just don't understand why it's a necessity. I don't know what the supervisors hope to achieve."

Acting Fire Chief John Cooper of Moraga said his department is already administratively lean. For example, he said, in the consolidated district, 20 percent of the personnel are administrators, while in Moraga, administrators account for 12.5 percent of the staff.

Moraga is the only district in the county with its own paramedic services. The town initiated its paramedic program because it is isolated. Residents felt that it would take too long for emergency medical services to reach them.

Noe said the Moraga district, with its reserve fund and its fire-flow tax capability, has tangible evidence of community support. She said that it is possible that Orinda also could generate that level of support, but that it is "unproven."

"We have to wait it out," Noe said. "The budget overshadows any and all other issues."

State fiscal woes threaten local fire districts face

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

Orinda and Moraga fire districts are facing a new threat as county leaders struggle for ways to absorb the impact of the state fiscal crisis.

The two districts have been asked to trim 30 percent from their 1992-93 operating budgets, as have all county departments. Revised proposals must be submitted to the county June 26.

The districts may also lose the special district augmentation funding from property tax money allocated by the county, which would reduce districts' proposed budgets by 55 percent.

Drastic budget cuts for Orinda and Moraga fire districts would result in service reductions, possible fire station closures and layoffs, and might make some form of consolidation more attractive, fire officials say.

"If there are 30 percent cuts, consolidation might look like an alternative," Orinda Assistant Fire Chief Walter Luhn said. "Obviously, we don't want to consolidate and want to remain as we are. We'll explore options and look at what's best for the communities."

The requested budget cuts would reduce Orinda's proposed \$3.8 million operating budget by \$1.58 million. Loss of augmentation fund revenue would reduce the budget by \$1.9 million.

Moraga is facing a budget reduction target of \$967,000, and would have to cut as much as \$1.8 million if the special district funding is lost, acting Moraga Fire Chief John Cooper said.

"Of all the districts in the county, we are better off than most... but

6/17/92
there will be some changes in service levels," said Cooper, citing the voter-approved fireflow tax and the district's \$750,000 in reserves.

"We could weather this year, but I can't say what will happen for the future," he said.

One possibility is to increase the fire flow tax, which was recently reinstated for next year at a rate of 3 cents per gallon. District fire commissioners, who have the authority in setting the rate, could raise the tax as high as 6 cents per gallon.

"The rate for this year is already set at 3 cents — we may have to go to the maximum," Cooper said.

Moraga Fire District Commissioners will hold a meeting at 7:30 p.m. Monday to discuss budget concerns, and the possibility of re-adjusting the rate.

City managers and fire chiefs from Orinda and Moraga last week met with county administrators to devise an agenda for a public meeting to determine future operation of the districts.

The meeting had initially been scheduled for May, and was to discuss alternatives to merging the two districts as proposed by the county earlier this year. The agenda may change significantly depending on the funding reduction.

The latest financial threat comes at a time when city and fire district officials await answers from the county on proposed consolidation or merging.

One unanswered question is what impact consolidation would have on ownership of the district-owned fire station. The Orinda W fire station, purchased through

Fire district budgets pared, consolidation looms

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MARTINEZ — Three Orinda firefighter positions were temporarily yanked off the chopping block Monday when the county budget ax fell, eliminating county 500 jobs that will result in 322 layoffs.

But more drastic changes are in store for Lamorinda's fire districts as officials wrestle with ways to cope with severe money shortages due to the state deficit.

Fire chiefs met with administrators Monday after presentation of a county plan to disburse \$3 million in fire district reserves to save hundreds of firefighter positions and prevent station closures. The plan was adopted late Monday.

The county Board of Supervisors is expected to consider consolidation of various fire district functions Aug. 4.

"County administrators are looking at a plan that would bring five

agencies under what they call functional integration," Moraga acting Fire Chief John Cooper said. "It would be like a 'super agency.'"

The plan, tentatively outlined by the county, would bring five fire districts — Orinda, Moraga, Contra Costa County, Riverview and West County — under the same administration, eliminating all but one chief and most administrative staff.

More than 400 people packed the board chambers and surrounding

hallways early Monday, testifying late into the night on a variety of proposed budget cuts. Supervisors wrapped up the lengthy hearing by unanimously approving a budget that slashed \$48.5 million from the \$583.9 million general fund budget.

Fire district budgets were the first item on Monday's agenda and firefighters from throughout the county stood in the the chamber. Cooper, Orinda Fire Chief Dave Evans and Capt. Walter Luhn were

at the meetings.

County Administrator Phil Batchelor said the budget was made under the assumption that state legislators would take the \$18.4 million augmentation fund to shore up schools. Eighty percent of the augmentation fund typically goes toward fire districts.

The Orinda district already made \$478,000 in cuts from a \$3.86 million budget. The county will give the district a one-time boost of \$162,500

from reserves. In addition to proposals to eliminate three firefighter positions, the district faces reduced staffing at one station, elimination of two vacant and two unfunded firefighter positions, reduced services and supplies.

Orinda Fire Commissioner Bill Gross called the county appropriation system "berserk," noting the city's history of contributions to the

See FIRE, Page 2

FIRE

From Page 1

county-wide augmentation fund.

"What's so unfair is that Orinda makes a positive contribution," Gross said. "Out of 13 fire districts, Orinda is the only district that has to lose firefighters. For years we've made positive contributions, and now we're being penalized."

Orinda resident Henry Saar said the Orinda fire district pays \$340,000 more to the county augmentation fund than it gets back in district funding.

The Moraga Fire District, facing \$478,000 in cuts from a \$3.22 million budget, will receive \$162,000 in the supplemental funding.

Because Moraga has a voter-approved fireflow tax, which is expected to generate \$480,000, fire officials expect to survive the financial crunch for the upcoming year. But Cooper warned that Moraga's reserves wouldn't last forever.

"This is just the first phase," warned Cooper. "The situation will get worse, and we definitely won't be in this position next year."

Former Mayor Graig Crossley told supervisors that since residents support the district, the town has earned the right to be involved any consolidation discussion.

Supervisor Robert Schroeder asked Crossley if he thought people in other jurisdictions would vote for a special district tax.

Crossley replied that any taxing authority must "outline where the money is to go and give citizens the

opportunity to vote.

"I believe citizens have the ability to make the right choice if the jurisdiction with authority to tax is honest and forthright," Crossley said.

Board Chairwoman Sunne McPeak noted that, if such a tax were implemented, taxes would not be applied to Moragans who have already taxed themselves.

The Contra Costa County Fire District, which serves Lafayette, is faced with \$3.47 in cuts from the district's proposed \$28.7 million budget. The \$1.18 million earmarked for the district will save 11 firefighter positions and keep one fire station open that otherwise would have been closed.

Improvement projects, including a new station that had been planned, will be canceled.

Thanks, Nancy *Contra Costa* *Sun*

There are many of us in Moraga who have worked with Supervisor Nancy Fahden through the years and feel the need to express our gratitude for a job well done. Indeed, we are an incorporated town now and depend less and less on Couty input, which is good of course. On the other hand, we have always known she'd be there for us if we needed her. Well, we have needed her.

She has talked garbage and dumps for years, even though we really didn't want to listen anymore. Well, she was right. We did run out of dumps, and she has stood up to the heat in solving the problems.

When the latest Fire Consolidation issue raised its ugly head, who did we call? You bet — Nancy! She and Supervisor Schroder brought the County Administrator right into our own backyard for a most informative meeting at the Hacienda de las Flores. She fought long and hard at the Martinez meetings to keep our fire District status quo (as a matter of fact, it was more like a tigress defending her cubs! I know too, that she will keep fighting for us right up to November.

6-10-92

Jerry Meyer
Moraga

Supervisors consider \$20 parcel tax

Fire district consolidation
also could save money

By Maria Gaura
Staff writer

MARTINEZ — Contra Costa supervisors voted Tuesday to consider a "modest" new property tax that could raise millions for the cash-strapped county, and to study a proposal to consolidate five county fire districts.

The supervisors juggled proposals at their Tuesday meeting, attempting to simultaneously raise money, cut costs and keep vital services. Last week, county officials slashed nearly \$50 million from the budget and eliminated 500 jobs.

Supervisors asked County Administrator Phil Batchelor to draw up a ballot initiative for a county-wide parcel tax that could be placed on the November ballot. The tax proposal will be brought before the board Aug. 4.

"It's the fairest source of funding for countywide services" such as fire protection, said board Chairwoman Sunne McPeak. "A very modest parcel assessment of ... \$20 a year could generate \$6 million."

Placing the proposal on the ballot could cost up to \$500,000, and a new property tax would require a two-thirds vote to be approved. Supervisors balked at a utility tax that could be imposed without passage

INSIDE

Community leaders urge county supervisors to fund Human Relations Commission. **4A**

by the voters but would only apply to residents in the unincorporated areas of the county.

"You'd better take your telephones off the hook," said Supervisor Nancy Fahden of Martinez, glumly warning her colleagues of probable opposition to the parcel tax. "Maybe people will start calling Sacramento; that could make a difference."

A plan to consolidate five fire districts into one regional agency could cut overhead and administrative costs, saving taxpayers \$1.4 million per year, according to a county report. County fire districts stand to lose up to half their funding because of state budget cuts this year.

But the hastily written plan was roundly criticized by city and fire district officials who complained they were not consulted and hadn't had time to analyze it.

Moraga Mayor Sue Noe said voters in her town might prefer to tax

Please see BUDGET, back page

Budget

FROM PAGE 1A

themselves rather than lose their autonomy. The communities of Moraga, Orinda and Kensington are considering local taxes to support their fire districts. A Kensington fire district spokesman said it could cost area residents \$400 per household to support the fire district if the state cuts their funding.

Antioch Councilwoman Elizabeth Rimbault said her city is considering forming its own fire department, and didn't want to be linked with Central County.

Annamaria Perrella, executive director of the Local Agency Formation Commission, said that combining the fire districts was "a passionate issue," but she asked people to consider the public good.

"The complexity of districts can and does lead to higher costs," she said. "We need to simplify, streamline and organize."

County resident Paul Katz blasted speakers who opposed reorganization.

"They're all saying, 'I want to get my share,'" he said. "But how about a fair share? The issue is not how many fire chiefs we save, it's how much service we can provide to all the citizens of Contra Costa County."

Supervisor Tom Powers of Richmond said the fire district reorgani-

zation is probably the first of many radical changes government will have to make to survive the coming years.

"We're in for major changes," he said. "We're not going to be able to do business the same way."

Supervisors directed staff to meet with county fire commissioners, city officials and volunteers to discuss and refine the consolidation plan and any other money-saving ideas. A status report on the new plan will be brought to the supervisors in two weeks.

In other business, McPeak proposed borrowing \$250,000 from the county's Child Care Affordability Fund to keep several vital social service groups from closing. Most service groups receive only a small percentage of their budgets from the county, but several will probably close if county funding is withdrawn. The Child Abuse Prevention Council, for instance, receives 53 percent of its budget from the county.

"It would be foolhardy to dismantle these organizations," said McPeak, who proposed finding enough money to help threatened organizations survive long enough to find other funding sources. She cautioned that none of the agencies would have all of its funding restored.

The board's Finance Committee will meet with agency representatives this week to consider McPeak's proposal.

Tax issues to face voters

Fire districts, agencies ask county for space on ballot

By Maria Gaura
Staff writer

MARTINEZ — While state legislators say they don't want to raise taxes, Contra Costa voters may be asked to approve a passel of new taxes to offset probable state raids on local treasuries.

As many as six new taxes may be competing for space on the county's November ballot, including three from fire districts, a countywide parcel tax for police and social services, an assessment for police and recreation in Kensington and a utility tax advisory measure in Lafayette. Contra Costa supervisors will decide Tuesday which measures to allow on the ballot.

"The state keeps saying, 'We're not going to raise your taxes,' but we are paying," said Orinda Assistant Fire Chief Walter Luihn. "The community has always supported us in the past.



John Cooper

Moraga's acting fire chief says higher taxes are needed to replace the certain loss of funding from the state

... but we're talking a lot of money here, and we're talking times when people are very angry at government. It's really hard to say how the community is going to react" to new tax proposals.

The inability of the Legislature and Gov. Pete

Wilson to approve a budget has created a special dilemma for Contra Costa fire districts.

There's no doubt that state officials plan to seize a portion of AB8 and Special District Augmentation Funds, pools of state money that now supply more than half the budget of local fire districts. The uncertainty lies in how much money the state will take, and when. Local agencies must submit tax proposals to the Board of Supervisors by Tuesday to qualify for the November ballot — even though they don't know how much money they will need.

And there lies the dilemma.

If the districts miscalculate how much they need, there's no way to modify a measure once it's submitted. If the measure makes the Novem-

Please see TAX, back page

Tax

FROM PAGE 1A

ber ballot but is accompanied by too many other tax measures, the chances of voter approval are slim. If a measure misses the November ballot, a special election could cost the county \$100,000 to \$500,000.

And if fire districts don't find money to replace what the state takes, they may abandon fire stations, lay off firefighters, or close down altogether.

"It's ugly, and it just isn't going to get any prettier," said Kensington Fire Chief Samuel Treese. Nearly 75 percent of the Kensington Fire Protection District's budget comes from threatened state funds, and a significant money grab by the state could close the little district down, Treese said.

"We are literally going to close the doors if we can't get a special tax initiative on the ballot," he said. The district has one station, 14 fire-

fighters including Treese, and a secretary. If the district closes, the responsibility for fire protection will go to the county, Treese said.

Voters likely to douse plans

Kensington fire commissioners plan to ask area homeowners to boost their current per-parcel fire tax from \$83 to \$400 per year. Because Kensington has been an independent district since 1928, the measure can go on the ballot without approval by county supervisors.

Treese is not optimistic that voters will approve the fire district measure because the Kensington Community Services District, which needs money for police and recreation services, plans to put its own \$400 parcel tax on the same ballot.

"I have to put myself in (the homeowners') place," said Treese. "If they came to me and said they wanted \$800 more in property taxes, I don't know if I could do it."

Moraga Fire Protection District officials plan to ask district residents to approve a higher "fire flow" tax to make up for state cuts. The "fire flow" refers to a formula

that determines the volume of water needed to fight a fire, and taxes larger buildings proportionately more. Area residents have already approved a 6-cent fire flow tax that costs the owner of a 2,400-square-foot home about \$80 a year. Fire officials may ask to boost the tax as high as 20 cents, about \$260 for a 2,400-square-foot home.

"We don't know what the cuts will look like," said Moraga Acting Fire Chief John Cooper. "But we are anticipating that all of our augmentation funds will be gone next fiscal year, and we need a measure in place to prevent a loss of personnel."

History may be kind to Moraga

Moraga officials hope voters will approve their measure, because the area has a history of strong support for firefighters. Nearly 90 percent of voters approved the current tax in 1980.

Orinda fire officials will ask residents to approve a sliding-scale fire flow tax ranging from zero to 30 cents, said Luihn. If the tax is approved in concept by voters, the dis-

trict will go back to the community after the election and ask residents to set the rate.

Orinda could lose as much as \$2.2 million in state funds from a budget of \$3.8 million, Luihn said.

Only three of 13 county fire districts will attempt November ballot measures, but many could be devastated by state budget cuts. San Ramon Fire Chief Mel Deardorff said his district doesn't want to consider taxes until it knows what the state will do.

"I'm uncomfortable going to the public and asking for a blank check," he said. "But if this (money grab) goes through, you're going to see the biggest flap across the state you've ever seen in your life. We will have to close fire stations. We can't operate on a deficit."

John I. Wolfe Jr., executive vice-president for the Contra Costa Taxpayers Association, said he is "appalled by the unconscionable procrastination up there in Sacramento."

"But I feel that if they do want to raise taxes, the ballot is the appropriate way to ask," he said.

Fire officials ask for new or higher taxes to fill budget gaps

By Karen Emanuel
Staff writer

Orinda and Moraga voters will likely be asked to approve a new tax that officials say is needed to guarantee paramedic and firefighting services.

The county Board of Supervisors was expected yesterday to approve placing a fireflow tax on the November ballot.

The fireflow tax would be based on how much water a particular house would need in the event of a fire. The maximum rate would be 30

INSIDE 8/5/92

Orinda resident Henry Saar, in a two-part opinion piece, asks where the city's firefighting money goes and whether it could be put to better use.

—Page 8

cents per gallon.

Moraga residents already pay a 6-cents-per-gallon fireflow tax, but it would be the first time such a tax

was approved by Orindans.

Revenue generated would replace an anticipated 55 percent loss in county funding, allowing the fire districts to maintain their current levels of service and staffing.

The tax would go into effect for fiscal year 1992-93. It could raise \$2.2 million for Orinda and \$1.9 million for Moraga, the same amount officials anticipate will be lost in special district augmentation funds.

See FIRE TAX, Page 2

FIRE TAX

From Page 1

The tax rate is based on a formula used by insurance service offices that calculates home area and the number of gallons of water needed to extinguish a fire.

According to the formula, a 30-cent tax rate would result in a \$400 tax on a 2,400-square-foot structure. Owners of a 5,000-square-foot building would pay \$570.

The Orinda district this year trimmed \$478,000 from a this year's \$3.86 million budget, and will receive \$162,000 from county reserves.

The Moraga district this year cut \$478,000 from a \$3.22 million budget, and will receive \$162,000 in county reserves.

The district would suffer a \$1.9 million shortfall if county funding is lost, acting Chief John Cooper said.

"We have requested that the maximum rate be increased to 30 cents," Cooper said. "We think it's absolutely critical to prevent station closures and personnel layoffs."

The ballot measure would require a two-thirds voter approval. In both districts, fire commissioners would determine annually if the tax would go into effect and what the rate would be.

Moraga residents overwhelmingly approved a fireflow tax in 1980, which has been implemented at the discretion of commissioners several times and used conservatively over the years, Cooper said.

Fireflow tax money purchases include an ambulance chassis, earthquake-proofing the walls of both fire stations, additional property behind the Moraga Way station for training and equipment. The tax has also boosted the district's reserves.

The Orinda and Moraga proposals come at a time when county supervisors are considering consolidating five county fire districts into one regional agency, a move that

would combine administration and overhead costs by \$1.4 million, according to county reports.

Fire officials hope taxes such as Moraga's and the one proposed in Orinda will provide revenue, as well as thwart consolidation efforts.

"I'm sure other districts will be considering taxes," Cooper said.

Assistant Orinda fire chief Walter Luihn said fire chiefs and county administrators are working on several different integration models to "streamline fire services but still keep the districts separate."

In a separate action, county administrators were to decide yesterday whether to place a \$20 county-wide parcel tax on the Nov. 3 ballot. The property tax would provide \$6 million in revenue to fund county services.

Luihn said there is a possibility the parcel tax, which would also require a two-thirds county vote for approval, may confuse the two tax proposals.

Correction

Due to a reporter's error, an article on a July 21 Gateway Valley public hearing incorrectly stated the number of vehicle trips to be generated by Gateway Valley development. The number is 9,000.

GATEWAY

From Page 1

write the opposing argument.

Knebel was the only council

sister cities, and we should have waited for the completion of the study before taking any action," Knebel said.

The California Department of Transportation is also waiting for results of the traffic study.

Caltrans agreed earlier this year to wait until completion of the study to make any decision on the right-of-way

Fall ballot resembles tax smorgasbord

By Maria Gaura
Staff writer

MARTINEZ — As many as eight tax proposals will appear on the November ballot, setting up a competition among libraries, police, fire districts and parks.

County supervisors agreed Tuesday to place five tax proposals on the ballot, including parcel taxes in Kensington and Crockett to support libraries, fire protection taxes in Moraga and Orinda and a \$20 countywide parcel tax for police, libraries and social services.

Lafayette voters will decide on a 4 percent utility tax to replenish the city's general

fund, and Kensington residents may face a \$400 parcel tax for fire protection and a \$400 tax for police and parks.

The flurry of last-minute tax measures reflect fears that curtailed state funding will wipe out local services.

Because the sheer number of proposals reduces the odds of any one being approved, county supervisors say they will remove their parcel tax from the ballot next week if "clear declarations of support" are not heard, said board Chairwoman Sunne McPeak.

"I support the notion of giving the voters a choice," said McPeak. "The question is

whether or not the public wants to have these services restored."

The supervisors will attempt to round up support for the \$20 parcel tax before their meeting Monday, at which they will place it on the ballot as is, change it or withdraw it. That meeting will be three days after the official deadline to have ballot measures submitted, but County Counsel Victor Westman said he doubted the delay would make the measure invalid.

The measure would levy a \$20 annual fee on every home in the county; \$100 on most stores, restaurants and offices, and \$200 on shopping centers, industrial parks and in-

dustry. The tax would raise \$6.7 million to be spent on the county crime lab, 911 dispatchers, prosecutors, gang crime suppression, libraries, drug diversion and social-service agencies. The measure may carry a four-year sunset clause.

The supervisors allowed a Kensington group to place a \$100 parcel tax on the ballot to support area libraries. Kensington voters may have measures for four separate taxes on their ballots, seeking a total of \$920 per household, per year in revenue. Since every one of the taxes requires a two-

Please see **TAXES**, back page

Taxes

FROM PAGE 1A

thirds vote for approval, observers say chances of passage are extremely slim.

The Crockett Improvement Association was granted a ballot measure asking area residents for a \$37-per-year parcel tax to prevent cuts in library hours, which are already minimal.

Moraga and Orinda residents will vote on sliding-scale fire protection levies that could cost the average homeowner \$260 per year. The maximum amount of the proposed taxes would assure fire district funding at current levels even if the state withdraws all of its support. Fire officials say the levies will probably be less than the maximum.

As crowded as the ballot looks, things could have been much worse, according to Supervisor Tom Torlakson of Antioch. An emergency meeting of Torlakson and East County fire chiefs Tuesday kept as many as four taxes off the ballot, he said.

"There could have been as many as twelve," he said. "The four (East County) fire districts are all facing different threats to their budgets.

PROPOSED TAXES

Crockett, \$37 parcel tax for libraries.

Kensington, \$100 parcel tax for libraries.

Kensington, \$400 parcel tax for fire protection.

Kensington, \$400 parcel tax for police and parks.

Lafayette, 4% utility tax for general fund.

Moraga, \$260 (avg.) parcel tax for fire protection.

Orinda, \$260 (avg.) parcel tax for fire protection.

Countywide, \$20 (residential) parcel tax for police, libraries, social services.

They wanted the option to put something on the ballot ... we were looking at additional taxes. But because things are so bizarre with the way this whole fiasco has unraveled this year ... we decided to wait."

The chiefs of the Oakley, Bethel Island, East Diablo and Riverview fire protection districts decided instead to wait for the news from Sacramento. They say they'll try to absorb the cuts for a few months, join to lower their costs and maybe call for a special election next year when they know how much money they'll need.

Parcel Tax on Ballot In Contra Costa

Funds sought for law enforcement, libraries

5F Chronicle

8-5-92

By Erin Hallissy

Chronicle East Bay Bureau

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors voted reluctantly yesterday to place a measure on the November ballot asking whether a \$20 residential parcel tax should be levied to restore budget cuts in criminal justice programs and county libraries.

However, board members said they might remove the measure from the ballot if they do not receive "overwhelming support" from the 18 cities in the county by Tuesday.

The parcel tax, which would need a two-thirds majority to win, would raise \$6.7 million. Of that, \$3 million would go to law enforcement for a variety of programs, \$1 million to libraries to maintain existing services and \$2.7 million to keep court diversion programs and to assist children and families.

The supervisors also agreed to place on the ballot parcel taxes in Moraga and Orinda for fire district financing and taxes in Crockett and Kensington to keep libraries open. The taxes would range from \$37 a year for the Crockett libraries to \$370 a year for the Orinda Fire Department.

Although the vote on the \$20 parcel tax proposal was unanimous, Supervisors Nancy Fahden of Martinez and Robert Schroder of Walnut Creek said they had reservations about it.

that the number of tax measures, which all need a two-thirds majority to pass, would overwhelm voters.

"If we get so many of these on the ballot, the public is just going to revolt," Schroder warned. "We're going to lose the whole ball of wax."

Schroder also said the parcel tax also may be opposed by school districts, which commonly have used them as a last-ditch financing technique to keep class sizes small and educational programs intact.

Fahden said she objected to the tax being earmarked mainly for criminal justice programs rather than for mental health programs, which she said are also sorely needed.

"If you don't put mental health in this, I'm not going to support it," Fahden said.

The parcel tax was backed by law enforcement officials and union leaders, along with community groups that said the public deserves a chance to vote on restoring programs to the county budget.

"Let people decide for themselves whether they want to see these services continue or whether they want to see them deteriorate," said Phyllis Roff of Walnut Creek, a weekly newspaper columnist who often gets involved in community affairs.

GUEST COMMENT

CC Sun 8/26/92

Fire flow tax increase a life and death decision

The state fiscal crisis is coming home to Moraga and Orinda by way of drastic cuts in special district augmentation funds.

The state legislature is now proposing to take these property tax funds from local government in order to balance the state budget, compounding the fiscal crisis.

No doubt the citizens of Moraga, Orinda and Lafayette have seen signs on some of the local fire stations indicating the stations may close. This is a very real possibility. With the loss of special district augmentation funds, fire districts cannot operate at current service levels.

Because the citizens of the Moraga Fire District supported the fire flow tax in the early 80s, the fire district has been able, when necessary, to supplement the lack of county funding. These fire flow funds have also allowed the district to provide an emergency operating reserve. It is this cash reserve and prudent planning that may enable the district to weather the 1992-1993 fiscal crunch in spite of operational funding cuts. However, due to current and future county spending cuts and the loss of special district augmentation funds, the Moraga Fire District may see an \$800,000 reduction in funding in the 1992-1993 fiscal year, and \$1.6 million or more in 1993-1994.

These cuts mean layoffs of fire fighting and paramedic personnel that will drastically reduce service to the community. It is conceivable that under current budget cutting proposals, the Moraga Fire District may have 50 percent fewer fire

fighting personnel and only one open fire station by 1994. The Moraga Fire District cannot operate sufficiently staffed ambulance and paramedic service with the loss of 50 percent of its fire fighting and paramedic staff. We will have very limited fire fighting capabilities in an isolated and high fire risk area of the county.

There is only one way to save the Moraga Fire District from drastic cuts in fire fighting personnel and life/safety services. We must consider an increase in the fire flow tax. The current maximum rate is .06 cents, but in order to generate sufficient revenue to keep fire services at its current levels, the citizens of the fire district will be asked to decide in November if they again will support their fire district as they have in the past by voting to raise the maximum rate to 30 cents. The projected first year cost of the tax is 10 to 20 cents. This equates to approximately \$10 to \$20 per month for an average 2,000 square foot home, comparable to the cost of basic cable television service.

The question now is, will the citizens of the Moraga Fire District again vote to support their fire district? Will they vote to continue with the highest level of emergency services in the county? Will they vote to retain the only district to operate paramedic/ambulance service in the county?

I believe the answer will be yes. It is a question of life and death.

Gordan Nathan

Chairman, Moraga Fire Commission



Fire-tax measure may be unneeded

By Ariel Ambruster
Staff writer

When they submitted Measure C for the ballot a month ago, Moraga Fire District officials were facing budget cuts that could have slashed half their firefighters and closed one of two fire stations.

With a new state budget, however, the picture may have changed.

Fire commissioners say Measure C, which would increase the cap on the district's property tax, may no longer be necessary.

"I have a gut feeling it could turn out to be that way, but at this point, I don't have the definite answer," commission Chairman Gordon Nathan said Friday.

Nathan said commissioners are waiting for county officials to ascertain how much money the new state budget would take from the Moraga district. They expect that answer later this week.

"The state has kept everyone in limbo for so long, people are afraid to make a judgment until they see it in black and white," he said.

Meanwhile, Nathan said he is trying to find out if it is still possible to take Measure C off the ballot.



FIRE INITIATIVES

Measure C

Summary: Would increase the cap on Moraga fire district's fire flow tax from 6 cents to 30 cents.

Pro: Will ensure fire and paramedic services are maintained.

Con: Could increase tax burden. At 30 cents, average homeowner would pay about \$400 a year.

Measure D

Summary: Would allow Orinda fire district commissioners to levy a sliding-scale fire flow tax with a cap of 30 cents.

Pro: Tax could be levied as needed, thereby maintaining fire services.

Con: Could increase tax burden. At 6 cents, the average homeowner would pay about \$80 a year; at 30 cents, about \$400 a year.

The Moraga district has a healthy \$750,000 reserve and a rare ability to generate income through a property tax. In 1980, shortly after Proposition 13 was approved, Moraga voters overwhelmingly gave the district authority to levy a "fire-flow" tax each year, up to a rate of 6 cents. A fire-flow tax is calculated based on a property's fire risk.

However, the state accounts for about half of the district's budget, and proposals were circulating around Sacramento last month to deprive fire, park and other special districts of most, if not all of their state money.

As it turned out, it appears lawmakers limited small districts like Moraga to cuts of no more than 10 percent.

A 10 percent cut to the Moraga district, about \$320,000, could easily be covered by the existing fire flow tax, without raising the cap from 6 to 30 cents, or, for an average homeowner, from \$80 to \$400 a year.

Moraga's is not the only fire district tax proposal on the November ballot.

The neighboring Orinda Fire District, through Measure D, is seeking voter permission to establish a fire-flow tax just like Moraga's.

"Ours is a mirror-image of what the Moraga district's had in place for 10 years," said Orinda Chief David Evans. "What we're seeking is something that's been tested and proven."

Orinda fire supporters are seek-



Times

EXAMINING THE MEASURES

Sunday: This November's ballot boasts a cornucopia of local tax measures spurred by state budget cutbacks. Tax supporters admit they face an uphill battle, because voters may be more worried about tough economic times than maintaining government services.

Monday: Contra Costa County is asking voters to approve its "modest" proposal for a \$20-a-year parcel tax to help restore funding for law enforcement, libraries and social programs.

TODAY: Moraga and Orinda voters will consider Measures C and D, property tax increases to prevent the number of firefighters from dwindling.

Wednesday: Lafayette voters are being asked whether they would favor a surcharge on their gas, electric and intrastate telephone bills to restore cuts in police services and road maintenance. Although Measure H is advisory, the City Council plans to abide by the vote of the majority.

Thursday: Measure K asks voters in the Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District whether to continue a \$47-per-year assessment. The money would be used for maintenance of park lawns, playing fields and buildings.

ing the same tax cap Measure C would have given Moraga: 30 cents.

However, officials say they would set the tax rate each year according to circumstances, after gathering public input. If the state had trimmed 25 percent of the Orinda budget, officials were preparing to go for a 12-cent tax, which would have amounted to about \$150 for an average homeowner.

The Orinda Fire District does not

have the financial leeway Moraga does. The district has neither the hefty reserve, nor the taxing ability of its neighboring fire district.

It already instituted a 10 percent cut earlier this summer, and that meant laying off three firefighters, what amounts to a full engine crew, Evans said.

If further cuts force him to lay off three more firefighters, he must

close one of the district's three fire stations, he said.

"This department runs hungry, it runs slim," said Charles Blue, chairman of the Orinda district board of commissioners.

Still, fire officials were not particularly optimistic about Measure D's chances. "If it does fail, we'll at least have given people the option," Evans said.

CC Sun 10/7/92



Sun photo/Trent Nelson

Moraga firefighter Dennis Aquilina and Smokey the Bear wave to visitors from up on the hook and ladder.

Moraga Fire Department welcomes visitors

MORAGA — The Moraga Fire Department will hold an open house Saturday in recognition of Fire Safety Week.

The event will kick off with a pancake breakfast from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. The cost is \$2 for children and \$3 for adults.

From 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., the fire department and other organizations will offer information on home

safety, fire safe roofing, drills on exiting from the house and child fingerprinting. Organizations such as PG&E and the American Automobile Association will also provide gas and electric and automobile safety information.

Smokey the Bear and Sparky, the fire house mascot dalmation, will greet visitors and there will be balloons for children.

The fire station is located at 1280 Moraga Way.



OPEN HOUSE

SATURDAY

OCTOBER 10, 1992

10 am - 3pm

1280 Moraga Way, Moraga,

Rescue
ONE
FOUNDATION



DON'T GET BURNED
—USE—
FIRESAFE ROOFING
CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FIRE DEPT.

FIRE-POLICE
MEDICAL
EMERGENCY
DIAL 9-1-1



PANCAKE BREAKFAST

7:30 - 10:00 am

Over 30 Raffle

\$3.00 Adults

\$1.50 Children

PRIZES

GUEST COMMENT

Approve Moraga fire tax measure

Moraga voters will soon be receiving sample ballots for the Nov. 3 election. Included on the ballot is Moraga Fire District Measure C, which asks the District's voters to authorize an increase in the maximum fire flow tax rate, but only if and when needed as a result of probable future State and County budget cutbacks.

The Moraga Fire District placed Measure C on the ballot in July because the Fire Commission believed proposed State budget reductions were going to affect the District's budget quite drastically. Faced with the deadline for submitting

a measure at the only general election this fiscal year, the Commission had only two alternatives — do nothing and run the risk that the Moraga Fire District could be dealt a crippling financial blow from which there would be no chance of recovery, or — prepare for the worst by placing

a measure on the ballot that would enable the district to withstand the gloomy state budget scenarios which were being prophesied as "highly likely" and which, no doubt, will be played out in the future.

In the face of this uncertainty, the Moraga Fire Commission made the only responsible choice. Measure C is designed to give the Moraga Fire District the maximum flexibility to handle whatever outcome results from the state's budget problems. The measure is drawn up to deal with almost every fiscal contingency. At the time the ballot argument was submitted, devastating state budget cutbacks seemed highly likely. Accordingly, the ballot arguments that accompany the sample ballot cite the impact on Moraga's fire and rescue ambulance services if the crippling state budget reductions, proposed at that time, become fully implemented.

Even though this year's budget cutbacks were not as severe as first feared, there is no question but this was simply "Round One" in an ongoing state budgetary battle, which will continuously threaten the Moraga Fire District's survival unless we take action to permanently protect ourselves now. If we are to assure the maintenance of our critically needed local fire, ambulance and paramedic services within our isolated district, Moraga Fire District voters must vote "YES" on Measure C this Nov. 3.

Although the ballot measure would allow the district to collect up to 30 cents of fire flow tax, it does not presently appear that this amount would be necessary. The Moraga Fire Commission has exercised great forbearance in implementing the current tax.

We need your support Nov. 3. Please vote "YES" on Measure C to ensure the future financial survival of the Moraga Fire District.

Gordon Nathan, Chairman
Moraga Fire Commission

"There is no question but this was simply 'Round One' in an ongoing state budgetary battle"

—Gordon Nathan
Moraga Fire Commission

New budget cuts could close fire station, force layoffs and demotions

cc-sun
10/25/92

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

ORINDA — Morale is low at Orinda fire stations as the district faces a potential station closure and staff reduction.

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors members were expected Tuesday to finalize a county budget that, if approved, could result in drastic cuts to the district. Seven firefighters could lose their jobs and six firefighters and captains could be demoted as early as Nov. 17.

"We're talking about a reduction of fire and emergency service protection to one-third of this community," Fire Chief Dave Evans said.

"Since the fire district's inception 40 years ago, it's been the policy for the closest engine to respond, backed up by a rescue unit," he said, adding that that would no longer be possible if a station closes.

County administrators blamed the latest round of cuts budget cuts on problems that have arisen since last July, when the district was able to keep three firefighters slated to lose their jobs.

The county asked the district two weeks ago to reduce the budget by 18 percent, or \$707,800 because

of a shortfall in state income and a lawsuit filed against Contra Costa County by the San Ramon Fire District and Mosquito Abatement District. The court has ordered the county to set aside \$3.5 million from a fire district fund pending settlement of the suit.

Because the district has always maintained a tight budget, there are no reserves to fall back on, Evans said. Unless the county finds money for the district or Orinda voters pass a tax measure next Tuesday that could bail out the district, there will surely be changes.

"The budget crisis has had a domino effect," Evans said. "Not laying people off earlier has caught up with us, and the number of positions we will lose is now seven, and possibly nine."

The closure of one station would result in a loss of service and longer emergency response time that would impact not only Orinda, but Lafayette and Moraga as well.

If the station at Via Las Cruces and Honey Hill Road in Charles Hill closes, there will be a loss of service to Lafayette. The closure of the

See BUDGET, Back Page

BUDGET

From Page 1

Moraga Way station would impact Moraga.

"With five stations between Orinda and Moraga, we lose 20 percent of the service if one closes," Moraga Acting Fire Chief John Cooper said.

"In mutual alarm fires, we drop all boundaries. It's typical for second or third engines to respond from Orinda — engines would have to come from Lafayette," he said.

Neither Fire Commissioner Bill Gross or Evans can say which station would be closed, but agreed that district officials would work with the county to make the decision.

Orinda would also lose its state Office of Emergency Services engine, one of three in the county and 100 in the state. It is used in Orinda and, when requested, travels to all parts of the state and outside manned by Orinda firefighters. The

engine was used in the Berkeley hills fire, and traveled to Los Angeles during last spring's racial riots.

"Since the 1950s, the engine has been provided by the state at no cost to Orinda," Evans said.

Steve Rivers, an Orinda firefighter 16 years is the acting captain for battalion 45 and the highest ranked captain who could be demoted to firefighter. Being the object of budget cuts is like a *deja vu* for Rivers, who worked in Orinda six months when Proposition 13 was passed and almost lost his job at that time.

"I will be better off than some — I'll still have a job," said Rivers, who is married and has three children.

Rivers was with the Orinda crew that was one of the first to arrive at the Berkeley hills fire.

"We were blessed with having a large crew that day," said Rivers. "If Orinda were needed for a fire that size today, there would not likely be a full crew. It's scary, because there is a potential for a fire like that here."

Measure C guarantees safety

Moragans, South Orindans and Canyon residents all have a lot riding on the outcome of next week's Measure C (Moraga Fire District fireflow tax increase) election. The Moraga Fire District paramedic-firefighter and ambulance program is unique among the county's fire districts. So, too, are some of the key elements of its structural and wildland fire equipment and operations, which have caused insurance rating authorities to give the Moraga Fire District's firefighting capabilities the highest rating of any of the county's firefighting agencies.

Those of us who have lived in Moraga long enough remember what life was like before the fire district initiated its paramedic-firefighter and ambulance program. We can readily recall the 20-to-30 minute wait for a private ambulance to reach our isolated community. We certainly know the value of today's Moraga Fire District service, which puts a paramedic team and advanced life support ambulance at our front doors in less than five minutes.

The first anniversary of the Oakland fire reminds us of the constant danger of a disastrous wildfire to our community.

This year's state budget deliberations are already having major financial impacts on the fire districts in Contra Costa County. Layoffs and station closures are likely. The ongoing recession in California means that next fiscal year's state budget will certainly bring more bad news. Fortunately, next Tuesday Moraga Fire District voters have the opportunity to ensure that the vital services of the district will be maintained. The issue is very simple: if we want to make sure that we and our families continue to be protected by the finest fire and paramedic services in the county, we'll vote Yes on Measure C. To me, the alternative is unthinkable.

Dick Olsen
Moraga

Moraga fire district turns to voters for fireflow tax increase

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Faced with an uncertain fiscal future, fire officials are asking residents here to approve an increase to the town fireflow tax.

"Measure C is designed to give the Moraga Fire District maximum flexibility in handling the outcome of state budget problems," said Acting Fire Chief John Cooper.

Measure C would increase the maximum tax rate from 6 cents to 30 cents. Fireflow taxes are based on a mathematical calculation which uses the tax rate, the square footage of a residence or business, and the amount of water it would take to put out a fire in the affected building.

The tax was first passed by Moraga voters in 1980 and has been levied six times since then by fire commissioners.

"In the years we've had the tax, the fire commissioners have been very prudent, and the money has gone to good use," Cooper said. "Our intent is not to ask for an assessment of a 30-cent rate — it's to have the option if we need it."

When fire commissioners submitted the measure to county election officials in August, they were expecting state budget cuts to drastically reduce the district's income.

Although the cuts weren't as severe as first feared, the state budget crisis will "continually threaten" the Moraga district, Cooper said.

The district this year cut \$200,000 from its \$3.22 million budget and levied the fireflow tax at its 6-cent limit for the first time. The tax, which generates \$80,000 for each cent of the rate, is expected to raise about \$480,000 for this year.

Cooper says it's not likely the maximum 30-cent rate would ever be imposed. The tax rate will remain the way it is this year, but residents could expect a rate between 6 and 10 cents in the future, depending on the future county budget.

At a 30-cent rate, the owner of a 2000-square-foot home would pay \$362 and the owner of a 3,000-square-foot home would pay \$443.

Purchases made over the years with the tax money include a new ambulance in 1982, an ambulance chassis in 1987, and land behind the Moraga Way station in

"I can't imagine people are going to object to it. We have a great thing going here with excellent service."

—16-year resident Arlene Matthews

1988 for a training facility.

Fireflow tax income also allowed the district to complete the Opticam project in 1985, which lets ambulances activate all traffic signals to green while traveling from Moraga to John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek. In 1987, the walls of both fire stations were earthquake-proofed.

The district also has a reserve of about \$750,000, money that has been set aside over the years for emergency or "one time problems," Cooper said.

Moraga Mayor and Fire Commissioner Sue Noe says the district has plans for a new ambulance and other improvements on hold until the future of the district is known.

"I've heard people ask whether this is the most cost-efficient way to raise money, and whether there are other ways to cut expenses," Noe said. "In my opinion, this is the most cost-efficient way to raise money in our district."

"I can't imagine people are going to object to it," said Arlene Matthews, a 16-year Moraga resident. "We have a great thing going here with excellent service."

Members of the business community aren't so optimistic.

"I'm all for the fire department, but I'm concerned about the effect on small businesses," said Paul Bruzzone, whose family owns the Moraga Shopping Center. "Raising taxes might not always be the solution. How much more taxes can a small business pay?"

Please
VOTE
November
3rd

Yes on Orinda, Moraga fire tax Measures C, D

Orindans and Moragans are being asked to tax themselves for improved fire protection.

Although many are growing weary of special taxes, residents should approve Measures C and D. The fireflow taxes are wise insurance in these tough economic times; without them, Moraga and Orinda fire districts could find themselves closing stations and laying off firefighters as the state passes further budget woes onto cities and counties.

Moragans have had a fireflow tax since 1980. Fire commissioners have levied the tax only six times during those years.

Moragans who've lived in town prior to 1980 can well remember the frightening days when it could take 20-30 minutes for an ambulance to reach the isolated community.

Residents in Moraga are being asked to approve an increase in the maximum tax rate from 6 to 30 cents. It's a good investment.

Orindans are being asked to approve a fire tax for the first time. One need only remember how close the Oakland hills fire came to Orinda's wooded hillsides to realize this is no time to be cutting back on fire protection.

Measures C and D deserve support.

Moraga fire thanks

On behalf of the Moraga Fire Commission and District staff, thank you for your support of Measure C. It is a great feeling to be part of a community that continues to support its fire district in its effort to provide the finest firefighting and paramedic services available.

Gordon Nathan, Chair
Moraga Board of Fire Commissioners



Moraga, Orinda fire officials to discuss revamp with county

By Pam King
Staff writer

Fire commissioners and fire district staff from Moraga and Orinda are meeting with county officials today to discuss reorganization plans that would save money but retain the independence of the two districts.

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, which has authority over the districts, on Tuesday ordered them to develop restructuring options by Dec. 15. They named John Cooper, who had been acting fire chief in Moraga for 18 months, as acting chief for both districts.

"Our concern right now is that both communities have spoken out strongly that they want to retain their identities," said Walt Luihn, whom the supervisors named as acting assistant chief, in charge of Orinda. "The board says we have to make radical changes. If the community desires to react, it has one week."

Cooper and Luihn are considering several models for integrating management of the districts and sharing personnel and training. Both consider Cooper's appointment a temporary measure.

"It was meant to get us to work together," said Cooper. "It's interim — just an additional workload for me."

Cooper and Luihn are analyzing costs of different models. Some of the plans include one chief for the two districts, Luihn said, and some have two chiefs and separate fire commissions. Sharing one fire marshal offers potential savings, Luihn said, assuming it would be cost-effective to contract for weed-abatement and other fire protection services such as arson investigation. If the districts shared surplus personnel, he said, they might save money on overtime payments.

"We in Orinda feel there's got to be distinct, stand-

alone leadership," said Chuck Blue, chairman of the commissioners of the Orinda Fire Protection District. "An assistant chief doesn't have the authority of a chief or a provisional chief. A district needs management."

Blue said Orinda taxpayers have paid more than enough to operate an independent district. "But the county takes this position," he said. "Tax money collected in Orinda is our money and we'll use it as we see fit."

One complicating factor is that Moraga residents have approved a fire-flow tax to supplement the budget of their fire district, but Orinda voters rejected a similar measure in November.

"That would make it interesting at budget time," Luihn said. "We would have to do something to get ourselves on a par with Moraga, either levy a benefit assessment fee or revisit the fire-flow tax. Otherwise, it would be difficult to budget for two communities if one were paying a radically different price for service."

Cooper said it is important to keep Moraga's money in Moraga. "Orinda has to realize it has a severe financial problem," he said, "and it's getting worse. They have to generate local revenue if they want to retain service. It concerns us, as their neighbor, because any reduction in their service affects us."

Moraga Mayor Sue Noe, who is a Moraga Fire Protection District commissioner, said Moraga needs a "strong sense of security" that its fire-flow dollars would not be used anywhere except in Moraga. She also notes that half of the Moraga district's employees are paramedics, and that Orinda would have to raise its level of training and expertise if the districts were to share personnel.



Sun photo/Karen Emanuel

Moraga fire district residents approved an increase on the fireflow tax rate by a 68.6 percent vote, surpassing the two-thirds voted needed for the measure's passage. The district's fireflow tax was first passed in 1980. "The community has supported us before, and we are thankful for everyone's continued support," Acting Fire Chief John Cooper said.

CCS 47 11/11/92

Safety Agencies Merger Urged

11-23-92

S.F.
Chronicle

Contra Costa communities consider streamlining services

By Dan Reed
Chronicle Correspondent

Striving to ensure the public's safety in the midst of deepening economic hardships, police and firefighting officials in Contra Costa County are considering separate plans to merge their scattered departments.

The mergers — which would create streamlined, regional superagencies to deliver local fire and police protection — could be months or years in the making and would likely encounter stubborn resistance. But in this county and others across the state, hard times are spurring a growing number of public safety departments to look to their neighbors for help.

"It's our turn in government to go through the merger and acquisition business that the private sector has gone through in the past five years," said county Supervisor Tom Powers, a regional government advocate who has been urging western Contra Costa fire departments to consider consolidation. "It is time the government begins to reduce the duplications it has."

Contra Costa officials are discussing consolidation of some or all of the firefighting tasks of many of the district and city departments in the county. County officials also are looking into the combination of dispatching and records-keeping of the San Pablo, Richmond and El Cerrito police departments — and, later, all departmental functions.

In addition, Lafayette city officials, who contract with the county to provide police services, have proposed studying the pooling of police services with neighboring Moraga and Orinda.

Larger Is Better

The local efforts reflect a growing belief that larger is better — or at least cheaper.

"You can go to almost any county in the state, and you can find at least two fire departments looking at the prospects of consolidating," said Bob Heald, president of the California Fire Chiefs Association.

"In Sacramento County, there were over 20 individual fire agencies a few years ago," he said. "To-

day, there are only five or six. It's the result of one consolidation after another."

Heald, chief of the Humboldt Fire Protection District, said his department is studying a possible merger with the neighboring Eureka Fire Department.

In Contra Costa, the Board of Supervisors, which oversees five fire departments in the county, told its staff last week to study consolidation plans for limited to full regional mergers in the central,

***'It is time the
government begins
to reduce the
duplications it has'***

— TOM POWERS,
CONTRA COSTA SUPERVISOR

eastern and western portions of the county. The board also ordered them to look into special taxes in most areas and money-saving negotiations with the major fire union.

Drop in State Money

Talks of mergers were prompted by a sharp drop in state money for the special districts and by fears that the funds — which account for an average of 50 percent of county fire department budgets — could evaporate altogether.

"We're approaching the day when we may not be able to maintain basic services," said Terry McGraw, a county administrator studying the mergers. "The state money was cut back by 10 percent this year, and next year it may be eliminated completely."

Although the mergers could carry their own new costs — such as upgrading dispatch centers to cover broader areas — merger proponents believe that consolidation would save scarce tax dollars by reducing the number of fire chiefs and other top-level administrators, centralizing dispatch, personnel, payroll and training functions,

...ndia has to realize it has a severe finan-
... he said "and it's getting worse. These

EMERGENCY: Merger Urged

From Page A11

and allowing bulk purchases of equipment.

Yet, the lure of budget-cutting mergers could also be quickly lost to fears of an unwieldy, unresponsive bureaucracy.

"You lose your independence. You become one big department, and you lose your identity," said Pedro Jimenez, chief of the 18-fire-fighter Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District. "That's the main concern with people here right now."

Police departments, too, are feeling the pinch of the recession and searching for economies of scale. In the western Contra Costa cities of Richmond, El Cerrito and San Pablo, police chiefs have been studying a merger that ultimately

could save as much as \$1.7 million annually.

The plan, first proposed last summer, would cut the staff from 230 to 244 and purportedly increase efficiency in responding to crimes in the three cities, whose jagged borders sometimes force police to cross one another's turf to arrive at their own beats.

Next month, the police chiefs will ask their city councils to approve a plan to merge the dispatching and records-keeping functions of the three departments by April, a move that could save as much as \$400,000 annually.

"We want to show that it can be successful," said El Cerrito Police Chief Dan Givens. "As to a total merger, that is a decision that the different communities will have to make down the road. All we can do is point out the advantages and disadvantages."

Moraga firefighters turn shopping savvy into cold cash

By Karen Emanuel

Staff Writer

MORAGA — Grocery shopping and game-show watching paid off for two Moraga firefighters who used their shopping savvy to make some extra money.

Pete Nowicki and Steve Anaya were chosen to participate as a team in "Supermarket Sweep," a game show that airs weekday afternoons during their lunchtime. They won \$5,000 for their efforts. The show airs Nov. 30.

The contest involves three pairs of contestants who answer questions about food and food products. The more questions each team answers correctly, the more time that team has during the "sweep", when one member runs through a supermarket filling as many grocery carts as possible with the most costly items.

Nowicki convinced Anaya to be his partner, and the two auditioned in Los Angeles last spring. They were selected as contestants and returned to the studio three weeks later to tape the show.

"They were chosen for their beaming and charming personalities," said Moraga fire Capt. Bob Lunardini at the station last week as Anaya and Nowicki watched the show and recapped the highlights of the 12 hours of taping for the half-hour show.



Sun photo/Trent Nelson

Steve Anaya and Pete Nowicki turned their television-watching prowess into a winning formula when they appeared on "Supermarket Sweep." The show will air Nov. 30.

The two had studied grocery items when shopping on their cooking days at the fire station, but they received some pointers for the show.

"They tell you to act really stupid," said Nowicki of his formal training for his first television

appearance.

"We had to act really happy and excited about the game," said Anaya, adding they had to jump up and down, clap their hands and yell every time money was mentioned.

During the question portion of

the contest, Nowicki and Anaya earned points to give them 2 minutes, 50 seconds for the "supermarket sweep."

Naturally, Nowicki — an avid runner who has competed in marathons and earned medals in the firefighters Olympics — was the

shopper.

Before the show began, they were given 10 minutes to walk through the studio grocery store, familiarizing themselves with products.

Nowicki filled two carts in the allotted 2 minutes, 50 seconds.

One of the choice selections was small but pricey — five cans of abalone at \$20 per can.

Although a team of identical twins had 10 additional seconds for the sweep, the firefighters' shopping carts racked up the highest points, with \$1,076 in merchandise.

Anaya and Nowicki both thought the twins had won.

"They were sure they had won," Nowicki said. "One was already talking about spending the money for her wedding."

"When we thought they won we just said 'we had a good time,'" Anaya said. "When we found out we won, it was even better."

Before returning to Moraga, the two took in a California Angels baseball game and viewed portions of Los Angeles that had been ravaged during the spring riots.

Although the taping took place last spring, reruns of previous shows ran all summer.

The two are hosting a party during which their families and friends will watch the game show. The show airs at 6 p.m. Nov. 30 on the Lifetime Channel, which is Channel 24 in Lamorinda.

"Who knows," said Nowicki. "Maybe we'll be on Jeopardy next."

COMMENT

Nancy Fahden a good friend to Lamorinda

Lamorinda is losing a good friend and staunch ally with the upcoming retirement of county Supervisor Nancy Fahden.

Fahden was the first woman to serve on the board. According to her assistant Helene Frakes, when Fahden took office 16 years ago, there was no women's restroom near the Board chambers.

With her quick wit and zest for accumulating knowledge, Fahden hit the all-male bastion running. Even before the 1980 redistricting made her Lamorinda's supervisor, Fahden was in the thick of things here.

She was the first elected official to come out in favor of preserving the Orinda Theatre.

Many say she was the powerhouse behind creation of the Briones Preserve, a pristine natural wonderland that abuts Lafayette.

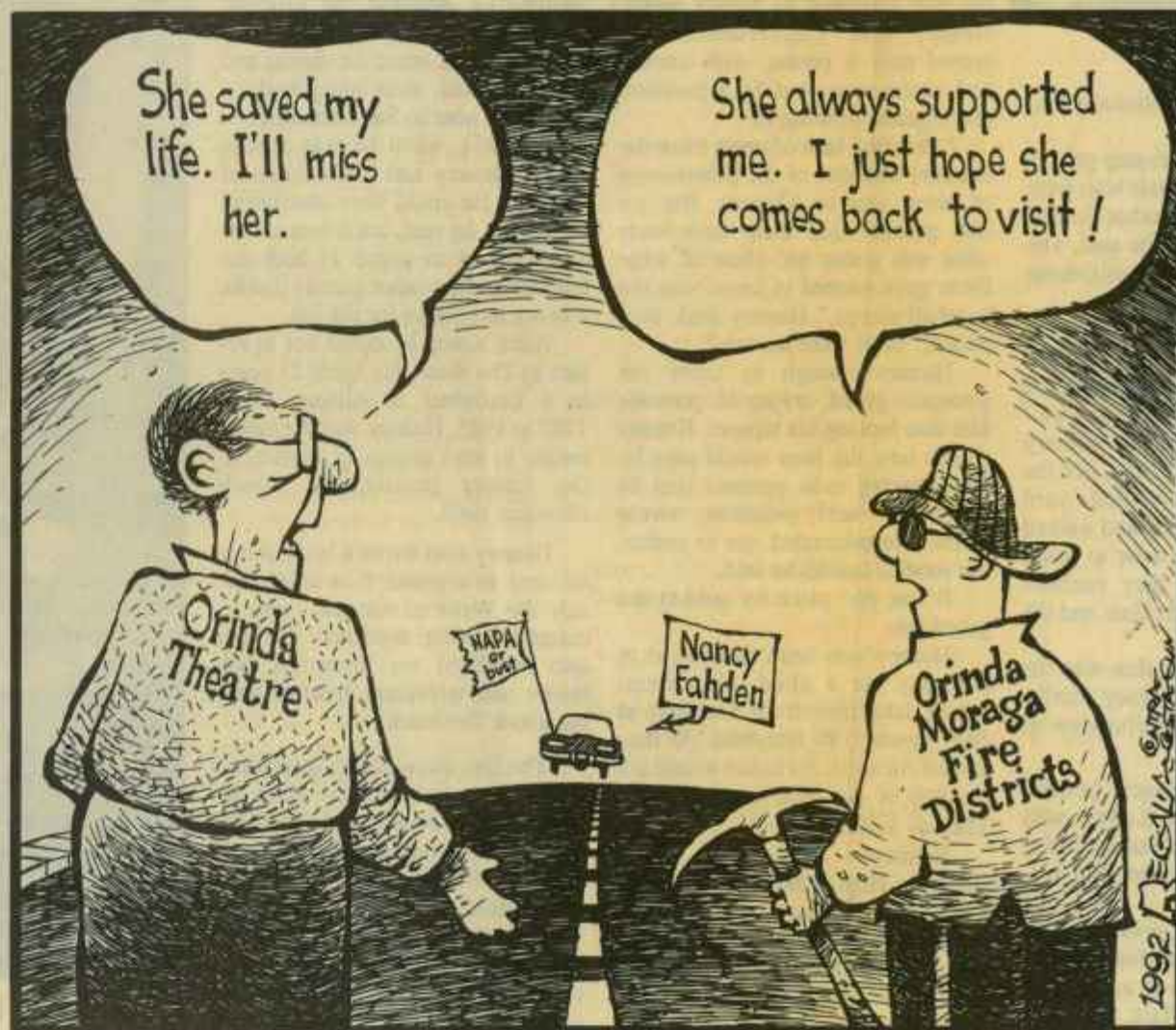
Agreeing that a community needed to control its planning process if it was to control its destiny, she backed formation of an Orinda area planning commission, along with Supervisor Robert Schroder.

In recent months, Fahden has again teamed with Schroder to defeat attempts to fold Orinda and Moraga fire districts into the bigger Consolidated district.

Fahden is the first to point out she doesn't fit the demographic mold of Lamorinda. But the feisty Democrat from Martinez says she's always felt a kinship with the people of Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga.

"People have this misconception of high-faluting Lamorinda peoples," she said at a recent luncheon in her honor. "They didn't understand that these are lovely people, just highly intelligent and determined to do what is best."

Fahden has been in Lamorinda's corner in the community quest to be the best. We wish her well as she seeks new adventures out of the political arena.



ccTimes 12/9/92

County orders 2 fire districts to reduce or combine budgets

By Maria Gaura
Times staff

MARTINEZ — County supervisors ordered the Orinda and Moraga fire districts to the negotiating table Tuesday and told them to cut or combine their administrative budgets before the county does it for them.

The supervisors also named Moraga's Acting Fire Chief John Cooper to replace recently retired Orinda Fire Chief David Evans. Cooper will serve as acting fire chief for both districts until a decision on the administrative cutbacks is made.

Cooper said Tuesday that his "promotion" was unexpected, but probably will be short-lived.

"I don't feel the county will be long in deciding this issue," he said. "It will be some extra work, but these are difficult times financially for us. Everybody has to sacrifice."

County officials have been looking at what they call "functional integration" of county fire services for more than a year, but the severity of the recession and funding cuts from the state have brought the issue to the fore. Under functional integration, fire districts would save money by sharing administrators, office help and purchasing.

But resistance to the proposed changes has been particularly

'Everybody has to sacrifice.'

— John Cooper, acting fire chief

strong in the tiny Moraga and Orinda districts, where residents fear consolidation will erode fire and emergency medical services. Some residents also fear loss of independence if they have to share a fire chief.

"Here we have two small, independent — seemingly fiercely independent — fire districts," said Scott Tandy, chief assistant county administrator. "They are proud of the service they provide, and so is the board and the county administration."

"We all want to continue that esprit de corps and high level of service," he said. "The county is not the enemy. We have a collective interest. It's a financial problem."

According to the county, the two districts could save a significant amount of money by sharing a chief, assistant chiefs, a fire marshal or other administrative positions. The board of supervisors has the power to impose those changes unilaterally, but would rather work with the districts and their resi-

dents, Tandy said.

The supervisors voted 4-0 to have the Moraga and Orinda fire commissions and "other affected parties" meet with county officials this week and prepare recommendations for Tuesday's supervisors' meeting.

"If nothing else (this signals) that we've come to the end of our rope waiting for reality to set in," said board Chairwoman Sunne McPeak. "Maybe they can be creative in the next seven days. They've had a year and a half to consider this."

The Orinda district in particular faces financial trouble if changes aren't made soon, McPeak pointed out. Cuts in state funding this year and the failure of voters to approve a new fire tax nearly forced firefighter layoffs and the closure of one of three stations. The closure and layoffs were prevented by a last-minute \$290,000 loan from the county and the retirement of Chief David Evans, which saved the district about \$80,000 per year, according to a county report.

But there is no bailout money left, Tandy said, and the state is sure to seize more fire district money next year to deal with its own huge and mounting deficit.

"Our position is, this (consolidation) is better than layoffs," he said.

ccSun 12/9/92

Guest Comment

Fire flow tax failure in Orinda

Time to reflect on the issue that was before the voters last Nov. 3 as to whether or not to support measure D, the Fire Flow tax. As one who voted against the tax, I feel somewhat vindicated for the following reasons:

The Board of Supervisors on Nov. 17 suddenly found the money in the Special District Augmentation Fund, plus the saving of the salary of newly retired Fire Chief Dave Evans, to fully fund the Orinda Fire District budget through the balance of the fiscal year thereby eliminating the need for personnel layoffs.

Any action, according to documents emanating from the County Administrator's office, was purposefully held over until after the Orinda election in order to see how the vote went.

Combine this with the scare tactics employed by the fire fighters themselves, i.e. "this station may close," "seven firefighters have received pink slips" etc. In retrospect, is it not quite clear that Measure D was but an orchestrated attempt to stampede the citizens of Orinda into believing that a fire flow tax was the only way to avert a severe reduction in force in the fire department?

Furthermore, isn't it only fair and reasonable that tax money from the special district augmentation fund be returned to Orinda from whence it originated?

This matter of fire department funding will be before us again at the start of fiscal '93-'94.

Some issues to be considered:

Out of department of 35 personnel we have nine

captains, a fire marshal, an assistant chief and a chief. Approximately annual costs are as follows: captain-\$80,000 (salary and benefits), assistant chief-\$100,000 (salary and benefits), and chief-\$118,000 (salary and benefits). Every third person in the department wears gold braid, lots of it. Do we or do we not have, "more chiefs than Indians" in the Orinda Fire Department?

Shift personnel currently work 24 hours on, then 24 hours off. When a holiday falls on one of their days off, they're paid time-and-a-half for 12 hours even though they don't work!

Why aren't Orinda and Moraga, since they are side by side, exchanging personnel to maintain minimum staffing in order to reduce overtime?

Why do these two, extremely small districts have to support over \$400,000 per year for two chiefs and two assistant chiefs?

Since the Orinda Fire District is run by the County Board of Supervisors, what appears to be a recent consensus by the three remaining supervisors that the Orinda Fire District must get "lean and mean" before we go back to the voters says it all. I agree. Let's get rid of the "pork," first then bring it to the voters.

In the public interest

Ray Davis
Orinda

P.S. I understand there is a waiting list of over 600 applicants for the position of fire fighter. One thing you can say for some, there are no dummies in that list!

ccSun 11/18/92

Firefighters fund-raiser for kids

Moraga Firefighters Association had a successful pancake breakfast at their Open House on Saturday, Oct. 10. The firefighters served breakfast to 225 hungry visitors. They even heated the syrup.

Nearly \$800 in proceeds will benefit Alisa Ann Ruch California Burn Foundation. They have the largest burn camp for kids that have been burned to help them learn to deal with their injury. They also have a back to school program for burn injured children that are having difficulty adjusting to school.

The Moraga Firefighters Association wants to thank Moraga Kiwanis, local businesses and Evergood sausage for their support and the citizens who bought tickets and made this all possible.

Bob Bratton
Moraga Firefighters Assn.

Orinda-Moraga fire proposal rejected

CCTimes 12/16/92

By Maria Gaura
Staff writer

MARTINEZ — County supervisors sent fire officials back to the drawing board Tuesday to rewrite a plan to trim management in the Orinda and Moraga Fire Protection districts.

The move stunned commissioners and fire district employees, who thought the plan they submitted was exactly what the board had ordered them to produce at last week's meeting.

"What happened today caused me a great deal of distress," said Moraga Mayor Sue Noe, who also serves on Moraga's fire commission. "They directly ordered us to come up with a management agreement and we did that, we did it in good faith."

Supervisors last week ordered the two fire districts to quickly draw

up a plan to save money by sharing administrators.

District representatives responded Tuesday with a plan to run their two operations with one chief, no assistant chiefs, one fire marshal and three battalion chiefs. The plan, which was endorsed by county staff, would save an estimated \$160,000 per year.

The proposal was considered a significant compromise by some because Moraga and Orinda have for years fiercely fought county attempts to merge their districts either with one another or with the much larger Contra Costa County Fire Protection District.

But Supervisor Tom Powers, who represents West County, said Tuesday that the county might save as much as \$445,000 by consolidating all three districts. He produced information sheets stating that the

Orinda and Moraga districts combined responded to 1,915 emergency calls in 1991, compared with 3,100 responses by the West County Fire Protection District.

The Orinda district has three stations, the Moraga district has two, the West County district has two and the Contra Costa district has 19.

"It concerns me that in West County they do one-third more responses with a lower number of people," Powers said. "I'd like a response back why we shouldn't go even further" in cutting costs in Orinda and Moraga, he said.

The supervisors voted 3-0 to have county staff meet with labor representatives, Moraga and Orinda fire district representatives and city councils and return to the supervisors on Jan. 19 with more information. Supervisor Nancy Fahden, who represents Lamorinda, was not

at Tuesday's board meeting. Also absent was Supervisor Sunne McPeak.

Powers asked staff to report on potential "political fallout" from consolidation, as well as the financial repercussions.

"This decision could very well jeopardize the cooperative effort between the cities and the county," said Orinda Fire Commissioner Charles Blue.

Noe said angry voters could retaliate if the county forces an unpopular merger on Moraga.

Moraga residents have for years paid a special fire-flow tax that supports extra services in their district, such as paramedic response. Orinda voters narrowly turned down a similar tax in November, and the Orinda district faced layoffs and a station closure until the county offered a \$290,000 loan last month.

Fire districts begin management merge

Orinda and Moraga fire districts to share one fire chief; separate fire commissions to continue

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

ORINDA — County Supervisors have taken the first steps in a plan to merge portions of Orinda and Moraga fire districts by appointing one man to lead both districts.

Moraga Acting Fire Chief John Cooper was named acting chief of the Orinda Fire District Dec. 8. He will head the two districts until the county launches a search and hires a permanent chief. That could occur within 90 days, said Chief Assistant County Administrator Scott Tandy.

"People fear that they will lose service through this, but the exact opposite is the case," Tandy said. "We're trying to forge a unity of purpose to keep service at the same level."

Tuesday, the board was expected to continue their cost-savings strat-



John Cooper

egy by considering other ways to merge the two districts' management positions. The board decision was to take place after the Sun deadline.

Administrative integration

Among the items to be considered is conversion of the districts' two assistant chief positions into three battalion chief positions. One fire marshal would be eliminated, with the remaining position shared between the two districts.

The ratio of administration to line personnel would drop to 12.5 per 100, Cooper said.

Under the latest proposal, Orinda and Moraga would maintain separate fire district budgets and fire commissions. Income from Moraga's voter-approved fireflow tax would continue to go directly to the district. Firefighters would work at their respective fire districts, and the Moraga paramedic program would remain as it is, said Cooper.

"The two districts have cooper-

ated closely in the past, and this appears to be a natural progression," Cooper said.

Consolidation opposition

For the past year, Moraga and Orinda residents, city and fire officials have vehemently opposed all forms of consolidation, either with each other or with Contra Costa Consolidated Fire District.

A grassroots campaign launched last spring resulted in more than 2,000 letters of opposition and numerous petitions sent to the county from residents who wanted to keep the fire districts separate and autonomous.

Since last spring's unsuccessful attempt to combine Moraga and Orinda fire districts — either with each other or with the larger Consolidated district — rippling effects

of a state financial crisis have sharply reduced income to the county fire departments.

A severe impact was a reduction in property taxes to the county's Special District Augmentation Fund, which provided 55 percent of the fire district budgets. The Orinda district, which suffered the most severe blow in a series of budget reductions, nearly lost one of its three fire stations and seven firefighters.

Last week, the board of supervisors told Orinda and Moraga fire officials it was time to go back to the negotiating table to look for ways to cut costs.

Spirit of cooperation

Unlike previous consolidation proposals, the present plan for integrated management is the result of concerted efforts between fire dis-

trict and county officials, taking into account the views of a newly formed task force.

The task force, which met last Thursday, is comprised of Cooper, Orinda Assistant Chief Walter Luhn, two fire commissioners each from Orinda and Moraga, city council representatives and county administrators.

"I've never, in my 30 years of experience in fire services, seen the spirit of cooperation that is starting to be forged," said Cooper of the task force and numerous meetings between fire officials throughout the county.

"Parochialism has got to stop. It's not in the best interest of the communities."

"We want to work with the city of Orinda to do what is best for resi-

See FIRE, Page 2

FIRE cc sun 12/16/92

From Page 1

dents of both communities and maintain the high level of fire service we've had for years," Moraga Fire Commissioner Gordon Nathan said. "The county mandated that we work together - our position is that we want this to be a cooperative effort."

Orinda Fire Commissioner Chuck Blue said he endorses the idea of one fire chief but that there are differences in the districts that will require more attention. The commission has not yet to discuss the proposal.

"We had looked at the idea and endorse the concept of having one chief take over for the two cities, but it will take some time to see how it will be worked out," Blue said.

Not everyone is jumping on the single-chief bandwagon. Henry Saar, an Orinda resident keenly interested in wildfire prevention and fire district funding, called the move the first salvo in the battle to combine Orinda and Moraga into the larger Consolidated Fire.

That would be devastating to Orinda, he said, because the city needs firefighters trained to battle blazes in the area's unique, hilly topography.

A single chief

Tandy said there is no plan to press for a merge with Consolidated.

"I know that's a fear, and I think it's an unfounded fear," Tandy said.

"The board of supervisors were clear when they directed us to look at distinct regions in the county for integration," he said. "Residents of the districts will not see any change in the delivery of fire protection to their homes or properties."

The supervisors' appointment of a chief to oversee both districts is a move to preserve fire stations and fire district personnel under current and future financial constraints, he said.

Cooper, 52, and a Moraga resident since 1971, has been with the Moraga Fire District 22 years. He has 30 years of fire service experi-



Sun file photo

Recent county budget cuts in the face of financial shortages resulted in a flurry of signs posted countywide such as this one in front of an Orinda fire station. County officials were able to forestall closing of any fire stations, but say the Orinda and Moraga fire districts must come up with ways to slash expenses to avoid future crises.

ence and has headed the Moraga district for 18 months since former Chief Ed Lucas left the department.

The Orinda chief position was vacated by Dave Evans, who retired last month after 22 years as chief of the fire district. Evans postponed his retirement by nine months after seeing the district successfully through the county's initial consolidation attempts.

Cooper sees his new role as an interim one during which he will be a facilitator in guiding the operation of both districts.

The future

Maintaining existing levels of fire and emergency protection in the communities and developing economic and efficiency plans for the districts are top priorities, Cooper said. Bringing in supplemental reve-

nue to replace what the state has taken — and is expected to take — from fire district funding is also essential, he added.

Orinda Assistant Chief Walter Luihn called Cooper an "excellent administrator and technician," and pledged him his full support.

"What he's proposing is best for his community, for my community and for employees in both districts," Luihn said. "He knows how to put something like this together and I fully support what he's doing. The foremost objective is to retain excellent service for the community."

Orinda fire finances

Financial planning for the Orinda Fire District — which took the hardest hit among county fire districts and was nearly forced to close a station — is crucial, Cooper said.

"We'll be working on collectively trying to solve Orinda's financial problem," said Cooper.

The Orinda district is funded until next July but could face serious problems at that time, Luihn said.

Luihn estimates the district will need as much as a \$1 million in additional funding, including a \$290,000 county loan that must be paid back.

This year's proposed \$3.86 budget was initially pared down to \$3.4 million, creating a \$456,500 shortfall.

"We were forced to go from a very lean budget to a bare bones budget," Luihn said.

The county loan and a budget cut of \$91,000 from Chief Evans' remaining salary, the supplies and service budget and employee benefits allowed the district's three sta-

"I've never, in my 30 years of experience in fire services, seen the spirit of cooperation that is starting to be forged. Parochialism has got to stop. It's not in the best interest of the communities."

— John Cooper

tions to remain open.

Fire district voters last month narrowly defeated a fireflow tax that could have raised money to ensure future protection.

The tax measure, similar to one passed in Moraga that has resulted in what is expected to be an \$850,000 reserve by the end of this year, was defeated in part by claims from Orindans who say the county owes the district money.

Opponents of the proposed fireflow tax claim the county owes as much as \$2.2 million Orindans paid to the county over the past 10 years that has not been returned to the district in fire services.

Cooper is concerned over what he calls misleading facts on distribution of the special district augmentation fund, which support special districts such as fire districts and libraries.

"I believe there has been a lot of misinformation about where the fire district money comes from and where it goes," he said.

The origin of fire district funding goes back to 1978 when Proposition 13 was passed and the state transferred property tax income from school district to the special district funding. At first, fire districts were funded at 95 percent of the 1978 level. But that was no guarantee the district would continue to receive the same percentage, Cooper said.

"Orinda had a very high spending level the first year the state bailed the districts out," said Cooper. "That dropped. The county is not required to fund the district at that level. Needs change over the years, and the county has put money in parts of the county where it is most needed."

Orinda fire commissioners plan to discuss options for raising money. Commissioner Blue said placing a fireflow tax before voters for a second time remains a possibility, but that there may be other options to

pursue.

"It might be more feasible if the county were to levy a benefit assessment fee to make up the shortfall," Blue said. Such an assessment would be a flat fee per property. Further, it would require only a 50 percent vote to pass, and then only if 5 percent of the voters protested the levying.

Moraga fire finances

Moraga fared better in the county budget reductions, losing \$200,000 from a \$3.23 budget. This is only the first of more anticipated cutbacks, cautions Cooper.

"We're building reserves in anticipation of the next round of budget cuts," Cooper said. "Our goal is to keep the tax rate as low as possible and prepare for the future."

Moraga Fire Commissioners implemented the fireflow tax, which was passed by voters in 1981, at a 6-cent rate this year. It is expected to raise \$480,000 this year, and the district will have an estimated \$850,000 reserve at the end of this year.

"Moraga protects part of Orinda in the Ivy Drive area. Those Orindans have supported the fireflow tax," Cooper said. "I believe the majority of Orindans understand the situation and don't want to settle for less protection."

Future challenges

The next six months will be a challenge, said Cooper.

"My opinion of the firefighters in Orinda and Moraga is that there are no finer around. They're dedicated to providing outstanding service to their communities."

Luihn agreed, and said he hopes residents support the changes occurring in the two districts.

"I hope people see it as a positive move and hope give their support," he said. "We've been working on it for a long time," he said. "Difficult times are ahead — if we don't hang together, we'll hang alone."

Fire districts sent back to drawing board

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

Orinda and Moraga fire officials received a shock last week when county supervisors rejected their plan to merge top management positions in the districts.

The board instead told Orinda and Moraga officials to look for ways to combine forces with the larger Consolidated Fire, which serves most of central county.

Local fire officials said they'll do as directed, but will also continue working on a proposal that would have Orinda and Moraga sharing key management positions.

"We will look at the other plans, but the thrust of what we do must have political support," said Acting Chief John Cooper of the Orinda and Moraga fire districts, who was named the interim chief two weeks ago.

"This is not a process that is going to be over quickly," he added.

Supervisors were unanimous Dec. 15 in their decision to send fire officials, city representatives and county administrators back to the negotiating table to explore consolidating the three districts. Supervisors Nancy Fahden and Sunne McPeak were absent from the meeting.

"I know the fire commissioners worked hard, but they're narrow in their scope of understanding the overall situation," said Supervisor Tom Powers, who advocates merging the districts with Consolidated. "They don't have to balance the budget. It's our job to make sure the money is spread throughout the county."

The board will revisit the consolidation issue at the Jan. 19 meeting. A task force comprised of Orinda and Moraga leaders plans to meet again before then. A representative from firefighters union Local 1230 and Supervisor-elect Jeff Smith will join the task force.

"I thought we had been given very specific directions which we followed to the letter. They threw (their proposal) out with no discussions."

— Moraga Mayor Sue Noe

Cooper and fire commissioners from both districts were disheartened after last week's meeting. They said their proposal to combine top management positions in Orinda and Moraga fire districts would save the county \$160,000.

"They kind of changed their focus mid-stream," said Cooper. "We're still very interested in working with Orinda — we're not interested in working with Central County."

Moraga Mayor and Fire Commissioner Sue Noe was upset after the meeting.

"I thought we had been given very specific directions which we followed to the letter," Noe said. "We had a plan we could have lived with. They threw it out with no discussions."

Moraga and Orinda fire commissioners remain adamantly opposed to consolidation.

"We're against it for the same reasons we have been all along," said Moraga Fire Commissioner Gordon Nathan. "These reasons have been expressed by us and by the citizens of Moraga and Orinda."

Losing the district's autonomy, threats to Moraga's unique paramedic program, a potential reduction in service and any impact to the district's funding mechanism — a

FIRE

From Page 1

voter-passed fireflow tax and the Rescue One Foundation — are among Moraga's reasons for opposition.

Calling the board decision "a terrible setback," Nathan said commissioners agreed last week to continue working cooperatively with Orinda and the county on a plan that will save money and allow the districts to remain separate from the county district.

"We were hopeful the board would accept the report," Nathan said. "Orinda and Moraga fire commissioners, staff from both districts and county administrators worked on the plan, and county administrators supported it."

Orinda Fire Commissioner Chuck Blue said he was pleased to hear that Moraga will "stay with Orinda in this endeavor."

"There is real potential for this

shared management plan to work," Blue said.

Cooper said the task force will look at a plan presented by Powers for bringing Orinda and Moraga districts under the central management which Powers says could save \$445,000.

Powers advocates consolidating Orinda and Moraga districts with Contra Costa County Consolidated Fire District, which has 19 fire stations in Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Martinez, Concord and Clayton. He outlined a plan in which Consolidated Fire Chief William Maxfield would oversee the two districts' five stations. Powers estimates consolidation would save \$450,000.

"It can be done with fewer personnel," he said.

Two assistant chief positions would be converted to battalion chiefs, Powers said. A third battalion chief position would be provided by Consolidated and both districts' fire marshal positions would be eliminated and replaced with a fire inspector.

Cooper said such a plan would

take control from Moraga and Orinda districts.

"There would be no administrative staff and the district would be without a command," Cooper said.

The task force will also look at a plan prepared by Orinda Fire Capt. Willis Lamm, which would consolidate the two districts with the central county district but create a battalion to serve Lamorinda. Lamm says the plan would save about \$375,000 and allow the districts to decide whether to fund management positions.

Although the plan has no support from Orinda or Moraga fire officials, Lamm sent a copy to Powers, who asked that it be considered.

Cooper said the plan, which was originally developed for Orinda fire district staff and commissioners, would not result in the savings suggested because the cost of providing one battalion chief is not included.

Financing the cash-strapped Orinda Fire District for the upcoming year remains a priority.

"From my perspective, that hasn't changed," Cooper said. "It's critical, and it is our number one goal."

Orinda, Moraga fire stick to original plan

CC SUN 1/13/93

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Orinda and Moraga fire officials are sticking to a proposal that would have one chief leading both districts, combine other top management positions, and insure autonomy from the larger Consolidated Fire District, while saving about \$222,000.

Officials also gave tentative support to an assessment fee that, if approved by county supervisors, would guarantee income in what looks like a bleak future for fire district funding.

At the direction of county supervisors, a special task force comprised of Orinda and Moraga fire officials, county Supervisor Jeff Smith, Consolidated Fire Chief William Maxfield, Deputy County Administrator Scott Tandy and members from firefighters union Local 1230 met Wednesday to consider

ways of slashing costs.

They stopped short of merging Moraga and Orinda districts with other fire districts, a move favored by county Supervisor Tom Powers. Instead, they reviewed two alternative plans before agreeing their former proposal, which has been amended to save more money than originally proposed, is the best for Moraga and Orinda.

The districts would operate under one chief, and two assistant chief positions would be converted to battalion chief positions. One fire marshal position would serve both districts and now-vacant fire inspector and clerical positions would be eliminated.

Local control the objective

"I'm confident that the communities want to maintain local admini-

See FIRE, Page 8

FIRE

From Page 1

stration and fire district programs," said John Cooper, acting chief for Orinda and Moraga fire districts.

Smith said he understood the districts' desire to maintain their own management. He said that while he will support the task force recommendation, he wants to "leave the door open to other possibilities."

The group rejected a plan similar to one used in the West County fire district, in which Maxfield would lead the Orinda and Moraga district and two battalions would cover the communities.

According to information provided by Supervisor Tom Powers, such a plan would save \$475,000.

The group also opposed a plan developed by several Orinda firefighters and presented by Orinda fire Capt. Willis Lamm.

Under Lamm's plan, Orinda, Moraga and Consolidated fire districts would form a third battalion for Lamorinda that would train together as a wildland fire unit. According to information provided, such a plan would save \$378,000.

In each plan, fire officials questioned the amount of money expected to be saved.

Consolidation savings doubt

"The savings identified are not there," Moraga Mayor and Fire Commissioner Sue Noe said of the plan patterned after the West County district. Noe said the plan fails to account for the administrative work performed by Consolidated district officials.

Having Maxfield at the helm of Orinda and Moraga districts would overburden the existing structure in the county and provide inadequate service to Moraga and Orinda, Cooper said.

Both Cooper and Maxfield opposed the plan presented by Lamm.

Money woes real villain

Despite concerns over consolidation, Cooper said the real issue is long term funding of all fire districts.

"All of us agree the amount of money saved by reorganization pales in comparison to the loss of the special district augmentation funding," which has provided 55 percent of county fire district funding, Cooper said.

"We're looking at losing millions — almost \$30 million — and talking about saving \$100,000 here or there."

Supervisors were expected to decide this week whether to ask county-wide fire districts for feedback and support of an assessment fee. Supervisors have the authority

to levy such a fee without an election; however, if 5 percent of the property owners in the county protest the fee, it must go on the ballot.

New fire fee proposed

Such fees are already in place in the Riverview Fire District in East County. There, single-family dwelling owners pay \$29 a year in fire district support. East Diablo and Oakley fire district residents also pay assessment fees.

Orinda voters in November rejected a fire district tax. But Noe said she believes a benefit fee, if tied in with a joint management plan for Orinda and Moraga, would be better received in Orinda.

Orinda fire commissioners Bill Gross and Chuck Blue supported the plan to merge management and said the entire board would discuss reorganization and financial structure

plans at this week's meeting.

"In view of the calendar of events, it appears the only alternative is to go for the benefit assessment tax," said Blue, referring to the possibility of losing all state support. "Moraga can survive for a while, but we run out of money July 1. Do we shut down a station?"

Mike Price, president of firefighters union Local 1230, said finding a funding source for the fire districts is the top priority of the union, and that it supports a benefit fee assessment.

Asked whether the union supports one management plan over another, Price said it will support doing what is needed to maintain the current fire protection service in the two communities.

"Firefighting is basically the same and there are no boundaries. Maintaining local identity is very key to the issue," he said.

County plans to levy tax to save fire stations

By Maria Gaura
Staff writer

MARTINEZ — County homeowners will be forced to make some tough budget decisions in the next few weeks.

They must decide whether to raise their property taxes or risk the shutdown of neighborhood fire stations.

Proposed state budget cuts could eliminate more than half the county's firefighting budget

for 1993-94. County officials say the only alternative to closing stations is to raise taxes, at least temporarily.

"It's unrealistic to eliminate every other fire station in the county," County Administrator Phil Batchelor told the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday. "It's unthinkable. And the only other thing to be done is . . . to come up with a new source of funding."

On Tuesday, supervisors voted to impose a

benefit assessment district to raise money for nine county-operated fire districts. If more than 5 percent of homeowners protest the assessment, the measure will be placed on the June 8 ballot.

Homeowners will be notified of the assessment by mail. The notices will be postmarked by Jan. 29. A public hearing will be held March 16.

If the tax is placed on the ballot, it will require a simple majority to pass. The tax would vary in

Please see **FIRE**, back page

Fire

FROM PAGE 1A

cost by district and expire in five years.

Costs would range from \$407 per year in Orinda to \$62 per year in Pinole. The difference depends on the number of "risk units" — the homes and businesses — in each district. The more homes and businesses in a district, the lower the cost. Orinda has only about 6,000 homes and very hilly terrain, thus the high cost.

A house is considered one risk unit. A small business could be considered four or five risk units. The most a large business like a refinery would be charged is 10 risk units. The amount of each property's assessment will be placed on the mailed notice.

The proposed assessments are a maximum amount and include all current assessments in a district. Supervisors said they hope the full amount won't be necessary.

Senior and low-income homeowners can apply for an exemption.

County officials were unhappy with the emergency measure, but found themselves trapped between almost-certain budget disaster and the deadline to place a measure on the June ballot.

It will be months before the state decides on a budget; last year it wasn't finalized until September. But if county officials wait for a de-

PROPOSED MAXIMUM FIRE ASSESSMENT

Assessment per house or "risk unit." Businesses could pay up to 10 times the annual assessment, depending on the type of business. The five-year tax would expire in 1998.

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (Clayton, Concord, Lafayette, Martinez, Pacheco, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek): \$200 per year
East Diablo Fire Protection District (Brentwood): \$111.50 per year
Oakley Fire Protection District: \$71 per year
Orinda Fire Protection District: \$407 per year
Pinole Fire Protection District: \$62 per year
Riverview Fire Protection District (Antioch, Pittsburg): \$279 per year
West County Fire Protection District: \$201 per year
Bethel Island Fire Protection District: not yet known
Crockett-Carquinez Fire Protection District: not yet known

INSIDE

Speaker Willie Brown predicts 1/2-cent sales tax increase will be renewed. **8A**

cision, fire stations could be closed for as long as a year before a tax is approved to reopen them.

"I think this is a responsible action on the part of the board," said Chief Assistant County Administrator Scott Tandy. "This is a life-threatening action on the part of the state. That's what we're talking about here."

Gov. Pete Wilson's proposed budget, released Friday, would take about \$24 million, or 55 percent, of the \$44 million in Special District Augmentation Funds now given to Contra Costa County to pay for fire services. The money comes from local property taxes.

Irritated at being forced to ask for new taxes, supervisors voted to include an informational flier with the assessment notices.

"The State of California is threatening to cut your fire services," it reads. "This is property tax money you pay to protect your home. This money belongs here in the county. Now it may be taken by the state and used for other purposes."

Other county services such as jails, libraries, sheriff's patrols and the crime lab also will be jeopardized by the state cuts. But counties only have the power to create assessment districts for fire services, Tandy said.

There are already three fire assessment districts in the county. Riverview charges \$29 per year, Oakley asks \$14.50 annually and Brentwood in the East Diablo District charges \$15.

EDITORIALS

County caught in bind

New fire district tax should be last resort

Contra Costa County supervisors, understandably concerned about Gov. Pete Wilson's plans to withdraw "bailout" property tax money from local governments and special districts, have voted to create a tax assessment district to raise money for nine county-operated districts that provide fire protection for almost all of the county.

Moving ahead with the assessment district at this time makes sense. Any further delays could preclude voters from having a say on the matter should supervisors decide to put it on the June 8 ballot.

Affected Contra Costa residents will be informed of the assessment district by Jan. 29, and a public hearing will be held on March 16. If more than 5 percent of homeowners within its boundaries protest the assessment district, the measure will be placed on the June 8 ballot.

Let's hope the state will not confiscate so much local property tax money that significant increases in taxes for fire protection will be necessary. But unfortunately there isn't much hope that Wilson will refrain from another substantial raid on the tax revenues that are raised at the local level and should be left there.

Let's also hope that the county will not misuse the assessment district to raise money for fire protection that could have come from other sources.

Since counties have few ways of raising money other than to form assessment districts for fire services, it is tempting to use the districts as cash cows instead of making difficult decisions to trim other departments.

The county has good reason to fear a major shortfall of funds from the state, which is facing another multi-billion dollar deficit. Last year, the state took \$1.3 billion in locally raised property taxes to try to balance its budget. This time around, Wilson wants \$2.6 billion more of local property taxes to bail out the state.

If Wilson has his way, the nine county-operated fire districts in Contra Costa would not be able to operate unless they found an additional source of money. That money must come from the proposed special assessment district, or from other county services that also are likely to be jeopardized if Sacramento launches another series of raids on local property tax coffers.

When push comes to shove, the county must place protective services at the top of its budget agenda. But it first must cut spending in every other budget area before voters will approve new tax assessments to pay for essential firefighting services.

Price of fire protection may go up in Orinda, Lafayette

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

ORINDA — Orinda fire officials are backing a county-proposed fee as the best immediate solution to guarantee fire protection and keep city fire stations from closing.

Fire commissioners agreed last week to support a benefit assessment fee which the county plans to levy on Orinda and eight other financially-strapped fire districts in the county, including the district which provides fire protection in Lafayette. Moraga, with a fireflow tax already in place, would not be affected.

But at least one resident said the district still needs to look at cutting costs and investigate how Orinda's tax money is distributed before backing an assessment fee.

The fee varies from district to district and is calculated on the money needed to support fire protection services divided by the number of "risk units," or homes and businesses in each fire district.

Orinda, a city with a high level of fire service and a low number of homes and businesses, would have the highest assessment fee in the county.

A preliminary study shows it could be as high as \$407 per building in Orinda, and \$200 in Lafayette,

"If this doesn't go through, Orinda is faced with having to reduce fire service. We are literally running on fumes."

—Acting Fire Chief John Cooper

which is part of Contra Costa Consolidated Fire District.

"That's the maximum limit, which would be the worst case projection in which we would lose the entire special district fund and portions of property tax revenue," said John Cooper, acting fire chief for Orinda and Moraga fire districts.

County supervisors were expected to discuss the assessment fee and determine exactly what the upper limit of the tax would be at Tuesday's meeting, after the Sun deadline.

Supervisors were also expected to review a management consolidation plan for the Orinda and Moraga fire districts which would have one chief, three battalion chiefs, one fire marshal and shared clerical staff that a local task force recommends.

See FIRE, Page 2

From Page 1

County analysts believe the state may take back property tax income it has provided for fire district funding.

If so, Orinda would need \$2.47 million — which includes paying back a \$290,000 loan — to keep fire service operating at its current level of service, Cooper said. With initial estimates of 6,067 parcels in the district, each parcel owner would pay \$407.

"If this doesn't go through, Orinda is faced with having to reduce fire service. There is no flexibility at all in the fire district budget," Cooper said. "We are literally burning on fumes."

Orinda fire commissioners say the assessment fee is the only solution for keeping Orinda's three fire stations open in July.

"The estimate of \$407 is based on the worst scenario," Commissioner Chuck Blue said. "It doesn't mean that is what people would pay. We hope people will become informed so they understand the situation. If people are against the fee, they need to know what they are taking about."

Homeowners will be notified of the assessment by mail at the end of this month and a public hearing is scheduled for March 16. If more than 5 percent of homeowners protest the assessment, it will be placed on a June 8 ballot where passage of the assessment fee would need one vote over 50 percent.

"I certainly hope they will oppose it," said Dana Isherwood, an Orinda resident who organized a group that opposed the fireflow tax.

"I think the only way for a full disclosure of issues behind this tax is to have an election," she said. "Whatever the election costs will be well worth it."

Isherwood continues to question whether there are other ways to cut fire district costs, as well as keep money Orindans pay to the state which has then gone to support other county fire districts.

Orinda Councilwoman Joyce Hawkins, who represents the council on a task force of Orinda and Moraga fire officials and county administrators, recommended the council support the assessment for lack of other short term solutions.

"Five months from now we have a potentially devastating situation in front of us," Hawkins said.

"We have to ask ourselves if we want the high level of service," she said. "I know I certainly want it. The problem is we don't have a lot of parcels — or people — to pay for it."

cc Times 1/20/93

Fire-chief sharing is a forerunner to more savings

County wants to research streamlining fire districts

By Maria Gaura
Staff writer

RICHMOND — Moraga and Orinda will continue to share one fire chief while county officials study ways to make their fire districts more economical.

A report presented to county supervisors Tuesday said that sharing administrators between the two small districts could save the county about \$223,000 per year. But supervisors agreed that more study is needed to determine a final plan for slimming down district management.

Combining administrators in Orinda and Moraga was only the first step in consolidating fire district operations, supervisors said.

County analysts say as much as \$502,000 per year could be saved by combining the Moraga and Orinda fire protection districts with other county districts. Area residents have vigorously opposed such a move for years, saying they want to retain local identity and control. So far, they have managed to fend off major changes.

But the state is likely to withdraw about half the county's fire protection funding next year, and supervisors are reluctant to impose new fire taxes without striving to make all county fire districts as "lean and nice" as possible.

"We are tippy-toeing through the tepid waters of Moraga and Orinda," said Supervisor Tom Powers of Richmond, who says the small districts should be combined with the district that serves seven other Contra Costa cities. "I believe this can be consolidated with Con Fire (Contra Costa County Fire Protection District) ... and we can have an excellent program."

"I don't think most people would know the difference."

Moraga Mayor Susan Noe said that having one chief for the two districts was an acceptable beginning in the search to save money. Moraga residents recently approved fire taxes that probably will be sufficient to run the district even if the state withdraws all of its subsidy.

But neighboring Orinda rejected a similar tax and was forced to borrow \$290,000 from the county to keep all three of its stations open last year. The two districts have a mutual-aid agreement, raising the question of who will pay if Moraga is forced to bail out an underfunded Orinda.

Anticipating huge state cuts, the county is attempting to pass fire taxes in nine of its fire districts. The board made final changes in the wording of the proposed assessment Tuesday. Notices to property owners will soon be printed and mailed, according to County Administrator Phil Batchelor.

Fire Tax Proposed Around Bay Area

'Special assessment' districts would keep some stations open

1-25-93

By Martin Halstuk

Chronicle East Bay Bureau

Alarmed over dwindling financial aid from the state, communities at risk of deadly wildfires are considering new taxes to keep fire stations open.

The creation of special assessment districts to finance fire protection is the latest example of how local governments in California are desperately seeking new ways to maintain basic services.

Although no one disputes the idea that adequate fire protection is important to avert a tragic brushfire like the one that struck in the East Bay hills in 1991, many disagree over how the additional firefighting funds should be raised.

Worried officials throughout the state say they have only two options — either cut fire protection or raise new taxes. State law limits local governments from imposing taxes, but the creation of a "special assessment" district for fire protection is allowed.

In Oakland, a new fire tax proposed only for hills residents recently surfaced as a topic of contentious debate. The city's proposed fire tax is unique because it is aimed only at residents in hill areas where fire hazards are great.

Some citizens argue that it is unfair to single out a special group for a bigger tax bite rather than spreading the cost among all taxpayers. Critics point out, for example, that all Oakland residents must pay for increased police services in high-crime areas in East and West Oakland.

The City Council is expected to take action on the plan next month. It calls for a tax of \$75 per year, with a ceiling of \$300, for up to 20 years.

In Contra Costa County, the Board of Supervisors is considering an ordinance to increase fire protection through a new tax that

would range from \$71 in Oakley to \$407 in Orinda.

However, in anticipation of community opposition to a new tax, the question will likely be placed before voters this June.

Contra Costa County Supervisor Dr. Jeff Smith, who supports the tax, said the county stands to lose 50 percent or more in state financing for fire services in 1993-94.

"We'd be in a devastating situation," said Smith, a family-practice physician.

Critics in Contra Costa argue that the county can maintain fire service by cutting elsewhere.

But Contra Costa County Administrator Phil Batchelor said

'I'm not convinced people learned from the Oakland fire'

— ROBERT MARCUCCI,
SAN RAFAEL FIRE CHIEF

that county fire districts made deep administrative cuts and used capital funds to keep fire stations open this year. Without the tax, half the fire stations could be closed and dozens of firefighters laid off, he warned.

Similarly in Oakland, City Manager Henry Gardner said the money for badly needed fire prevention in high-risk areas must be raised somehow.

He said the city cannot dip into the general fund because a \$16 million budget deficit for 1993-94 already looms. The city narrowly avoided layoffs and cutbacks to services last year.

San Rafael Assistant City Manager Suzanne Golt said a committee has been formed to explore ways to raise revenue, and a special fire assessment will be one of the options considered.

Paul Scannell, deputy county administrator for San Mateo County, said that if the state continues to reduce aid, a special fire tax "is something we would have to consider."

Many veteran firefighters believe that it is short-sighted to oppose the cost of maintaining current levels of fire protection.

"I'm not convinced people learned from the Oakland fire," said San Rafael Fire Chief Robert Marcucci, referring to the conflagration that destroyed 3,200 homes and killed 25 people.

"People go through cycles of concern," he said. "When you have an event — like an Oakland fire — there's all this talk and energy about doing something. Then people ask how much is it going to cost, and attention starts to wane."

This winter's heavy rains have not pushed the subject aside nor allayed fears. Marcucci said a rainy winter means heavy brush and plenty of new vegetation that could fuel another wildfire next summer.

"It happened in Oakland," he said, "but next time it could be Mill Valley or San Rafael."

Fire taxes are now up to county's landowners

By Maria Gaura
Staff writer

MARTINEZ — New taxes for the owners of 220,000 pieces of property in Contra Costa County were approved by supervisors Tuesday, and notices could hit mailboxes by this weekend.

Contra Costa officials will then begin nervously watching their own mail to see how the news is received. If enough landowners deliver protests, the proposal could be killed before it gets on the June 8 ballot.

Because Gov. Pete Wilson's state budget plan threatens to eliminate half the county's fire district funding this year, supervisors are proposing fire taxes in nine of 17 area fire districts. If rejected by the affected landowners, many county fire stations could close in July, officials warn.

"This is not a false alarm," said board Chairman Tom Torlakson. "This is not crying 'fire' in a crowded theater. This is a disaster."

Supervisors agreed Tuesday to launch a public information campaign to direct public anger at the taxes where they believe it belongs — at the governor and the Legislature.

When fire department budget cuts were proposed last year, union members placed signs in front of fire stations that said "Call your county supervisor" and listed officials' office numbers. This year the county plans to adopt that tactic, but change the message.

"You will see the governor's phone number and fax number on those signs," said Scott Tandy, assistant county supervisor. "It's a way to direct the complaints to him, since it's his proposal."

County officials also plan to attend as many community meetings as possible to spread information about their proposal. They believe the more people know, the more likely they'll support the tax.

"My opinion is that we should secede from the county and start our own fire district," said Thomas Lemmer of Orinda. "I don't mind paying four hundred-some dollars if it's our own fire engines and our own staff. Do we pay more than we receive, is the question. I don't know that."

A public hearing on the proposal is set for 10:30 a.m. March 16. An informational hearing before the board has been set for March 9 at 5 p.m.

INSIDE

Two East Bay districts might not escape this year's state budget crunch.

3A

Fire

FROM PAGE 1A

The board also set maximum levels for the taxes Tuesday, and approved the wording of notices.

The proposed levy varies in each district, ranging from \$68 per "risk unit" per year in Oakley to \$407 in Orinda, though supervisors vow they will try to keep the cost below the maximum allowed.

A single-family home is considered one risk unit, while apartment complexes and large industries can be charged for up to 10 risk units. The tax is set to expire in five years, and the maximum assessment could increase each of those years with the Consumer Price Index.

The tax could pass or fail in each of the nine fire districts, potentially creating a checkerboard of fire protection throughout the county.

The 'benefit assessment' mechanism, invented by the Legislature in 1981, could be imposed by a vote of the board if few protests are received. But if residents owning property that would generate 5 percent of the assessment protest, it goes to a vote. That ballot would require a simple majority to pass.

If the owners of property that would generate 50 percent of the assessment file a protest, the measure would be killed outright and not placed on the ballot.

Supervisors expect the measures to be placed on the ballot. But if too many protests are lodged, they might seek volunteer help to call protesters individually and ask them to change their minds.

Of the eight area fire districts not under the county's control, San Ramon and Rodeo-Hercules are seeking their own benefit assessment districts. Kensington is placing a tax on the June ballot, and Moraga has already passed local taxes to keep its department afloat.

The Richmond, Pinole and El Cerrito city fire departments do not rely on state funds, and will not be immediately affected by the state budget crisis. The Dougherty Regional Fire Authority is similarly unaffected.

The potential for balkanization of fire service in Contra Costa has county officials worried, but there are no better choices available.

"It's possible there will be disparities in protection," said Tandy. "It's directly opposite to what we strive for now, (which is) roughly equal protection in every district. At best, it's a short-term approach."

PROPOSED FIRE TAXES

The maximum proposed annual fire taxes:

Bethel Island Fire Protection District	* \$273
Contra Costa County Fire Protection District ..	\$200
Crockett-Carquinez Fire Protection District ..	* \$130
East Diablo Fire Protection District	\$112
Oakley Fire Protection District	* \$ 68
Orinda Fire Protection District	\$407
Pinole Fire Protection District	* \$ 82
Riverview Fire Protection District	* \$237
West County Fire Protection District	\$201

* Figures updated as of Jan. 26

How to comment

If you decide to protest a benefit assessment in your fire district, you have several options:

■ Sign and date the notice you receive in the mail and return it to the clerk of the Board of Supervisors. The clerk's address is listed on the notice.

■ Write a letter expressing your protest and send it to the clerk of the board. Put your name, address and parcel number in the letter. Your parcel number will be listed on the mailed notice.

■ Attend the public hearing at 10:30 a.m. March 16 and submit a written protest. A copy of your notice or parcel number would be helpful, but not necessary.

But it's better than closing fire stations, he said. And the county has no other taxing authority to fall back on. The governor's budget plan would take \$25 million or more in fire district funding from Contra Costa, about 55 percent of the total budget.

Overcoming taxpayer skepticism will be a challenge this year. As the state hacks away at local governments' budgets, more local taxes are sure to be placed on the ballot.

The supervisors asked Tuesday for Assemblyman Bob Campbell, D-Martinez, to sponsor state legislation allowing benefit assessments for libraries and city police departments as well as fire districts. Other counties are asking for similar taxing powers.

In Contra Costa, residents in the Rodeo-Hercules area spent little time considering a proposal for a fire benefit assessment. Less than a week after it was proposed, nearly 5 percent of the homeowners have objected to the tax.

Fire districts in danger without fiscal back-up

By John Cooper

Guest columnist

California's fiscal crisis has come home to Contra Costa County! To balance the projected state budget deficit of over \$9 billion, Governor Wilson plans to eliminate almost \$2.6 billion in revenue to local governments in the coming fiscal year. Under the Governor's plan, the entire Special District Augmentation Fund, which was established to help finance fire and library services after the passage of Proposition 13, will be eliminated. Contra Costa special districts will lose about \$30 million (55 percent of their total budgets), and the cash-strapped Orinda Fire District will have a budget shortfall of almost \$2 million in the fiscal year beginning July first.

This past year Contra Costa County fire districts reduced their budgets by over 12 percent and the Orinda Fire District had to borrow \$290,000.00 from the county just to keep its fire stations open. The failure of the Fire Flow Tax (Measure D) on the November ballot has left the Orinda Fire District powerless to avoid major cuts in fire services if the state enacts its current budget plan. The fire station closures that were predicted last spring are certain to occur in Orinda and throughout the county unless new contingent funding for fire services is quickly put in place.

This week the Board of Supervisors is mailing notices to property owners advising them of their intent to establish an emergency fire suppression assessment. The fire assessment is being enacted to replace the revenue that will be lost when the special District Augmentation Fund is eliminated by the state. The amounts of the assessment vary depending on the number of fire stations each fire district maintains. The maximum assessment Orinda Fire District property owners would pay under the county plan would be \$407.00 per year. The assessment would be reduced substantially if the state is willing to find another way to balance its budget. If more than five percent of the local property owners protest the special fire assessment, the matter will be placed on the June 8 ballot.

The Governor says he doesn't want to raise taxes. Yet his action to eliminate the major portion of fire district funding will force local property owners to tax themselves if they wish to maintain adequate fire service. These are tough times and Orinda residents are facing a tough decision. Should they risk losing their excellent fire and rescue protection and watch their fire insurance rates rise dramatically, or should they increase taxes?

Orinda's narrow streets, brush covered hillsides, and large homes create the potential for a major urban fire disaster unless the local fire department can respond quickly and effectively when fires break out. The closure of fire stations in Orinda or any other community would normally be unthinkable, yet Orindans will have to decide upon this issue almost immediately. The 1991 Oakland Hills Firestorm is a poignant lesson why Orinda Fire Stations must not be closed. A fire suppression assessment is the only way to prevent that from happening.

John Cooper is acting chief of Moraga and Orinda fire districts.

Put the fire financing blame where it is due

2-24-93

Contra Costa Sun

By Scott Tandy

Voter approval of Proposition 13 in 1978 radically changed local government financing. Cities, counties and other units of local government including fire districts, libraries, flood control, lighting districts and schools lost about 50 percent of their historical property tax revenues. In fiscal year 1978-79, the state used its massive surplus of more than \$7 billion to help "bail out" local government. The following year, the Legislature agreed to fund local school districts directly from the state General Fund and also created a local Special District Augmentation Fund (SDAF) which transferred a portion of the school property taxes to finance local special districts. It was designed to provide permanent funding for essential local government services like fire.

Now the Governor and state legislative leaders want to take these local property taxes and use them to balance the state deficit! It could mean a loss of \$24 million or about 55 percent of the fire districts' remaining property tax.

The law creating the SDAF gives discretion to each county Board of Supervisors to distribute the taxes in the fund within their respective counties for special districts. Our county distributes the SDAF based on need.

Prior to Proposition 13, the Orinda Fire District had one of the highest fire tax rates and spending levels of any fire district in the county. Since that time, several economies and efficiencies have been implemented to reduce district spending. Some recent examples include

It is inconceivable that Orindans would expect the Board of Supervisors to allow uncontrolled spending by their fire district just because the fire district had a high tax rate when Proposition 13 passed 14 years ago.

a centralized fire dispatching and more than a 30 percent reduction in the number of chief officer and senior management positions. These efficiencies save hundred of thousands of dollars annually.

It is inconceivable that Orindans would expect the Board of Supervisors to allow uncontrolled spending by their fire district just because the fire district had a high tax rate when Proposition 13 passed 14 years ago. Yet this is just what is being proposed by "return to source district" advocates in the Orinda community.

It is true that the Orinda Fire District has contributed more to the SDAF than received back for services. But those funds have been allocated to other district in our county in an effort to provide uniform services and equipment and more importantly, to ensure quality mutual aid and back-up response in our communities when necessary.

Would people really prefer that other district in Con-

tra Costa County be unequipped, under-trained and ill-prepared to battle a major fire if it were to occur in Orinda?

Orinda is not the only district in this situation. Contra Costa and Moraga have typically put more money into the SDAF to support this countywide network for mutual aid and regional benefit.

Orindans should also be aware that the Governor's 1993-94 budget proposes to eliminate the SDAF to balance the state government deficit. If this revenue is lost, drastic reductions in fire services, flood control and libraries will likely occur unless there is another local option. This is why the Board of Supervisors is proposing fire district benefit assessments as a contingency plan in communities such as Orinda.

Should Pete Wilson and the Legislature be allowed to put us in this position? We think not! The Board of Supervisors has asked the mayors and city councils of all 18 cities to join with us and urge the Governor and members of the Assembly and state Senate to exhaust other methods to balance their deficit and preserve our fire protection.

Please join us at our public hearings on March 9 and 16. We want to hear your ideas and concerns and develop with you a strong coalition to battle the Governor's tax rip off! Add your voice to the outcry! Call the Governor's office at (916) 445-2841.

Scott Tandy is Chief Assistant County Administrator for Contra Costa County.

Moraga fire marshal, Les Wandel, retiring

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Rest and relaxation are hardly on Fire Marshal Les Wandel's retirement agenda.

When he leaves his job as enforcer of town fire codes and the weed abatement program, he plans to fly his two-seater plane, fish and scuba dive.

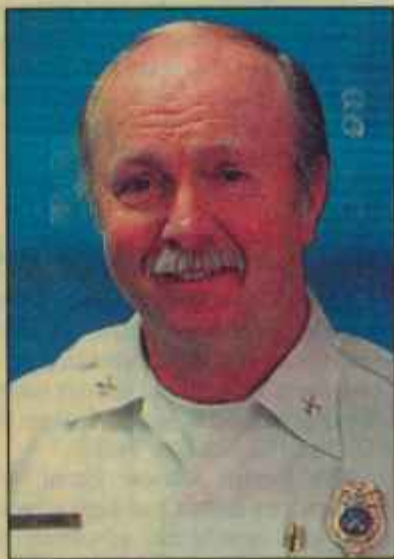
When he's tired of that, he'll hone his snow skiing skills, a sport he learned recently on a trip to a Lake Tahoe ski resort with his three grandchildren.

Wandel, 53, is leaving the Moraga Fire District at the end of this month after 32 years of service. During that time he has been a firefighter, an engine captain and the town's first full-time fire marshal.

"I've been blessed with a wonderful career and I've been fortunate," says Wandel. "I'll miss it here, but there are a lot of things I want to do. I'm looking forward to 20 years of active retirement."

A retirement dinner will be held to honor Wandel at 6 p.m. April 19 at the St. Mary's College Soda Center. For ticket information and reservations call Andi Freeman at 376-5454.

Wandel leaves the fire district satisfied with achieving some of the goals he set when he became the en-



Les Wandel

forcer of the town fire codes. One — to have all the buildings at St. Mary's College equipped with sprinklers — is nearly complete.

Another was to start a weed abatement program for fire prevention. Last year when abatement notices were sent out, the district also sent educational brochures. The results? The highest weed abatement compliance ever.

"We reached 90 percent of Moraga home and property owners and

See MARSHAL, Page 8

Leadership merged for five fire districts

By CATHERINE CHRISS
Staff writer

To cut costs, Contra Costa supervisors on Tuesday overhauled fire protection administration and named one chief and three assistant chiefs to lead five districts.

Allen Little, Riverview Fire Protection District chief for seven years, will remain Riverview chief and become acting chief for the Contra Costa, Orinda, Moraga and West County fire protection districts.

Assistant Chief William Cullen of the Contra Costa district was named operations chief for all districts except Riverview.

"The challenges are going to be very great," said Little, who has worked for the fire district for 28 years. "But I think we can pull together and support the effort."

The interim move, expected to save \$634,000 a year in salaries, was hailed by the Board of Supervisors as a bold, cost-cutting step that could usher in more consolidation as the county grapples with a staggering \$21 million shortfall and as much as \$80 million in state cuts.

Only a year ago the county's fire districts operated with five chiefs and seven assistant chiefs, said Supervisor Sunne McPeak of Concord, who has backed consolidation efforts.

The consolidation followed an announcement Tuesday that two fire chiefs and two assistant chiefs were taking early retirement.

The notion of consolidating fire districts has generated resistance for two years. Opponents maintain fire protection will suffer and communities will lose their identities.

The board will discuss later this year whether to keep the districts

LEAVING EARLY

Fire administrators taking early retirement:

	Annual including salary benefits	
Bill Maxfield , chief, Contra Costa Consolidated and West County district	\$105,348	\$151,701
John Cooper , acting chief, Moraga and Orinda	80,652	116,139
Walt Lulhn , assistant chief, Orinda	76,812	110,609
Keith Hayden , assistant chief, Riverview	86,424	124,450
David Evans , chief, Orinda (retired Nov. 1991)	91,044	131,103
Total savings	\$634,002	



John Cooper



Bill Maxfield

intact with one administrator or merge some of the five fire districts. The West County district wants to consolidate with another, McPeak said.

Last month, the county hired a consultant to work on the consolidation effort.

The early retirement of the four administrators and one from Orinda last fall translates into an annual savings of \$634,000, said Scott Tandy, assistant county administrator. The departing administrators will receive retirement credit for an additional two years of work.

Of course, the early retirement comes at a cost. The county will pay an additional \$400,000 in retirement benefits to the five men, Tandy said.

Many dislike consolidation. "Don't fragment things to the extent that you defeat the level of quality and services," warned Fire Commissioner Charles Blue of Orinda. "If you dilute too much, you lose control."

Fire Commissioner William Gross, also of Orinda, agreed. He urged supervisors to retain fire district boundaries.

"People in communities want their dollars spent their ways," he said. The budget for the fire districts has been reduced 15 percent over the past two years. Administrators plan to cut another 10 percent from the fire budget this year.

The county also is negotiating salaries with Local 1230 of the International Association of Fire Fighters.

The board is evaluating salaries of neighboring fire departments to determine how local firefighters' salaries compare.

Little's \$98,400 base salary will remain the same.

Assistant Chiefs Mike Argo and Ray Miraglia of the Contra Costa district will stay, but will work for all five districts.

RETIRE

From Page 1

retirements had been planned for some time and were not affected by the supervisors' offer. Former Orinda Chief Dave Evans retired in November, and the Moraga assistant chief position Cooper held before becoming acting chief is also vacant.

None of the vacancies have been or are expected to be replaced at this time.

Cooper, 53 and a Moraga resident, said the timing was right for him to leave the fire district.

"I feel like I've done everything I can do for Moraga and Orinda, and particularly for the Moraga district," he said.

Cooper's departure comes after intense involvement in months of political and financial wrangling, discussions and meetings with county administrators and fire officials. He has made numerous appearances before the County Board of Supervisors over the past year.

Firefighters and local fire officials were surprised by Cooper's decision and praised his dedication to fire service and the community.

"We'll miss him," said Moraga Fire Capt. Chris Klein, saying that he had no idea Cooper planned to leave. "John has done a good job in

the district and in the community, and we respect him. He's worked hard to provide the type of fire district and service people want and are willing to support."

Moraga Fire Commissioner Nathan said he was disappointed Cooper was leaving but noted that the Board of Supervisors had "made it tough" for him.

"John was a career firefighter who worked his way up to assistant chief and was appointed acting chief for Moraga and Orinda," Nathan said. "We asked them several times to give the chief's test and were turned down."

Cooper said he will miss the people he's worked with in fire service and in the community.

The commitment of Moraga residents and their continued support of the emergency and protection services has been one of Cooper's biggest satisfactions.

"What's unique has been the interaction with the community and the citizens and their willingness to get involved and support local services — it's unique in a job like mine and it's what makes the job pleasurable."

He is most proud of the district's financial stability and voter approved fireflow tax, the firefighter paramedic program and the Rescue One Foundation which supports the district.

"We are in the black," he said, noting the district will have nearly \$1 million in reserves before the impending purchase of a new ambulance.

Cooper said he was worried over the future of the Orinda district, which does not have the funding mechanism Moraga does. Orinda voters last November rejected a fireflow tax that would have provided income to the financially strapped district. Many now oppose a proposed benefit assessment fee with a \$171 which will be on the June ballot.

Further consolidation of management which could occur between West County, Orinda, Moraga, Central County and Riverview or East County is a viable method of fire district operation for the future, said Cooper.

"My personal opinion is the community should give the Board of Supervisors benefit of the doubt in trying to fix this thing," he said. "There's just not enough money to go around."

In the near future though, Cooper will devote his personal time to fighting state proposals to eliminate local fire service funding.

"I figure this is my community, and I want to protect our collective interests. This problem has moved beyond the boundaries of Moraga," he said.

3-31-93 Contra Costa Sun

Fire chief takes unexpected early retirement



John Cooper

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Acting Moraga and Orinda Fire Chief John Cooper unexpectedly retired Tuesday, causing some local fire officials to fear the districts are one step closer to consolidation with Contra Costa Fire District.

Cooper made the decision after the County Board of Supervisors on March 23 offered top level fire officials an additional two years toward their service record if they took early retirement. The length of time employed is used to calculate retirement income.

The retirement offer is part of a

county cost-saving plan aimed toward reducing management costs and consolidation or functional integration of the county's nine fire districts, said chief Assistant County Administrator Scott Tandy.

"We don't intend to fill the (Moraga and Orinda fire chief) job," said Tandy. "We intend to restructure, reorganize and consolidate management. It doesn't mean the district is eliminated — it's just a change in how the district is managed on a day to day basis."

The Board of Supervisors was to meet in closed session Tuesday to decide who would lead the Orinda and Moraga districts. Tandy said

several factors will be considered in deciding what to do with the Moraga and Orinda fire districts in the long run.

They include the number of county fire officials accepting early retirement, the severity of threatened funding cuts from the state and the results of an advisory measure on Orinda's June ballot asking whether the district should consolidate.

The Moraga Fire Commission met Monday night to discuss the effect of Cooper's retirement. They planned to ask supervisors Tuesday not to appoint an acting chief from the Contra Costa Fire District as was expected, but to allow fire captains

from the Moraga and Orinda districts to take over as acting assistant fire chiefs.

"We'd like them (the Board of Supervisors) to wait before appointing anyone to the district," said Fire Commissioner Gordon Nathan. "We're reiterating that we are financially sound and we have options that need to be looked at. We have support from the community, which supports the Moraga fire district in its present form."

Dick Olsen, a Moraga resident and former fire commissioner who was at the meeting, said he fears county officials are moving the district a step closer to consolidation

with the Contra Costa Fire district.

"I think this is a total back door plan for consolidation," he said. "They know they can't get the citizens of Moraga to vote for consolidation. Every time we've had a tax measure, the residents have supported it by two or three to one."

Cooper's retirement makes him one of three fire officials this month — and one of four in recent months — who has retired from the Orinda and Moraga districts.

Moraga Fire Marshal Les Wandel and Orinda Assistant Chief Walt Luihn retired Tuesday. Their

See RETIRE, Page 2



Firefighter of the Year Jake Casey.

Firefighter of the year commended for his work with young people

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Jake Casey was confused when he walked into what he thought was a party for a fire commissioner and saw his grandson.

The 3-year-old was one of the guests — including Casey's wife, son, daughter, Moraga firefighters and fire commissioners — who surprised him at a party honoring his selection as this year's Moraga Firefighter of the Year.

"I was shocked," said Casey, 50, who has been with the fire district 21 years. He was lured to the March 11 celebration under the pretense it was in recognition of a fire commissioner's years with the district.

"I was off-duty and working on my taxes," Casey said. "I wasn't going to go, but they said I would be the only one not there. When I walked in I thought, 'what in the world is my grandson doing here?'"

The annual award is presented to a firefighter based on nominations from his or her peers which are screened by captains. The final selection is approved by the fire chief.

"I'm honored that a majority of the people I work with selected me," said Casey. "It surpasses many things I could ask for in my job or career. It

really means a lot to me."

Casey, who joined the Moraga district 21 years ago, became a firefighter after leaving a law enforcement career as a Concord police officer. Glad he made the change, he finds his firefighting career rewarding and satisfying.

"There is a much different appreciation level," he says.

Many who nominated him cited his work with youth and children. He is popular with school and day care groups that tour the station.

"We get requests all the time for him to do the tours," says Fire Chief Cooper, noting Casey's firefighting abilities and other skills including his "unique way in relating to young people."

"It's an honor to be selected by his peers, and I completely agree with their selection," Cooper said.

Assisting his wife, who runs a pre-school and his 20 years of teaching Sunday school classes are ways in which Casey has cultivated his skills with young people.

"I enjoy being with them and know a child's attention span," Casey said. "It's a matter of getting down to their level and talking about what they can relate to. We try to teach them what we do but in a way that they don't become fearful."

3-24-93 Contra Costa Sun



BY FREDERIC LARSON/THE CHRONICLE

Moraga firefighters Jon Holmes (left) and Don Romero stocked up with supplies from the grocery store

Town Loses Prized Fire Department

County supervisors wrest control of Moraga's 'pride and joy'

By Erin Hallissy
Chronicle East Bay Bureau

Residents of Moraga, a secluded, upscale Contra Costa County town nestled below the East Bay hills, have long held their firefighters close to their hearts and their pocketbooks.

For almost 20 years, the people of Moraga have paid extra taxes to pay the costs of paramedic training for their fire department, making their firefighters the only ones in the county to provide such a high quality of medical care.

Last November, Moraga residents voted to raise their property taxes to make sure that the state budget crisis will not lead to any cutbacks in their service. They donate thousands of dollars annually to a nonprofit foundation, called Rescue One, which buys equipment that the department would otherwise have to forgo.

Residents Are Stung

For many residents, however, the rosy picture suddenly dimmed Tuesday with a surprise move by the county Board of Supervisors to wrest the department from local control put it in the hands of a centralized bureaucracy far from Moraga. The move has stung the people of Moraga.

"The fire department is just the pride and joy of our a community," said Jerry Meyer, who works with the Rescue One Foundation. "We know the men. We know their families."

Local support has meant a financially healthy fire district with \$1 million in reserves, making it far different from other fire departments throughout the state now facing huge cutbacks because of the state budget crisis.

The Board of Supervisors con-

does appear that the rug has been pulled out from underneath us."

Moraga's Unique Needs

Dick Olsen, a Transamerica executive who has lived in Moraga for 21 years, said that the new fire administration knows nothing about the unique needs of Moraga, which is far from major hospitals and accessible only by two-lane country roads.

"These people need a map to

taxation without effective representation."

The supervisors' move was not without warning, although it was not listed on the Tuesday meeting agenda and caught many residents off guard.

Last year, the board suggested merging the Orinda and Moraga fire departments, but backed off after more than 2,000 letters of protest flooded county offices. The board has studied for months whether to consolidate all the county fire departments to save administrative and training costs, but the idea has met with resistance from communities that want to keep local control.

Supervisor Tom Powers of Richmond, who has backed consolidation as a way of saving money, said the board might agree to guarantee that the extra tax dollars raised in Moraga be used only in Moraga and that the paramedic service will not be changed under a new administration. However, he defended the board's action as necessary and cost-conscious.

"We don't need to sit around and ponder these things," Powers said. "In my opinion, consolidation should have happened a long time ago."

'It certainly does appear that the rug has been pulled out from underneath us'

— FIRE COMMISSION CHAIRMAN GORDON NATHAN

solidated the administrations of five fire districts, placing them under a single chief from the River-view Fire District in Antioch. The action coincided with the immediate resignation of the acting Moraga fire chief and the fire marshal, along with resignations of fire chiefs in the other affected fire departments.

"All of these backdoor shenanigans have been going on without consulting with us," said Gordon Nathan, chairman of the Moraga Fire Commission. "It certainly

even find out where Moraga is," Olsen said.

Moraga residents are afraid that their ample coffers will be raided by the central administration to fill in budget gaps in other areas where residents have turned down property tax measures for fire services.

"I think there is a fear that through one means or another ... they could start to siphon off Moraga's money," Olsen said. "We feel like colonists back in the time of the Brits. It's another example of

Moraga fire officials brace for the future

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Moraga fire commissioners tomorrow will discuss the possibility of creating an independent fire district, as well as ways of preserving the town's unique paramedic program and keeping the self-imposed fire tax in Moraga.

The meeting is at 7:30 p.m. April 8 at the Moraga Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way.

The meeting is in wake of a decision last week by the county Board of Supervisors in which Moraga was forced to relinquish local management of the fire district.

The Board of Supervisors appointed Chief Allen Little of the Riverview Fire Protection District acting chief for Moraga, Orinda and three other county districts. Assistant Fire Bill Cullen of the Contra Costa Fire District will serve as acting operations chief for the fire districts.

Moraga Fire meeting

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: Moraga Fire Station
1280 Moraga Way

The temporary appointments, officially called functional integration by county administrators, came after the March 30 resignation of John Cooper.

Moraga chief resignation

Cooper, who headed the Orinda and Moraga fire districts, and four other county chiefs and assistant chiefs accepted an early retirement incentive that will save the county \$635,000 but cost \$400,000 for one year in retirement benefits.

The management change has Moraga fire commissioners worried about possible plans for complete

See MORAGA, page 2



Sun photo/Trent Nelson

Moraga Firefighter Paramedic Michele Godske puts away an EKG monitor, which was purchased with community donations made to the Rescue One Foundation.

MORAGA

From Page 1

consolidation with the rest of the county, as well as immediate and longterm effects on the district's paramedic program and fireflow tax.

Moraga, which will have \$1 million in reserves before the purchase of an ambulance, has a unique funding source in a district fireflow tax passed by voters in 1981. Voters increased the tax rate during November's election.

Supervisor Jeff Smith, who represents Moraga and Orinda, on Monday called last week's board decision "a temporary cost-saving maneuver to fill the chain of command" left by Cooper's retirement.

"I want to assure the people in Moraga that none of the services will be changed and that the fireflow tax will stay in Moraga," Smith said.

Mayor voices concerns

Moraga Mayor and Fire Commissioner Mayor Sue Noe said this week the Board of Supervisors has not fully considered the paramedic service and the fireflow tax.

Although the board can't legally take any fireflow tax income, she worries about supervisors reducing county funding because Moraga has its own income.

"At some point the board will feel that because Moraga has the fireflow tax for backfill, they will reduce our budget by more than other districts," Noe said. "What hasn't been identified is what will happen to the base property taxes Moraga receives, and any budget cuts across the board."

Forming an independent or new

fire district is an option, said Noe. She said a district in which Moraga and Orinda, or even all three Lamorinda cities were integrated, are options.

While formation of a district with its Lamorinda neighbors may be an option, fire commissioners say forming a district with the larger Contra Costa Fire District is not.

Fire Commissioner Gordon Nathan believes the recent management reorganization is a step toward consolidation.

"We're pretty unhappy and we're angry," said Nathan, who has represented Moraga on a 40-person countywide task force that has met in recent months to work on cutting costs.

"We've tried to do everything we can to help reorganize and we have been very patient," Nathan said. "The Board of Supervisors has wanted this for several years — they got their way by stringing us along."

Dick Olsen, a longtime resident and former fire commissioner, worries about the service to Moraga and the experience of the acting chief and assistant. He would have preferred that a Moraga captain serve as acting assistant chief, as was recommended by fire commissioners but rejected by supervisors.

"Neither have any experience running a paramedic or ambulance program," Olsen said. "The nearest chief officer is in Pleasant Hill."

Olsen is one of a number of Moragans fighting county consolidation efforts.

Maintaining the quality of the Moraga paramedic program, which began in a grassroots effort more than 20 years ago as a result of the town's isolation from county paramedics, is a primary concern.

The program started with an ambulance van purchased for \$10,000

with community donations. There are now ambulance and paramedic units. Half of the 26-member firefighting staff are trained as paramedics and the other half as EMT1-A, which is the highest emergency training below a paramedic.

Rescue One

The program is largely supported by Rescue One, a non-profit foundation started in 1977. Since then, the foundation has received more than \$65,000 in donations used to purchase equipment and supplies for which conventional funding is unavailable.

A citizens task force has organized to fight for local management and to support the district.

"There is a wonderful grass roots movement here and everyone is getting involved," said Jeanne Kirsch, who has been involved in fire and paramedic service issues for 23 years and is a board director on the Rescue One Foundation.

The task force is contacting people and organizations in the community and mobilizing support for the fire district.

"We're talking about our lives, and the quality of our lives. This community has pulled together every time the county has tried to ruin our system."



Moraga plans on hiring consultant for fire study

By KATHLEEN MACLAY
Staff writer

MORAGA — A consultant will be hired to examine financing and organization of local fire protection services and future options.

The Moraga Town Council agreed during a special session Wednesday night to hire the Davis Co. of Sacramento to do the study.

The five-member council tentatively agreed to meet with the consultant next week to further define the project's scope and determine its costs.

About a dozen residents attended the council session, voicing displeasure and distrust at recent actions involving local and county fire protection.

Moraga is part of the Moraga Fire Protection District, a county entity that includes Moraga, part of Orinda and some unincorporated county territory. The district is controlled by the county Board of Supervisors, although a Moraga fire commission advises the board.

The board shook up Moraga and other communities last week by announcing early retirement of two fire chiefs and three assistant chiefs, including the Moraga chief.

Many Moraga residents fear the action is the start of a county effort to erase the boundaries of the Moraga fire district and weaken a high level of fire protection and paramedic service offered in the affluent community.

Vice Mayor Al Desayer said there is a lack of public trust in the supervisors regarding fire protection, and said Moraga's paramedic service is important to residents.

"We somehow have to control that" and bring it under the town umbrella if possible, he said.

Moraga taxpayers supplement their fire district's budget with a fire-flow tax levied at the discretion of its district commissioners.

Last November, Moragans voted to increase the tax cap, which could cost an average homeowner up to \$400 a year. Without the tax, the district could not offer paramedic service to the geographically isolated community.

"All we're doing at this point is gathering information," said Councilman Michael Harris.

"I think it behooves us to go forward with a fact-finding mission," Mayor Sue Noe said.

Town Manager Ross Hubbard said Moraga had discussed the fire service consultant idea with officials in neighboring Orinda and Lafayette but has not been able to schedule anything.



BY FREDERIC LARSON/THE CHRONICLE

Moraga firefighters Jon Holmes (left) and Don Romero stocked up with supplies from the grocery store

Town Loses Prized Fire Department

County supervisors wrest control of Moraga's 'pride and joy'

By Erin Hallissy
Chronicle East Bay Bureau

Residents of Moraga, a secluded, upscale Contra Costa County town nestled below the East Bay hills, have long held their firefighters close to their hearts and their pocketbooks.

For almost 20 years, the people of Moraga have paid extra taxes to pay the costs of paramedic training for their fire department, making their firefighters the only ones in the county to provide such a high quality of medical care.

Last November, Moraga residents voted to raise their property taxes to make sure that the state budget crisis will not lead to any cutbacks in their service. They donate thousands of dollars annually to a nonprofit foundation, called Rescue One, which buys equipment that the department would otherwise have to forgo.

Residents Are Stung

For many residents, however, the rosy picture suddenly dimmed Tuesday with a surprise move by the county Board of Supervisors to wrest the department from local control put it in the hands of a centralized bureaucracy far from Moraga. The move has stung the people of Moraga.

"The fire department is just the pride and joy of our a community," said Jerry Meyer, who works with the Rescue One Foundation. "We know the men. We know their families."

Local support has meant a financially healthy fire district with \$1 million in reserves, making it far different from other fire departments throughout the state now facing huge cutbacks because of the state budget crisis.

The Board of Supervisors con-

does appear that the rug has been pulled out from underneath us."

Moraga's Unique Needs

Dick Olsen, a Transamerica executive who has lived in Moraga for 21 years, said that the new fire administration knows nothing about the unique needs of Moraga, which is far from major hospitals and accessible only by two-lane country roads.

"These people need a map to

taxation without effective representation."

The supervisors' move was not without warning, although it was not listed on the Tuesday meeting agenda and caught many residents off guard.

Last year, the board suggested merging the Orinda and Moraga fire departments, but backed off after more than 2,000 letters of protest flooded county offices. The board has studied for months whether to consolidate all the county fire departments to save administrative and training costs, but the idea has met with resistance from communities that want to keep local control.

Supervisor Tom Powers of Richmond, who has backed consolidation as a way of saving money, said the board might agree to guarantee that the extra tax dollars raised in Moraga be used only in Moraga and that the paramedic service will not be changed under a new administration. However, he defended the board's action as necessary and cost-conscious.

"We don't need to sit around and ponder these things," Powers said. "In my opinion, consolidation should have happened a long time ago."

'It certainly does appear that the rug has been pulled out from underneath us'

— FIRE COMMISSION CHAIRMAN GORDON NATHAN

solidated the administrations of five fire districts, placing them under a single chief from the River-view Fire District in Antioch. The action coincided with the immediate resignation of the acting Moraga fire chief and the fire marshal, along with resignations of fire chiefs in the other affected fire departments.

"All of these backdoor shenanigans have been going on without consulting with us," said Gordon Nathan, chairman of the Moraga Fire Commission. "It certainly

even find out where Moraga is," Olsen said.

Moraga residents are afraid that their ample coffers will be raided by the central administration to fill in budget gaps in other areas where residents have turned down property tax measures for fire services.

"I think there is a fear that through one means or another ... they could start to siphon off Moraga's money," Olsen said. "We feel like colonists back in the time of the Brits. It's another example of

Contra Costa Sun 4-14-93

Moragans fired up over loss of chief

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Moragans turned out in force for several meetings last week to discuss the future of the district's fire and paramedic service.

At a packed house Thursday, Moraga fire commissioners, the district's recently appointed fire and assistant fire chiefs and many firefighters listened nearly two hours to questions and comments.

Another meeting was held before the Town Council Wednesday.

Most speakers said Moraga had no input in the recent county decision to have one fire chief lead five districts, including Orinda and Moraga. They feared the change will reduce the quality of Moraga's fire and paramedic service and is a step toward a complete consolidation of fire protection service.

Other top concerns are protection of the town's paramedic program — started by the community

more than 20 years ago — and fear of losing or having to share the district's reserve money or other fire district income from private sources.

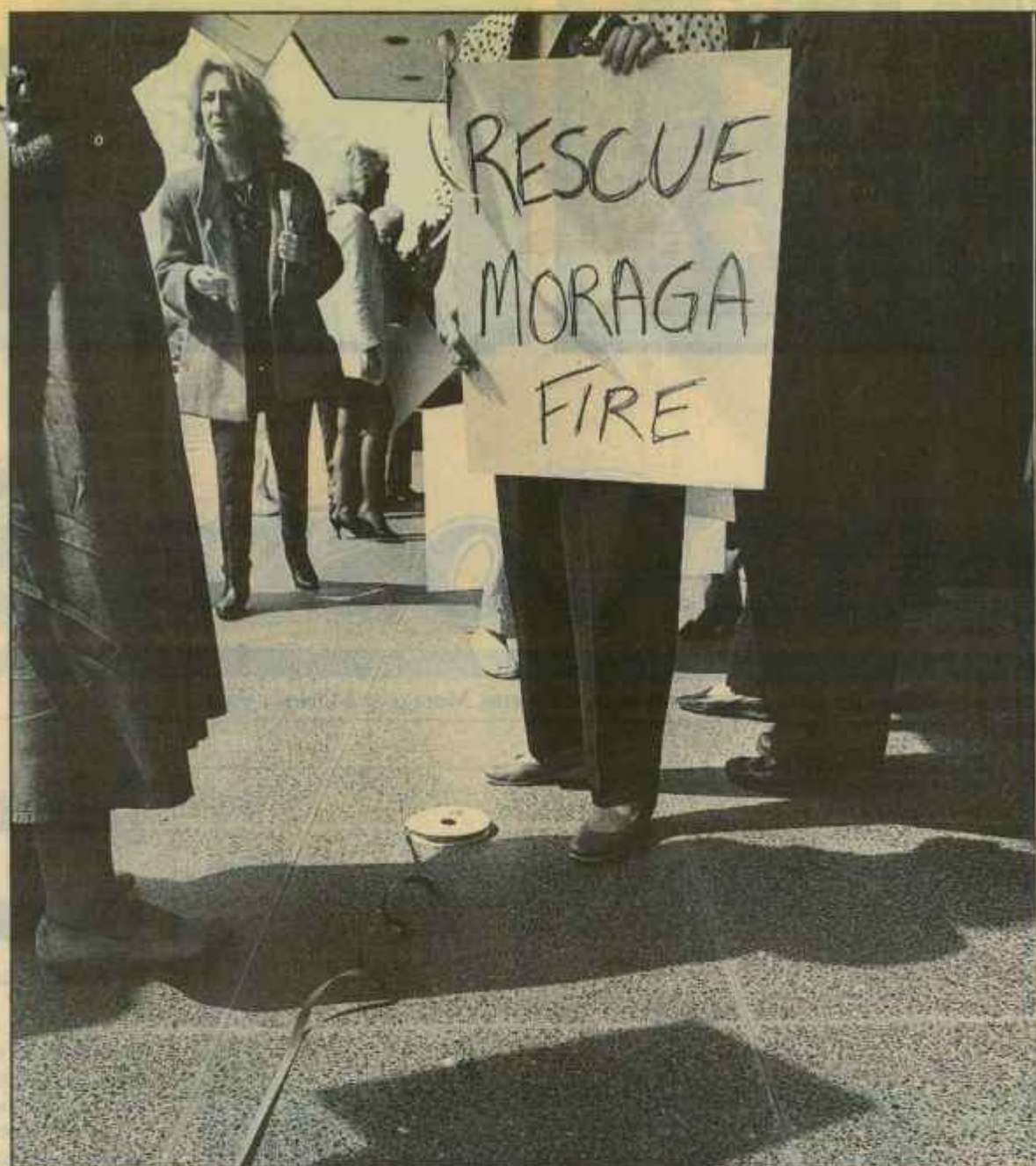
Thursday's meeting was primarily to discuss impacts of the county Board of Supervisors' March 30 decision to appoint Chief Allen Little of the Riverview Fire District and Assistant Fire Chief Bill Cullen of the Contra Costa Fire District to temporarily oversee the Moraga, Orinda, Riverview, West County and Contra Costa fire districts.

"This is dirty pool," said one man.

"We became a town to make our own decisions — we have no control over what goes on his Martinez," the resident said.

Wednesday, town council members held a special meeting to determine what their role — if any — will be in guiding the future of the

See CHIEF, Page 2



Sun photo/Trant Nelson

Moragans gathered in front of the county administration building in Martinez Tuesday to protest the board of supervisors' handling of fire issues. They used rolls of blue ribbon to symbolize their fight.

CHIEF

From Page 1

fire district. The council has no jurisdiction over the fire district, which is under county jurisdiction, while the fire commission has in the past acted as an advisory board to the supervisors.

About a dozen residents were at the meeting, which Moraga Mayor and Fire Commissioner Sue Noe called a "fact finding mission."

The council decided to hire an independent consultant, the Davis Company in Sacramento, to prepare a report on various town fire protection and paramedic service options, including separating the two services, forming an independent district or creating a district with other Lamorinda cities.

Barbara Simpson, an organizer of a group of 25 residents who picketed in Martinez last week in protest of the supervisors' March 30 management decision, questioned the authority of the commissioners and criticized Noe for not requesting that Moraga be allowed to hire its own chief.

Assistant Chief Cullen, who met with the Moraga fire captains and battalion chiefs, said neither he or Little have plans to change

or disrupt the Moraga fire or paramedic service. Personnel, training, fire trucks, apparatus, boundaries and the paramedic program will remain as they are, Cullen said.

"We are sharing trying times. They intend to retain this program and not divert funds to other parts of the county," he said.

Nevertheless, Moraga residents made it clear they fear the management integration is a first step to complete consolidation of the district with others. They also said they don't trust the supervisors.

Opposition group formed

The recent management change, which was made without the knowledge or approval of the commission, has spurred at least one group to form in opposition to county control of the district.

The group includes representatives of several Moraga organizations, four former Moraga mayors and longtime residents who have for many years been involved in fire service and paramedic programs are forming a group independent of the council and commission to look into future options for the fire district.

The group has met once last week and plans to meet this week, said Dick Olsen, a former fire commissioner.

"One of the things we're concerned with is that there is no leadership here in Moraga," Ol-

son said. "There is money to fund a chief's position — our view is that we have \$1 million in reserve and the ability to raise \$2.5 million a year."

Ellen Dale, who helped mobilize the Martinez protest and is part of the citizens group, said she and several others have phoned many group and organization in the area to discuss the fire district situation and have also heard from people who are concerned.

"We've had more than 100 calls from people beside themselves — including an 80-year-old woman who moved with her husband from Oakland for the paramedic service," she said.

Upset over compromise

Simpson said she was upset with Sue Noe for appearing to "give in" and not ask for Moraga's own chief at a recent supervisors meeting.

Noe said the board, in a "reality check," is attempting to work within the framework of what is realistically obtainable.

"We've requested the appointment of an acting interim chief," now said. "It has gotten to the point where we need to request what we can realistically get."

Noe also said the county is providing what will be basic level of service that is equitable throughout the county and has not precluded any district obtaining additional management.

COMMENT

Will Moraga-Orinda fire districts get burned?

County handling of fire issues has some worried

The County Board of Supervisors appears to be moving full steam ahead toward consolidation of county fire services.

Although the politically correct term for the changes now under way is "functional integration" instead of consolidation, this much is clear:

Orinda and Moraga no longer have a local chief.

Instead, they share acting chief Allen Little with the Riverview, Central and West county fire districts. Little has been the Riverview fire chief for some time.

County Supervisor Jeff Smith, who represents Orinda and Moraga, says fears over loss of money or equipment are unfounded. Orinda and Moraga fire districts will continue to keep their own budgets, equipment and boundaries despite sharing an acting chief with three other fire districts.

But it's easy to see why so many residents are finding it hard to maintain their trust in what the county says when it comes to fire services.

First, there's the way Little's appointment occurred — behind closed doors, in a supervisors' meeting closed to the public.

True, it's not unusual to decide upon personnel matters in closed session. But by not making an all-out effort to notify the public ahead of time that such a plan was being considered, the supervisors continued to erode Moraga and Orinda residents' already shaky confidence that they have their best interests at heart.

Former Orinda-Moraga acting Chief John Cooper sent his letter of intent to accept an early retirement package at least a week before the supervisors made their March 30 decision. That was plenty of time to get the public involved.

Then there's the record created over the past year, where Orinda and Moraga residents have compromised on several important issues.

When Moraga's chief Ed Lucas retired more than a year ago, Moragans agreed to delay appointment of a permanent chief and accepted acting Chief John Cooper in his stead.

Later, when Orinda's Chief Dave Evans retired, both communities agreed to share Cooper as their acting chief.

When they realized Cooper was preparing to resign, Moraga and Orinda fire officials asked the county to appoint two local fire captains as acting chiefs on a rotating basis. Instead, the board ap-



pointed Little to head up five districts, saying it was a necessary cost savings measure.

It's especially hard for Moragans to swallow the cost savings explanation when the Moraga district has a balanced budget and a healthy reserve. Moragans have acted more than responsibly over the years in their support of their beloved fire department and paramedic services.

As recently as last November, in an election year when almost all tax proposals were resoundingly defeated, Moragans agreed to provide more money for fire services by raising the limit on their fireflow tax.

Even if the state were to take away all special district funding, the upper limit on Moraga's fireflow tax would cover the gap.

Moragans and Orindans have gone that extra mile when it comes to showing their concern for fire services. More than any other district, residents

have attended numerous fire-related hearings in Martinez. When the supervisors first broached the concept of consolidating fire services, more than 2,000 letters from these communities flooded the Martinez board room — the most ever received on a single issue.

In the last week, Chief Little has been trying to bridge the communication gap created by the supervisors. He has come to Moraga to meet with residents and appears to be approachable and earnest in his desire to serve the communities.

But Little is not responsible for the loss of trust between Moraga and Orinda and their county Board of Supervisors.

It is the supervisors themselves who have shut out the very people who care so deeply about fire services, and it is the supervisors themselves who need to repair the damaged lines of communication.

COMMENT

Moraga picked a winner in Citizen of the Year

Linda Borrelli's hard work, easy smile win her honors

Moraga residents picked a winner when they nominated Linda Borrelli for Citizen of the Year.

Borrelli's long list of community service is dimmed only by the brightness of her ever-present smile.

Those who know her well describe her as an "Ambassador of Goodwill" for Moraga, and it's an accurate description.

Whether she's speaking on behalf of fire services before the county Board of Supervisors or talking with voters while working on a political campaign, Borrelli never loses her warm graciousness.

Many Moragans have been touched by her hard work during the 24 years she's lived in Moraga with her husband and two sons.

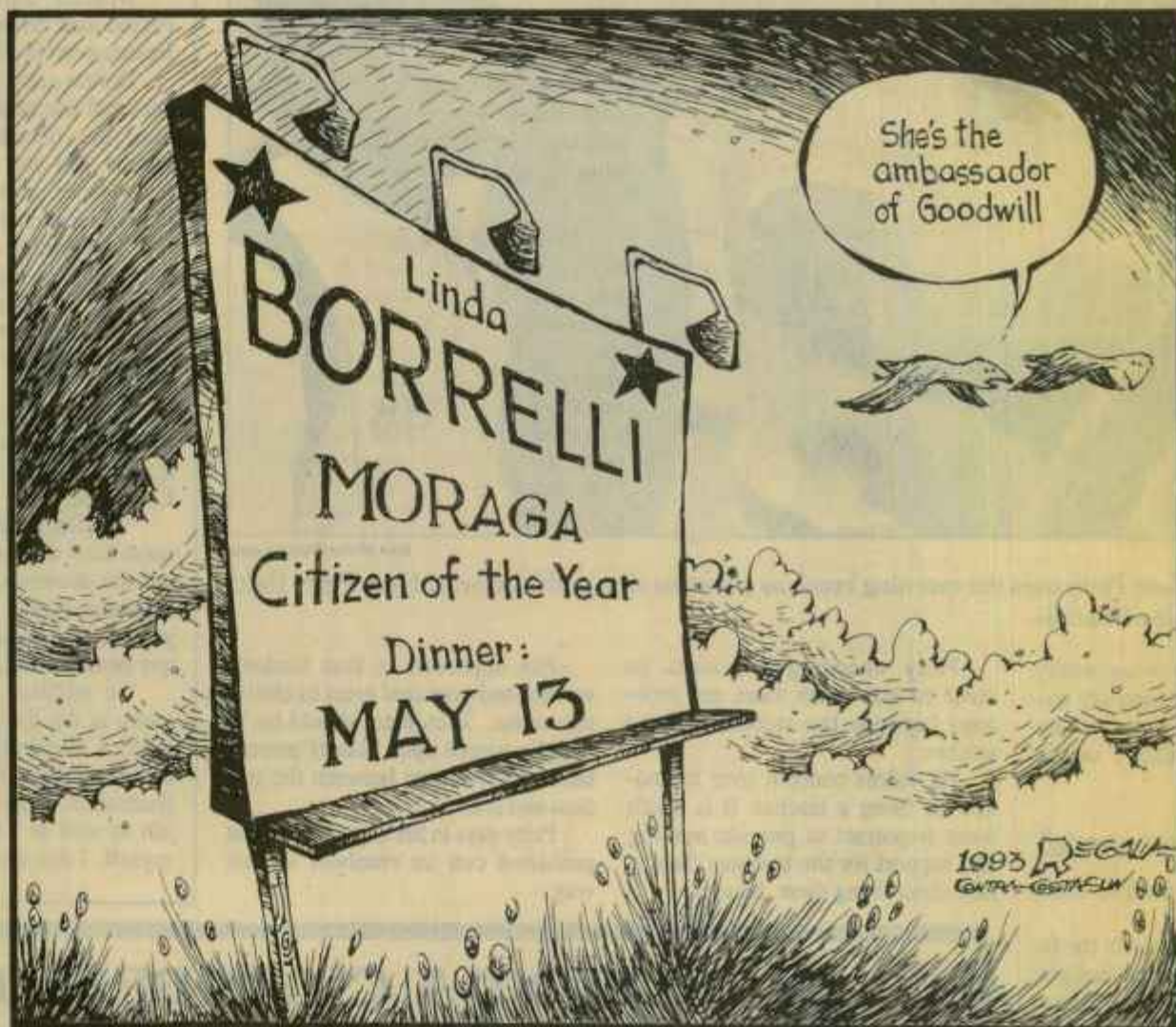
As a parent, she's been active in Campolindo sports programs, the parents clubs at Los Perales, Joaquin Moraga and Campolindo. When her sons graduated from Campolindo, she was one of the band of parents who produced the popular all-night graduation celebration on campus.

Borrelli's been president of the Moraga Juniors and the Moraga Service League, chaired the town's Fourth of July celebration and worked tirelessly on the Fiesta de Moraga. On the Parks and Recreation Commission, she worked hard to make Moraga a more enjoyable place to live.

As one of the founders of Rescue One, she's played an integral part in keeping Moragans safe. The non-profit agency raises money for paramedic and fire services.

As a member of the Moraga Fire Commission, she further carries out her commitment to the town's fire and safety services.

Add to this roundup her years as director of



the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, efforts on the Moraga baseball commission and with American Legion baseball and work on St. Monica's Church board and you've got quite a person.

Now it's time for the community to say

"Thank you," to this outstanding volunteer.

On May 13, friends and family will gather at St. Mary's Soda Center for an evening of toasts, cheers and remembrances. Tickets are \$22.50 and may be reserved by calling Belinda Laird at 932-1732.

Moraga fire commissioners explain how district works

From fire taxes to loss of chief, issues change daily

The recent events surrounding the reorganization of the fire service programs in the five merit system districts of Contra Costa County has prompted a brief explanation of the process and how it will affect the Moraga Fire Protection District.

The MFPD is one of the five merit system districts, along with Orinda, Contra Costa Fire, Riverview and West County. The county Board of Supervisors has complete jurisdiction of the five merit system districts.

The Moraga Fire District encompasses an area of 25 square miles. The town of Moraga covers nine square miles within the district boundaries. The district takes in a portion of southern Orinda, Bollinger Canyon and the community of Canyon. Approximately 6,800 dwellings are included in the district, about 800 of which are outside town limits.

The district is funded by property taxes, special district augmentation funds from the state and a special voter-approved fire flow tax.

The district is represented by a five member Board of Commissioners appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Four members represent the area within the town limits, one represents the remaining area of the district. The responsibility of the commission is to review the annual budget and advise the Board of Supervisors of any local issues pertaining to the district. The staff of the fire district prepares the budget for the commission's review before it goes to the county for approval.



As a reaction to the probable cut in state funding for local service districts, the Board of Supervisors initiated a benefit assessment tax for all fire districts within their jurisdiction, with the exception of the Moraga district. Moraga has a fire flow tax to cover budget deficits.

The reaction of the residents of the other districts to a possible increase in taxes led the supervisors to start making cuts at the top, offering early retirements to every chief and assistant chief within the five merit districts. Moraga and Orinda acting Chief John Cooper and Contra Costa Fire Chief Bill Maxfield accepted the early retirement. Orinda Fire Chief Dave Evans retired last year and Orinda's assistant Chief Walt Luhn accepted early retirement. West County contracts with Contra Costa Fire for management services. Chief Allen Little of Riverview District chose not to retire.

The result is what many believe has been the

county's agenda for the past few years in the reorganization of the fire service program. It must be noted that when Moraga Chief Ed Lucas retired nearly two years ago, the Board of Supervisors virtually ignored the continuous requests of the Moraga Fire Commission to administer the chief's exam for our district. They instead appointed John Cooper to acting chief and in November added the management of the Orinda district to his responsibilities. While the commission was requesting the chief's exam, the Board of Supervisors asked us to prepare a report on the functional integration of the Moraga and Orinda districts. John Cooper spent a great deal of time and energy compiling the report, only to have it totally ignored by the Board of Supervisors.

As of today, the Moraga fire district personnel continue to operate the same as they have for the past several years, offering the same high quality of service and an excellent paramedic program. What has changed is the "functional integration" at the management level. Acting Chief Allen Little is our interim chief and assistant Chief Bill Cullen of Contra Costa Fire is operations manager. The Board of Supervisors has promised to leave the paramedic program intact as well as the fire flow taxing authority and the reserve fund which was generated by the fire flow tax. They have also promised the special equipment and supplied accumulated over the years will remain in the district.

The Moraga district is in the black because of the excellent management of the administration and the wonderful support of the community. Rescue 1 foundation was founded in 1977 to provide financial support to the paramedic program. Approximately \$65,000 has

been donated for the purchase of special equipment and supplies. In 1980, after passage of Proposition 13, residents overwhelmingly voted to tax themselves, if necessary, for preservation of fire service and the paramedic program. The fire flow tax rate was based at a maximum of six cents per gallon based on a fire flow formula; in 1992, the residents raised that to a 30 cent per gallon maximum rate. The fire flow tax revenues are to be used only for any Moraga Fire District budget shortfall. The rate is set annually by the fire commission at a public hearing. It has been used to purchase equipment and to retrofit both fire stations for earthquake safety.

The annual budget of the fire district is about \$3 million. Some 89 percent of the budget comprises salaries and benefits, the rest is allotted to operating expenses.

We urge residents in the Moraga fire district to stay informed of the reorganization process. The information received by the district and commissioners changes almost daily. For the past two years, commissioners have been attending the Board of Supervisors meetings as fire service is on the agenda. We have been very vocal in speaking out for the preservation of our outstanding district.

The commission meets at 7:30 p.m. the second Thursday of each month at 1280 Moraga Way. The public is encouraged to attend.

Gordon Nathan
Linda Borrelli
Sue Noe
Walt Tibbets
Art Comerford

Moraga Fire Commission



Sun photo/David Lowe

Moraga's Citizen of the Year Linda Borrelli was a founder of the town's paramedic support group, Rescue One, and is a long-time fire commissioner. Shown here with her are Capt. Rob Goodyear, paramedic Tim Bartolomei and firefighter Vince Matulich.

Linda Borrelli is Moraga Citizen of the Year

Recognized for support of fire and paramedic services

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — When Linda Borrelli got a phone call from Norm Lino last week, the Moraga fire commissioner thought he probably wanted to discuss fire issues.

She was wrong.

Instead, Lino congratulated her on her selection as this year's Moraga Citizen of the Year.

"I'm overwhelmed," said Borrelli, surprised after learning she was the 1993 award recipient. "This is exciting, and something I never expected. I'm honored."

Borrelli was nominated for the town's 15th annual award through letters written by numerous Moragans who have known her and worked with her on volunteer projects and organizations.

A committee of Lino, who is president of the Moraga Valley Kiwanis Club, Kaye Yost, who received the 1992 award and Gayle Vassar Melvin, managing editor for the Contra Costa Sun, screened all nominations and unanimously selected Borrelli as the honoree.

Borrelli has been active in community, school, fire district and sports groups during her 25

years in Moraga.

But it was her quick smile and obvious care for the community as much as any single involvement which won her Citizen of the Year honors.

Chamber of Commerce president Linda Gong calls Borrelli a "shining example of what community volunteerism is all about."

"She has always put her efforts toward the betterment of the community, and her friendly outgoing nature makes her an ideal 'Ambassador of Goodwill'," Gong said in her nomination letter.

Citizen of Year dinner

When: May 13

Why: To honor Linda Borrelli, Moraga Citizen of the Year

Where: St. Mary's Soda Center

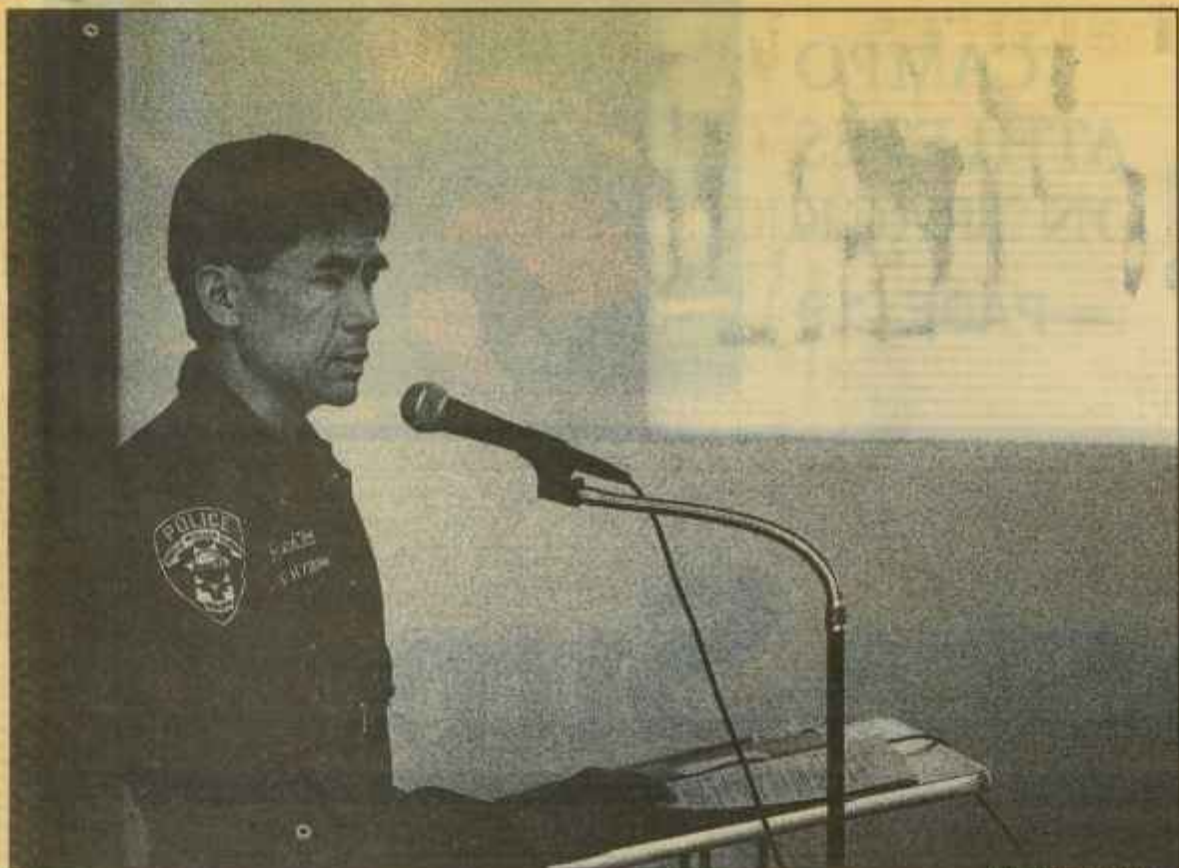
How much: \$22.50

Call: Belinda Baird, 932-1732.

Borrelli is one of the founders of the Rescue One Foundation started in 1977 to support the town's fire and paramedic services. She is currently serving her second term as a member of the fire district's volunteer Board of Fire Commissioners, which serves as

See CITIZEN, Page 2

Contra Costa Sun 4-28-93



Sun photo/David Lowe

Safety and rescue expert Dr. Ben Ho says senior citizens' life experiences can make them ideal participants in post-earthquake recovery.

Older residents could play key role in earthquake survival, says expert

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — In a major earthquake Lamorinda seniors would be called on to help.

They might be asked to go into schools to calm students or stay with children who might be without their parents for hours or days, depending on access across the Bay Bridge and to other Bay Area locations.

But first they must be able to take care of themselves, know how to prepare themselves before, and what to do during and after, an earthquake.

That was the message of Dr. Ben Ho, a Moraga resident who was the guest speaker April 19 at a Moraga Hacienda Seniors luncheon. His discussion and slide show was the first in a series of emergency preparedness presentations sponsored by the Rescue One Foundation.

"Disasters are a part of our lives — and an inescapable part of our lives," said Ho, who has worked in many emergency evacuation and rescue situations including the collapse of the Cypress Street overpass during the Loma Prieta earthquake, the Oakland hills fire and Hurricane Aniki in Kauai.

"During the daytime, the majority of the adult work force is at work in San Francisco or Oakland, or away from this community," he told the seniors.

"We're relying on you, the teachers in our schools and others to help out in an emergency and with our children," he said. "You have the practical common sense experience — you've been through World War

Before a quake

- Keep a pair of sturdy walking shoes handy
- If you wear prescription eyeglasses, have an extra pair
- Have a battery operated radio and flashlight, a first aid kit and fire extinguisher nearby
- Keep potable water, at least one gallon per person for three days
- Know how to perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation

During a quake

- Get under furniture.
- Brace yourself in a doorway
- Cover your head and neck

II, the depression and hard times. You are adaptable and capable of self-rescue."

Ho, a medical advisor on many state and regional search and rescue organizations, is an instructor in trauma life support, cardiac life support and combat medical care.

A retired Navy captain and former chief eye surgeon at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, he was the senior eye surgeon the Persian Gulf war. He is a Moraga volunteer paramedic and reserve police officer.

Seniors are an unrecognized survival source who have been through difficulties which make them capable of helping, Ho said.

Seniors are likely draw on their

pasts if needed to handle an emergency as opposed to the baby boomer generation, which is more accustomed to picking up their cellular phones and using fax machines.

"Those with survival instincts — including seniors — can survive, and can help others," Ho said.

Ho encouraged people to know the basics of earthquake survival. Basic information can be found in the back of the yellow pages and more through Red Cross information.

Preparatory measures specific to seniors include having a pair of sturdy walking shoes, medication and extra pair of prescription eye glasses at hand which might lost needed in an emergency situation.

"Don't plan on going down to the drug store to fill a prescription," he said.

Nearly 90 of the group's 534 members, which is comprised of seniors from Lamorinda and neighboring cities, attended the meeting. Many asked questions and talked among themselves afterward.

"The message is to be prepared," said Moraga resident Wilda Fajardo after the presentation. "I think we need to get busy and form some committee to look at these ideas. It seems there is a lot we can do."

Iris Hart, chairwoman of the Moraga Hacienda Seniors Book Review Committee, said she found the information presented useful.

"The hints he gave us were wonderful," she said. "The who subject was on how to be self-sustained."

Orinda, Moraga join forces for fire service study

5-5-93

Contra Costa Star

By Karen Emanuel
Staff writer

Moraga and Orinda will share the cost of a \$20,750 fire service study to look into organizing and funding alternatives that would improve local fire service control in both communities.

Council members in both cities approved jointly hiring The Davis Company. The Sacramento-based consultants will provide the councils with an update in about four weeks, and the entire study is expected to take eight weeks.

"We had been pushing to do a joint study and believe this will have a lot of value," said Moraga Councilman Jim Sweeney. "There are some different aspects of the focus because of our paramedic program and the Orinda (proposed) assessment fee."

The councils from both cities are looking into fire service alternatives as a result of recent management changes made by the county Board of Supervisors, which governs all county fire districts including Orinda and Moraga, and expected reductions in state fire service funding.

Fire chief positions were eliminated in the two districts and three others in the county, which are now under the command of one fire chief. Income to county fire districts is also uncertain because of state proposals to shift an unknown amount of money from fire service to public schools.

In Moraga, fire and town officials and residents are concerned about maintaining the level of service in the town's fire and paramedic programs. The town's fireflow tax assures the town of a temporary but not long-term income source.

Orinda's financial outlook is not as secure, and the city could face the closure of a fire station without voter approval of a benefit assessment fee which is on the June ballot. More than 8 percent of Orinda's registered voters protested the proposed \$171 fee to bring it to the ballot.

Michael Davis, principal of The Davis Company, will provide the cities information on a range of fire

"It's their privilege as city leaders to do a study. Maybe the city's study will turn up information others won't."

—Orinda fire commissioner
Chuck Blue

service options available to the Orinda and Moraga communities together or independently. Davis will provide information on the impact of the recent management consolidation and income changes in state funding to fire districts.

"There appears to be a sufficient core of common interests between Moraga and Orinda ... however there are also items of work in which only one community is interested," said Davis in a letter to officials in both cities.

The Moraga council asked for more analysis in the area of paramedic services and ways in which the town might improve local control. Orinda council members want information on what the impacts would be to existing services if a station were to close.

When the Orinda council considered such a study two months ago fire commissioners asked the city to wait until more information on the future funding of the station was available.

The county Board of Supervisors since then launched a study of fire county service, and a report should be ready by the middle of May.

"It's their privilege as city leaders to do a study," said Orinda Fire Commissioner Chuck Blue. "Maybe the city's study will turn up information others won't."

Dana Isherwood, who is heading Orindans for Fair Taxation, a group which opposes a proposed \$171 fire service assessment fee, said she is familiar with the scope of the fire service and is not opposed to it.

"What we are opposed to is that the June election will take place before the study is done," Isherwood said. "The election is premature."

Fire Districts Ask Voters for New Taxes To Protect Services

Officials warn that stations could close
if property assessment measures don't pass

By Erin Hallissy
Chronicle Staff Writer

Officials throughout the Bay Area are warning voters that firehouses may be closed, response time to emergencies slowed and property insurance premiums increased if proposed fire assessment taxes fail at the ballot box on June 8.

About two dozen districts from Oakley to Menlo Park are seeking new property assessments to make up for budget gaps caused by state raids on county coffers. The assessments, which require a simple majority for approval, range from \$38 a year in the Crockett-Carquinez Fire Protection District to \$171 in the Orinda Fire District.

The state took \$1.3 billion from local governments last year, and Governor Wilson has threatened to take an additional \$2.6 billion this year to help solve the state's chronic budget problems.

Fire officials say they have already reduced spending to the bare minimum and there is no room left for more cuts without taking drastic measures, such as closing down firehouses.

"We have no choice — we're forced into this," said Menlo Park Fire Chief Rick Tye. He warned that two of the six fire stations serving Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, Atherton and unincorporated Redwood City will be closed unless voters approve the proposed assessment.

"If (the ballot measure) doesn't pass, we'll shut down the stations," Tye said. "Government should listen to the people."

In Contra Costa County, 11 fire districts are asking voters to approve assessments to make up for a 10 percent cutback this year and an anticipated cutback of 20 percent next year if Wilson succeeds in his budget plan.

Two Marin County districts have put measures on the ballot that would raise money for a variety of services, including fire protection. San Rafael hopes to raise \$2.3 million with a \$70 annual parcel tax that would go toward open space patrols, wildland fire protection, and street and road repair. The Muir Beach Community Services District, which provides fire protection, water, recreation and roads in the community, also has a parcel tax that could cost up to \$296 for residences and up to \$740

for commercial properties.

Allen Little, who is acting chief of five of the largest districts in Contra Costa County, said that without the assessments, half of the stations may close.

"The consequences will be severe," he warned. "The small fires will have a chance to grow into a larger fire."

The longer response times may lead insurance companies to raise

**Fire officials say
they have already
reduced spending to
the bare minimum**

premiums, Little said. He added that people in need of emergency medical care may face life-threatening delays in getting help from firefighters, who often respond before ambulances arrive.

Firefighters have already begun campaigning door-to-door to convince voters to approve the assessments, said Mike Price, president of the United Professional Firefighters of Contra Costa County.

"The response has been positive when we explain how long it's for," Price said, noting the proposed assessment would be for only one year. "When you're done analyzing the costs, you find that it's reasonable for the services provided."

Some opponents say that fire departments should look at dropping some service rather than raising taxes.

Firefighters should stop "trying to be a doctor and a firefighter at the same time," said Albert Nakai of Atherton, who owns a nursery in East Palo Alto. Under the proposed assessment, which taxes businesses at a higher rate than homes, Nakai would have to pay \$1,500 for the fire tax.

Contra Costa County has tried to make its fire assessments more palatable to voters, said Supervisor Sunne McPeak.

When first proposed in January, the taxes were as high as \$407

San Francisco Chronicle 5-4-93



Photos by Karen Emanuel

Linda Borrelli (third from right) with some of the "Dirty Dozen," a group of longtime friends.

Moraga honors Linda Borrelli

Friends and family fill Soda Center to pay tribute to 15th Citizen of the Year

By Karen Emanuel
Staff writer

MORAGA — Friends and family recognized Linda Borrelli as the Citizen of the Year on Thursday, showering her with plaques, a 10-gallon hat, a unique T-shirt and hugs.

Borrelli was honored as the 15th Citizen of the Year at a dinner held at St. Mary's College Soda Center.

The longtime Moraga resident has been involved in the town fire district and the Rescue One Foundation, parks and recreation, schools and service clubs.

Guests at the dinner included Borrelli's husband, Gary, sons, David and Matt and other members of her family plus more than 100 friends who socialized before dining on lasagne, chicken, fresh vegetables and salads. A large caked iced in pink and white spelled out congratulations to Borrelli.

Then the Moraga Community Chorus started off the evening's entertainment singing several songs including "Sunnyside of the Street" and "Somewhere over the Rainbow" with a bass and percussion accompaniment.

Tributes and teasing

The musical serenade was followed with tributes and teasing from Borrelli's many friends.

Jerry Meyer said she was thrilled when she learned Borrelli received the award.

"I had been on vacation, and

when I returned, it was the best homecoming I've ever had," said Meyer, who with Borrelli was one of the first Rescue One Foundation board of directors.

"We've attended one thousand meetings together, baked 1,500,033 cookies for open houses, learned CPR, and ridden on old fire service vehicles in parades together," said Meyers. "The board misses Linda but we know she'll always be there, just as she is for the town of Moraga."

Linda Gong, president of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, thanked Borrelli for her friendship and community involvement. She also gave Borrelli a wrapped box that contained a white cowboy hat. Borrelli, who was executive director of the chamber for six years until 1991, is in charge of this year's annual Round-Up western party and chamber fund-raiser.

Like a cowboy

Gong compared Borrelli to a cowboy.

"You, like a cowboy, are bold and fearless," said Gong. "You've kept the town from wandering and you're definitely tending to the Round-Up."

State Assemblyman and Richard Rainey thanked Borrelli, who left her position with the chamber to work for his assembly campaign and his wife Sue Rainey's campaign for county supervisor.

"She took a year out of her per-

sonal life to spend with the Raineys," he said.

"And you wonder why we have budget problems," he said, handing her a large commemorative plaque with the state seal.

Rainey also read a letter of appreciation from U.S. Congressman Bill Baker, who was unable to attend the dinner.

Moraga Mayor Sue Noe — who earlier added her personal touch to the evening in placing silver and gold-foiled chocolate kisses on each tabletop — gave Borrelli a plaque on behalf of the council.

"It's not as fancy as the state's, but fancier than Congress's," said Noe, thanking Borrelli for "countless hours and years of dedication" to the town.

Moraga Fire Commissioner Gordon Nathan gave a plaque to Borrelli, who is a fire commissioner, with an inscription fittingly engraved on a bright red plate.

"I keep asking myself 'are we having fun yet?'" he said, noting the difficulties of the past 1 1/2 years in fire district negotiations with the county for Moraga control of the fire district. "Yes, I think tonight we are having fun."

Nathan noted his work on community projects with Borrelli and his wife, Gail.

"The husbands always seemed to get involved," he said, recalling when he was the procurement officer for 60 tons of sand in building the Los Perales Elementary School playground.

"Mr. Linda Borrelli"

Gary Borrelli had his wife and



Borrelli, an avid trail walker and staunch believer in cleaning up after one's pet, was given this comical T-shirt by Claire Roth.

guests laughing with his perception of his wife's and his own community involvement in Moraga. He said he at refused to speak but then changed his mind.

"I really felt you should hear from Mr. Linda Borrelli," he said, noting that his wife's first-ever community involvement started when the couple moved to Moraga from Oakland 25 years ago.

Before the move, she had been a traditional wife who devoted most of her time to her family. Once in Moraga, she was constantly on the go with community project, he said.

"I still have not been able to figure out what happened to her in going through the tunnel," he said.

Borrelli said he, too, has become involved in Moraga through his wife's activities.

"I forgot to ask if I'm on the cleanup committee tonight," he said, and added that he would encourage his wife to do everything she has done again.

When Linda Borrelli got her chance at the microphone, she said she was overwhelmed.

"It's because of this type of community and the people I have met I am standing here," she said.

"I consider Moraga my home town, and a community that has brought me many happy memories. Thank you for an evening I shall never forget."



The Borrelli family, from left, Gary, David, Linda and Matt.



Moraga Mayor Sue Noe and her husband Gary shared a laugh at the Citizen of the Year dinner.

5-19-93 Contra Costa Sun



Sun photo/Karen Emanuel

Moraga firefighters Matt O'Brien, Chris Klein, Sean Perkins, Dennis Aquilina, and (kneeling) Bill Klement competed in the Firefighter Combat Challenge. Vince Matulich, not pictured, also participated.

Moraga firefighters place fourth in statewide 'Combat Challenge'

MORAGA — Moraga firefighters placed a respectable fourth among 33 teams throughout California in the 1993 Firefighter Combat Challenge, which was held April 20 in San Jose.

This was the second year in a row the firefighters placed in the event. Last year, firefighters

placed second in the event, which fielded teams from only northern California.

Firefighters this year competed against five-person teams representing 33 fire districts.

The Combat Challenge is a national competition, and contests are held in 12 states. The challenge tests firefighting skills

in a series of five timed events including a five-floor stair climb with a 50-pound fire hose, hoisting the hose over a tower, driving a 165-lb. beam into a building. Firefighters then "rescue" a 175-lb. victim.

Moraga placed fourth overall based on their combined times.

Moraga to examine fire issues

5-26-93 Contra Costa Sun

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

MORAGA — Two fire-related meetings will take place this week, as residents and town officials grapple with ways to maintain fire service levels in the face of almost-certain county and state budget cuts.

Spurred by worries over the effects of a recent fire district management consolidation, fire commissioners, the town Council and a citizens group are taking an in-depth look at fire service issues.

Two months ago, the county Board of Supervisors named an interim chief for the Orinda, Moraga, Contra Costa Fire District, West County and Riverview fire districts. More changes could be in store for county fire districts as the county looks for other ways to integrate fire service and administrative responsibilities.

Moraga Town Council members hired an independent consultant to look at other ways of fire and paramedic organization.

The consultant, Sacramento-based Davis Company, will make an initial presentation at a town council workshop at 6 p.m. tonight. The workshop and a council meeting set for 7:30 p.m. will be held at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate on Camino Pablo.

Moraga fire commissioners will meet Thursday to review next year's fireflow tax rate and other fire district issues.

Fire service meetings

WHAT: Two meetings will be held this week on Moraga fire issues

WHO: Moraga Town Council; Moraga fire commission

WHEN: 6:00 tonight (council)
7:30 p.m. Thursday (commission)

Commissioner Gordon Nathan said the commission is not likely to decide on a fireflow tax rate recommendation at Thursday's meeting.

The commission has until the last day in June to make a recommendation to the county Board of Supervisors, which sets the tax rate. Commissioners will likely wait until more is known about next fiscal year's state budget and the amount of funding the fire district will receive, Nathan said.

The tax, which has been used four times since 1981, raises about \$80,000 for each cent at which it is set. It was used this year, set at a six-cent per fireflow unit rate. More than two thirds of the necessary voters approved an increase to a maximum rate of 30 cents last November.

Nathan said he plans to take a cautious approach in recommending the level of the tax rate.

"My preference is to not make any recommendation until we see what will happen at the state and

county level, and until we know what will happen to the special district funding," he said.

The commission is also reviewing whether to hire an on-site chief fire official, a decision which would be factored into the district's budget and could affect the fireflow tax rate, Nathan said.

"We need to discuss whether Moraga will take measures to fund our own chief," Nathan said. "(Having a Moraga chief) is what many of the citizens want. That's what we want, and on several occasions have asked for."

A citizens group has met several times in the past two months to outline concerns over future fire district operation, and has met with Supervisor Jeff Smith, said Merle Gilliland, who chaired a meeting last week.

The group, which includes former councilmembers and Moragans long involved in the fire district's non-profit Rescue One Foundation, will make a formal recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, Gilliland said.

Among top concerns of the group are that Moraga has an on-site chief officer, maintains a permanent administrative staff, and keeps its same county income level despite the district's fireflow tax.

"We want to keep the fireflow tax in Moraga and make sure Moraga still gets its share of other funds available," Gilliland said.

COMMENTARY

Firefighters' sick leave policy explained

By Sunne McPeak

FACT: In May 1991, long after the county initiated a revision of the sick leave policy in 1989, Fire Chief William Maxfield raised the issue of firefighter sick leave abuse and requested an investigation. The Board of Supervisors voted publicly to hire the law firm of Littler Mendelson to investigate the matter.

Union leaders regard this law firm as extremely anti-labor and pro-management. The board was informed in early September 1991 that the law firm had completed its investigation and did not find sufficient evidence to support disciplinary action against any firefighters.

Contrary to the implication in the Times and the allegation by John Stiglich, an administrative fire officer, that the county halted the sick leave study or eliminated his administrative position to block the sick leave investigation, we did investigate the firefighter matter using a law firm regarded as hostile to labor which found no grounds for any disciplinary action.

This was all before budget constraints caused County Administrator Phil Batchelor and Maxfield to recommend eliminating the Stiglich

position. Incidentally, I was not aware that Stiglich had ever been involved in a sick leave study within the fire department, and the board was never told about it. It was not a factor in the budget reductions involving his administrative position.

■ FACT: A year later, in September 1992, the board became aware that a letter had been sent by Maxfield to selected firefighters unilaterally setting forth certain sick leave rules that have never been negotiated with the union. This was done without the approval of the board and contrary to the procedures outlined by the county administrator in his April directive.

Also, the letter was sent just two weeks after Maxfield's management team had met with the firefighters at their request to discuss sick leave matters, but no one mentioned they were doing another sick leave study and intended to send another letter. This is not the way to foster good employee-employer relations.

The chief's letter further instructed firefighters to report to Stiglich (not the fire district's personnel officer or the county's personnel department as was the established procedure). This, of course, was taken as an insult to the firefighters

because of the Stiglich lawsuit and negotiated settlement that reinstated his administrative position.

The board, therefore, directed the county administrator to oversee all sick leave matters for every department and to continue to aggressively implement the board's earlier decisions on sick leave.

■ FACT: In order to make sure all the recent sick leave matters, including the letters sent out by the fire district, could be addressed in public, I requested that the issue be scheduled for the Sept. 22 agenda. That was a month before the Times story was published.

The item was fully discussed publicly, and anyone who wanted to make allegations could have stated so directly to the board instead of verbally sniping in the Times' story.

A review of the tape of that meeting will reveal that none of these wild accusations was asserted then. However, a representative of Local 1230 did attend the meeting and testified that the union was willing to meet and confer about sick leave and did not condone or promote abuse of sick leave.

■ FACT: At that meeting, we did underscore the need to assure employees that our family leave policy

is not to be undermined as we implement the new sick leave procedures. We strongly support family leave and want our employees to know they are allowed to use sick leave for the birth or adoption of a child, the illness of a child, or the illness of a dependent parent.

This policy has been in place for several years in Contra Costa County, and we do not want to convey to employees any change in that position as we pursue actions to prevent sick leave abuse.

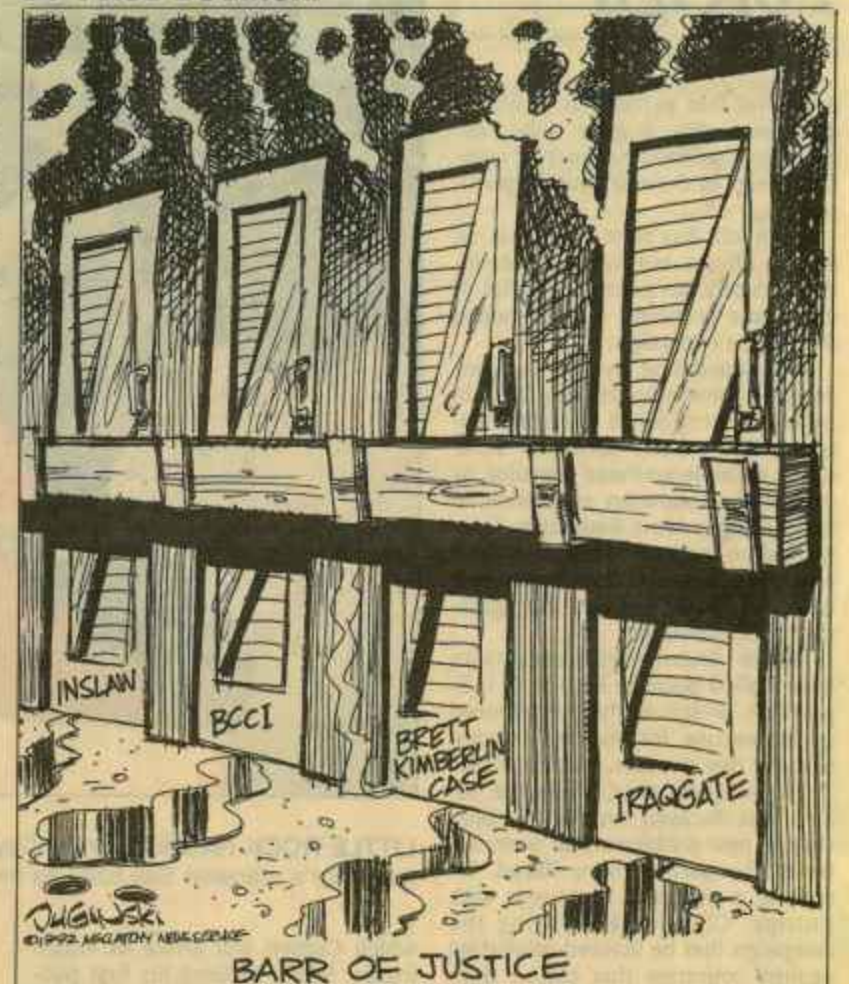
I also emphasized this point to the Times, and it was never mentioned in the story. This was important because the fire district did not address the relationship of family leave to sick leave.

If the above facts had been included in the sick leave story, readers would have a much different impression of the truth. Because of the Times' story, firefighters have had a shadow cast on their dedicated service, and the county's well-established efforts to negotiate and implement new sick leave policies and to prevent sick leave abuse have been called into question.

Sunne Wright McPeak is a Contra Costa County supervisor

PAUL DUGINSKI

McClatchy News Service



County fire captain answers critical questions about sick leave

By Henry Warren

As a fire captain with Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, I would like to answer some questions that friends and neighbors have asked me following the Times' Oct. 21 article about Central County firefighters' use of sick leave.

■ Question: Is it true that the fire district could save \$148,000 a year if every firefighter used one less day of sick leave?

■ Answer: No. Firefighters are not recalled each and every time that a fellow firefighter is sick, injured or on vacation. Firefighters are recalled only to maintain the minimum daily staffing of 61 personnel. When firefighters work in excess of their normal 56-hour work week, federal law does require that they are paid 1½ times their regular wage. However, to suggest that every sick leave day eliminated would save money is wrong. There are

many days each year that up to nine firefighters can call in sick and no one is recalled and no cost is incurred.

■ Question: Is it really necessary to maintain a certain minimum staffing level every day?

■ Answer: Yes. Since Proposition 13 passed in 1978, county workers in every department have assumed larger workloads with stable or declining numbers of employees. The county's fire suppression forces are no exception. The minimum staffing levels to provide fire and emergency medical services were established for the safety of the public and the safety of the firefighters.

Our fire district has added just three on-duty firefighters in the past 20 years. During that period the district has grown to serve 185 square miles of residential, commercial, industrial and wildland areas in Contra Costa County. The population served by the district has increased by

100,000, and the number of responses to calls has tripled to 18,000 per year.

■ Question: Is the Times' comparison of sick leave usage in different districts significant?

■ Answer: In the absence of a detailed analysis, no. On Sept. 22, the county's Personnel Department was specifically directed by the Board of Supervisors to consider "mitigating factors" when reviewing sick leave usage in county departments.

Characterizations made by the Times clearly show that this has not been done for fire districts by the administrators quoted in the Oct. 21 article.

Oakland firefighters' rate of sick leave use was cited for comparison. However, the article failed to mention that while local firefighters regularly work three 24-hour shifts in a five-day period, Oakland firefighters are never scheduled to work more

than two shifts in any five-day period. It also went unreported that, unlike Oakland firefighters, county firefighters are allowed to use sick leave to care for their sick children and family and to deal with deaths.

■ Question: How could the number of responses to emergencies affect the use of sick leave?

■ Answer: The article implicitly criticized Contra Costa County Fire District firefighters for using one more shift of sick leave each year than Orinda firefighters.

An important distinction, however, is that crews at some of Contra Costa County Fire District's individual stations respond to more calls each year than the five Orinda and Moraga fire stations combined. This activity level necessarily means more exposure to communicable disease, less sleep, more stress, and a higher chance of injury.

■ Question: Is there some scheme for firefighters to call in

sick when they are not?

■ Answer: Absolutely not. It is unfortunate that an allegation to that effect made Page 1 of the "Times," while the fact that "district administrators say they have no evidence that such a ruse is widespread or even exists" did not appear until the last column of the article on Page 10.

■ Question: So is the big jump in overtime described in the article really due to problems with firefighter morale?

■ Answer: No. The article says Fire Chief William Maxfield "first reported the problem to county supervisors and top administrators in early 1991." However, neither the fire district nor the county has ever formally addressed this issue with our labor union.

On Sept. 22, the Board of Supervisors specifically directed the Personnel Department to contact employee organizations to review the

sick leave issue. One month later, we have yet to hear from the Personnel Department to schedule a meeting to discuss the matter. This is not a firefighter problem. This is not a union problem. This is an administrative problem.

The taxpayers in this county should know that they have a conscientious and dedicated firefighter workforce. We love our job and are proud to serve Contra Costa County. In these difficult times, we firefighters will continue to do our best to provide the service and protection that the citizens expect and deserve.

Henry Warren is a fire captain with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. He is the department representative of the United Professional Firefighters of Contra Costa County, IAFF Local 1230, serving his fourth elected term.

Contra Costa Firefighters Grossly Overpaid, Panel Says

By Erin Hallissy
Chronicle East Bay Bureau

Less than one week before fire departments in Contra Costa County ask voters to approve new fire taxes, the county's grand jury issued a scathing report yesterday alleging that firefighters are grossly overpaid.

The grand jury recommended that the board of supervisors unilaterally slash wages and benefits for firefighters and captains to help close the budget gaps that are threatening to cripple fire services in the county.

The report criticized labor agreements that have led to 56 percent pay increases over the past eight years and said that fire-

fighters have been paid guaranteed overtime even when they did not work the extra hours.

Firefighters were enraged by the report, claiming that it was unfair and filled with inaccurate information.

"It's a gross misrepresentation of the facts," said Mike Price, president of United Professional Firefighters of Contra Costa, Local 1230.

"It appears that they chose not to look for a balanced view," said Consolidated Fire Captain Henry Warren. "Our wages did not create

the financial crisis. The crisis comes from the state diverting property tax revenues."

Allen Little, who is acting fire chief for five Contra Costa County fire districts, said the release of the report, just before Tuesday's election, was "certainly not the timing we would have preferred."

Eleven fire districts in Contra Costa County are asking voters to approve assessments to make up for budget cuts. Proponents say that if the taxes do not pass, firehouses may have to be closed and firefighters laid off.

The grand jury report, on the other hand, said the county could save money by lowering firefighters' pay. It says that firefighters in five county-run fire departments which cover most of central and eastern Contra Costa County cost taxpayers \$80,000 a year each in salary and benefits.

The Contra Costa salaries have steadily escalated in recent years partly because of an agreement by the county to tie their wages to the 10 highest-paid fire departments in the Bay Area, the grand jury said.

Price took issue with the grand

jury's premise that firefighters earn at \$60,000 a year in base salary, overtime, uniform allowance and other compensation. Price contends the average firefighter earns about \$50,000 from such compensation.

The grand jury also counted nearly \$20,000 in annual benefits, but Price said that amount is not out of line with other fire departments. He said the wage increases were appropriate, and that the Contra Costa firefighters now rank only about eighth among the highest-paid departments in the Bay Area.

S.F. Chronicle
6-3-93
"We work a 56-hour workweek that takes us away from our families for 24 hours at a time," Warren said. "We work just as long of hours as other firefighters (in the Bay Area) and we are expected to put ourselves at risk. We live in an area where the cost of living is high."

Price said Contra Costa County was losing firefighters to other departments because the salaries were much lower there. He said the county has to remain competitive to attract and keep well-trained firefighters.

"We have to maintain a competitive edge," he said. He added that most people tell firefighters that they're worth every cent they make.

C.C. Bay The cost of fire protection

There seems to be a great deal of confusion between the cost of local fire personnel and wages earned. There have been some pretty high figures quoted lately, and local taxpayers need to understand that they represent the total costs to fund on-duty personnel, not actual wages paid.

Contracts for county fire fighters are based on the average wages paid by the top 10 comparable Bay Area fire agencies. Beyond this national sum come a host of other required personnel expenses that have to be added into the "cost" equation.

For example, to maintain 24-hour coverage, firefighters are scheduled to work 56 hours per week as compared to the conventional 40 hour work schedule. Federal law requires that a portion of these excess hours be paid in overtime.

The Fire District is "open" 365 days a year, including holidays. As a result, additional overtime compensation is calculated as personnel have to work those holidays.

Firefighters off on sick leave or vacation have to be replaced by overtime personnel when the shortage of personnel exceeds established safe minimum staffing levels.

Fire fighting is rated as one of the most hazardous professions in the United States, thus the cost of workers' compensation is comparably high.

These are just a few of the numerous costs that quickly add up in staffing a highly dangerous, professional organization. So when you see those figures relating to the cost of fire district personnel, please remember that there are a lot of expenses being considered and the money is not all going into the pockets of the firefighters.

9/2/92
Willis Lamm, Fire Captain
Orinda Fire Protection District

The Retirement of
JOHN COOPER

Fire Chief
Moraga Fire Protection District
1971 - 1993

Tuesday, June 15
No Host Bar 6:00 PM
Dinner Served 7:30 PM

Saint Mary's College
Soda Center
Moraga, CA

Entrees: Choice of Chicken Cordon Bleu or London Broil

\$30.00 Per person: includes entree, tax, tip, &, at John's request, a donation to Rescue 1 for new ambulance in lieu of a gift.

Please return this portion with your payment.

() I/We will attend () I/We won't be able to attend
() I have a presentation

Name (please print)

Entree Choice

Name (please print)

Entree Choice

Day time telephone

TOTAL ENCL.

FAIR'S FAIR.

When former Moraga Fire Chief John Cooper retired recently, he turned down the offer of a retirement trip.

Always thinking of the good of the team, Cooper asked instead that the money be put toward the purchase of a new town ambulance.

Now he and wife Judi have won a trip to Maui through the Moraga Playhouse Foundation Raffle.

It couldn't have happened to a more decent guy.

The trip was donated by Marcia Cutter and Bev Hogan of Lamorinda Travel. Proceeds from the raffle will go toward paying Playhouse's 1993-94 season.

According to Moraga fire officials, donations toward the ambulance as a well deserved thank you to Cooper exceeded \$800.

6-30-93 Contra Costa Sun

RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY: JUNE 9, 1993

PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: John Cooper Retirement Dinner

MAIL TO: Moraga Fire District, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, CA 94556

ATTENTION: ANDI

Orinda, Moraga could get new joint fire officer according to county report

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

Moraga and Orinda fire districts could get a shared Chief Officer if county supervisors approve a cost-cutting plan that would reduce county fire service management and leave firefighter positions intact.

The chief officer would report to

the current fire chief, who oversees five fire districts throughout the county.

The proposal is included as part of a county fire service report released last week. The county Board of Supervisors is scheduled to discuss the report and could approve it Tuesday.

The report states that 10 percent budget cuts would be made in county fire service by further eliminating and merging management. There would be no fire station closures, but 29 administrative and technical positions throughout the county would be eliminated.

Local fire officials and others

who have expressed concern over not having an on-site fire chief in Orinda and Moraga said they support the recommendation.

"Moraga and Orinda have vacant positions that haven't been filled," said Fire Marshal Ron Garland. They include chief and assistant chief positions in Orinda and

Moraga and a vacant fire marshal position in Moraga.

Garland said the chief officer proposal is in part due to the actions of Moraga residents who have campaigned for an on-site chief since the 1992 retirement of Chief Ed Lucas.

"It seems to be a very reasonable

compromise," said Merle Gilliland, a member of a citizens group active in fire issues. "We're well aware of the financial constraints the county is working under, and we don't want to give up any firefighters."

The fire service plan is subject to changes that could be necessary after the state budget is adopted.

Moraga fire commission to consider new tax rate

By Stephanie Roberts

STAFF WRITER

Moraga Fire Commissioners will meet Thursday to propose a fireflow tax to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

The amount of the proposed tax has not yet been decided, due to the undetermined state budget.

The meeting, scheduled for 7:30 p.m. at the Moraga Fire Station, is open to the public. Fire Commission Chair Gordon Nathan stresses that the public's input and suggestions are welcome.

"Nobody likes to talk about taxes ... but it's a very serious situation we all face," said Nathan. "We need to maintain a high level of service."

Mayor Sue Noe, who is also a member of the Fire Commission, said the voter-approved tax is used to maintain fire service and to safeguard the paramedic program. She added that

MORAGA FIRE TAX HEARING

What: Hearing to set tax rate

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: Moraga Fire Station

the town has been "very conservative with the fireflow tax in the past and wishes to maintain that type of attitude."

The previous fireflow tax had a maximum of six cents per gallon, but it was increased in the last election to 30 cents per gallon. The tax is based on how much water a particular square footage would need in the event of a fire. The tax is collected when its need is determined by commissioners and approved by the county supervisors.

Fireflow tax money purchases include an ambulance chassis, earthquake-proofing the walls of the firestation and additional property behind the Moraga Way station for training and equipment. The tax has also boosted the district's reserves.

Moraga fire tax stays steady

By Stephanie Roberts

STAFF WRITER

The Moraga Fire Commission unanimously voted Thursday to keep the fire flow tax at six cents per gallon, despite voters approving a 30-cent per gallon maximum in November.

As the state budget stands now, the special districts fund for the fire districts will not suffer as much as previously thought, fire officials said.

"For the first time in many, many months I can say we got some good news from Sacramento," said acting fire chief Allen Little.

Fire Commissioner Sue Noe said, "I'm pleasantly surprised — actually I'm shocked."

With the state budget blow being less painful than expected, Mike George, chief of administrative services for the fire district, said the fire flow tax was not imperative.

However, with the uncertainty of the budget and unpassed trailer bills, the commission decided to maintain the fire flow tax at a six-cent per gallon rate, which appears on the property tax bill.

"Perhaps next year we can lower it or even do away with it," Noe said.

Fire Commission Chair Gordon Nathan said having the fire flow tax this year will assure a contingency in case further budget problems for the state or county occur.

See TAX, Back Page

TAX

FROM PAGE 1

"The community has given us a vote of confidence to do the right thing — I think the right thing is having money in the bank," he said.

The revenue from the fire flow tax, if not needed for rescue from budget disaster, may be used to purchase a new fire engine to replace the almost 23-year-old pumper in use now, and to repave the training site at the

Moraga Way fire station.

Nathan added that this is only the seventh time the fire flow tax has been implemented in the last 13 years. The tax is collected when its need is determined by commissioners and approved by the county supervisors. It is based on how many gallons of water are needed to put out a fire of a particular square-footage.

The Board of Supervisors, which has final say on all fire district budgets, is expected to make its decision on the proposed tax rate and budget by the end of July.

6-23-93

Contra Costa Sun

6-16-93 Contra Costa Sun

COMMENT

Lamorinda ready for a spectacular Fourth

Leave pyrotechnics safely to the experts

Lamorinda will break out the red, white and blue for an old fashioned Fourth of July, complete with pancake breakfasts, a community parade, music performances and pie tasting.

And of course, nothing says Fourth of July like fireworks. The sight of colored plumes bursting in the air and the accompanying "oohs" and "aahs" of the crowd are part of the American tradition of recognizing Independence Day.

In these tight financial times, not many communities are eager to loosen their purse strings for fun, but the Moraga community has done just that. The town will put on the annual light show which, after a 13-year hiatus, will make it the show's fourth year.

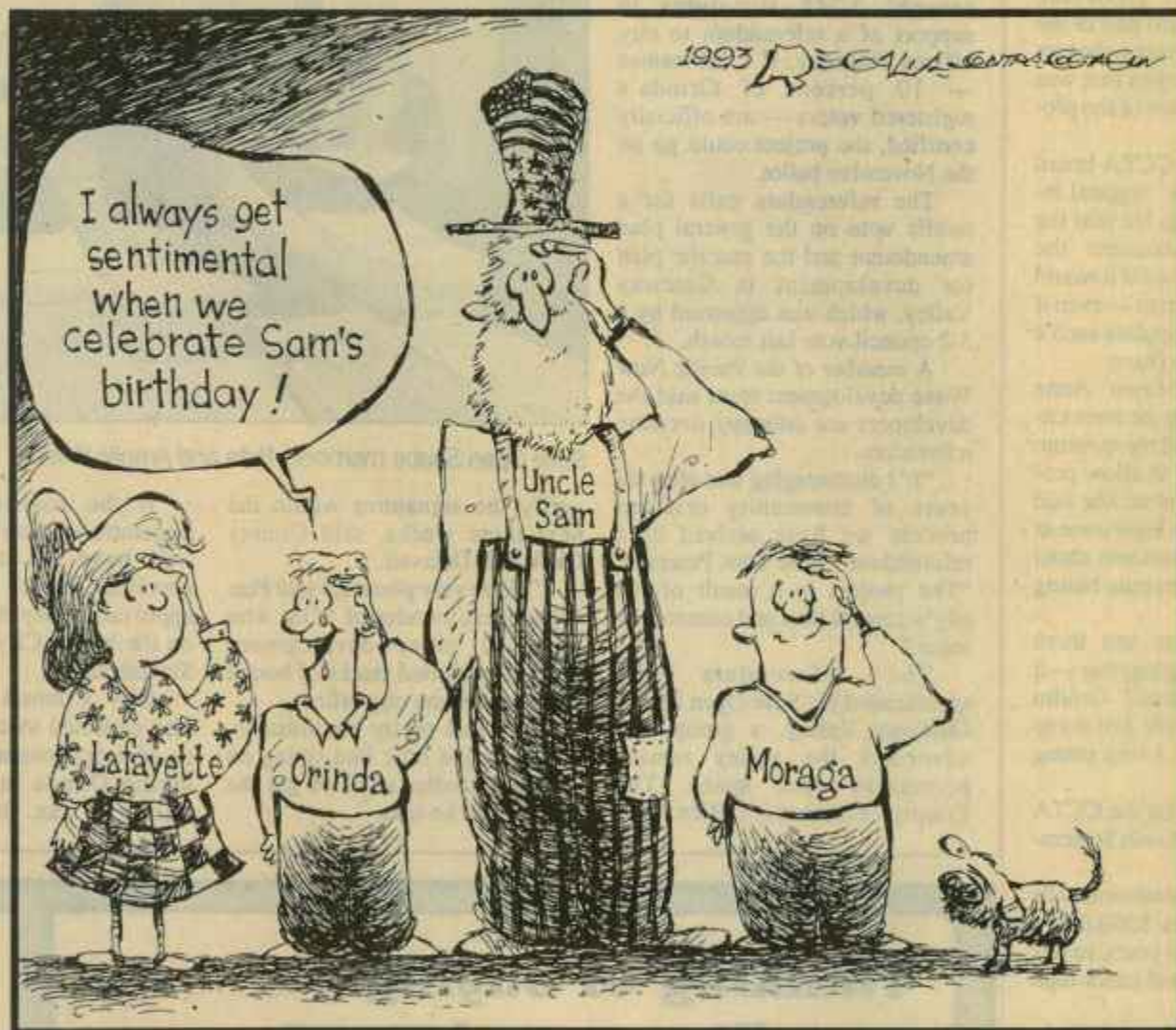
A big thank you goes out to residents and groups in Moraga for the show that will go on at 9:30 p.m. Sunday.

The community donated more than \$7,000 toward the light show by "purchasing" rockets for \$22.06 after town officials asked residents to foot half of the \$10,000 bill. The remaining costs will come from town coffers. Rockets will be set off into the sky from the Moraga Country Club, after a 6:30 p.m. performance by the Lamorinda Community Band at the Moraga Commons Bandshell.

Back on the ground, keep in mind that fireworks are illegal in all of Contra Costa County.

In addition to dangers of personal injury, sparks from firecrackers and other illegal fireworks can lead to disaster. Setting them off can result in police citations, injury or a firestorm in the Lamorinda hills, where heavy rains of the past year and recent heat have resulted in an extraordinary amount of dry grass.

Fire officials are warning people to be cautious, to let the fireworks show be handled by professionals and to properly dispose of ashes from barbecues.



Four small brush fires were reported in Orinda last week, and fire officials there are warning that sparks from fireworks are hazardous and dangerous. Two years ago, Moraga had a small brush fire as a result of Independence Day celebrations.

It's best to let the experts handle the pyrotechnics. The town in the past has had the show well under control, with professionals setting off rockets and town staff, fire and police officials assisting with the event.

The town will close Moraga Way between St. Andrews Drive and Country Club Drive for about three hours starting at 7:30 p.m. Traffic will be rerouted off Moraga Way onto Camino Ricardo from Hardy Drive.

Sunday's Fourth of July events are listed on Page 5, and a history of Orinda's pick-up band on Page 16. Be safe, relax and enjoy Lamorinda's Fourth of July events and the spectacular light show.

Orinda, Moraga could get new joint fire officer according to county report

By Karen Emanuel

Staff writer

Moraga and Orinda fire districts could get a shared Chief Officer if county supervisors approve a cost-cutting plan that would reduce county fire service management and leave firefighter positions intact.

The chief officer would report to

the current fire chief, who oversees five fire districts throughout the county.

The proposal is included as part of a county fire service report released last week. The county Board of Supervisors is scheduled to discuss the report and could approve it Tuesday.

The report states that 10 percent budget cuts would be made in county fire service by further eliminating and merging management. There would be no fire station closures, but 29 administrative and technical positions throughout the county would be eliminated.

Local fire officials and others

who have expressed concern over not having an on-site fire chief in Orinda and Moraga said they support the recommendation.

"Moraga and Orinda have vacant positions that haven't been filled," said Fire Marshal Ron Garland. They include chief and assistant chief positions in Orinda and

Moraga and a vacant fire marshal position in Moraga.

Garland said the chief officer proposal is in part due to the actions of Moraga residents who have campaigned for an on-site chief since the 1992 retirement of Chief Ed Lucas.

"It seems to be a very reasonable

compromise," said Merle Gilliland, a member of a citizens group active in fire issues. "We're well aware of the financial constraints the county is working under, and we don't want to give up any firefighters."

The fire service plan is subject to changes that could be necessary after the state budget is adopted.

6-16-93 Contra Costa Sun

Moraga fire commission to consider new tax rate

By Stephanie Roberts

STAFF WRITER

Moraga Fire Commissioners will meet Thursday to propose a fireflow tax to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

The amount of the proposed tax has not yet been decided, due to the undetermined state budget.

The meeting, scheduled for 7:30 p.m. at the Moraga Fire Station, is open to the public. Fire Commission Chair Gordon Nathan stresses that the public's input and suggestions are welcome.

"Nobody likes to talk about taxes ... but it's a very serious situation we all face," said Nathan. "We need to maintain a high level of service."

Mayor Sue Noe, who is also a member of the Fire Commission, said the voter-approved tax is used to maintain fire service and to safeguard the paramedic program. She added that

MORAGA FIRE TAX HEARING

What: Hearing to set tax rate

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: Moraga Fire Station

the town has been "very conservative with the fireflow tax in the past and wishes to maintain that type of attitude."

The previous fireflow tax had a maximum of six cents per gallon, but it was increased in the last election to 30 cents per gallon. The tax is based on how much water a particular square footage would need in the event of a fire. The tax is collected when its need is determined by commissioners and approved by the county supervisors.

Fireflow tax money purchases include an ambulance chassis, earthquake-proofing the walls of the firestation and additional property behind the Moraga Way station for training and equipment. The tax has also boosted the district's reserves.

Moraga fire tax stays steady

By Stephanie Roberts

STAFF WRITER

The Moraga Fire Commission unanimously voted Thursday to keep the fire flow tax at six cents per gallon, despite voters approving a 30-cent per gallon maximum in November.

As the state budget stands now, the special districts fund for the fire districts will not suffer as much as previously thought, fire officials said.

"For the first time in many, many months I can say we got some good news from Sacramento," said acting fire chief Allen Little.

Fire Commissioner Sue Noe said, "I'm pleasantly surprised — actually I'm shocked."

With the state budget blow being less painful than expected, Mike George, chief of administrative services for the fire district, said the fire flow tax was not imperative.

However, with the uncertainty of the budget and unpassed trailer bills, the commission decided to maintain the fire flow tax at a six-cent per gallon rate, which appears on the property tax bill.

"Perhaps next year we can lower it or even do away with it," Noe said.

Fire Commission Chair Gordon Nathan said having the fire flow tax this year will assure a contingency in case further budget problems for the state or county occur.

See TAX, Back Page

TAX

FROM PAGE 1

"The community has given us a vote of confidence to do the right thing — I think the right thing is having money in the bank," he said.

The revenue from the fire flow tax, if not needed for rescue from budget disaster, may be used to purchase a new fire engine to replace the almost 23-year-old pumper in use now, and to repave the training site at the

Moraga Way fire station.

Nathan added that this is only the seventh time the fire flow tax has been implemented in the last 13 years. The tax is collected when its need is determined by commissioners and approved by the county supervisors. It is based on how many gallons of water are needed to put out a fire of a particular square-footage.

The Board of Supervisors, which has final say on all fire district budgets, is expected to make its decision on the proposed tax rate and budget by the end of July.

6-23-93

Contra Costa Sun



KAREN EMANUEL/SUN

Moraga firefighters Ken Consiglio, left, and Dennis Aquilina admire the medals they won at the Firefighter's Olympic Games in Bakersfield.

Prize-winning Moraga firefighters come to the rescue on trip home

By Karen Emanuel
STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — Two Moraga firefighters who won medals at a statewide firefighter's competition had their rescue skills put to the test when they arrived at a serious car accident on Interstate 5.

Firefighter Dennis Aquilina and Ken Consiglio, a senior firefighter and paramedic, were returning from the annual Firefighter's Olympic Games in Bakersfield on June 24 when they arrived at a two-car accident near Patterson.

The two had represented the fire district in track and weight lifting at a competition for firefighters from all over the state. Consiglio earned a gold medal in power lifting and a silver in the bench press competition. Aquilina competed

in track and field, and won a gold medal in the 1500 meter race.

Long before they reached Moraga on their return, they resumed their professional skills.

Driving home the afternoon after the competition, which included bike racing, soccer, basketball, softball and other events, they arrived at the accident scene.

A California Highway Patrol officer was attending an injured man in a car on the highway when they arrived. The Moraga firefighters spotted an injured man laying in weeds down an embankment. His car, said the firefighters, appeared to have rolled several times and was further down the embankment.

"An officer was on the scene with the man on the highway, but the other one was over the embankment. It looked like he had been ejected from the car,"

said Consiglio.

The two remained with the man until rescue workers arrived, and Consiglio gave his report to medics. The Moraga firefighters assisted Central Valley firefighters in getting the man onto a stretcher and onto Med Flight, which flew the man to a Modesto hospital. The other man driver was also airlifted in a separate helicopter.

The incident wasn't the first and won't likely be the last time they have offered assistance at an accident scene while off duty.

Consiglio was once on his way to Lake Tahoe once and assisted at an accident once in which a senior tour bus crashed.

"It happens every once in a while," said Aquilina, who has assisted at accidents on Hwy 4 in the past. "It just depends who else is at the scene, who they are and whether they need help."

Area bikers travel to Harley festival

By Karen Emanuel
STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — Three Lamorinda residents rode their "hogs" to Milwaukee in style last month to join 65,000 bikers for the 90th Harley-Davidson anniversary.

In the storage compartment of a Santa Clara friend's bright red and shiny chrome Harley was a cappuccino machine.

Gordon Nathan of Moraga, Lafayette residents Bob and Dolores Lobenberg and Angelo Tomassi of Santa Clara brewed coffee at the end of each day's drive.

Several of those days were chilly rides in rain and hail and over snow-covered mountain passes when temperatures dipped to 20 degrees.

They wrapped their hands and feet with duct tape to warm, journeyed through windy Winnemucca Nevada, rainy Salt Lake City, Utah, and snowy Buffalo Wyoming.

Despite a breakdown near Des Moines, Iowa, they arrived in Milwaukee along with hundreds of thousands of leather and denim-clad Harley Owners Group members celebrating the anniversary of the only remaining American motorcycle builder. The coffee machine was cast aside until the return trip home.

"The trip to Milwaukee was a trip of a lifetime," said Nathan, a Moraga resident who heads the emergency road service department for the California State Automobile Association and is a Moraga Fire Commissioner.

Nathan brought back stories about the journey, the anniversary celebration and more T-shirts from Harley dealers than he knows what to do with.

"It's the thing to do," said Nathan, who has ridden Harleys for 30 years.

"Everyone patronizes all the Harley dealerships, and the dealers are all expecting us."

Nathan, who three years ago journeyed to the 50th anniversary of the South Dakota Sturgess motorcycle rally, says the Milwaukee gathering is a must for Harley riders.

"It's sort of like a marathon runner who has to go to Boston sometime in his life," he said.

On June 12 the four friends joined the parade down Highway 94 along with about 65,000 other Harley riders. The parade closed traffic for six hours and drew 100,000 spectators.

Each rider paid \$25 to enter the parade, which went to the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Harley-Davidson is one of 16 national corporate sponsors of the MDA.

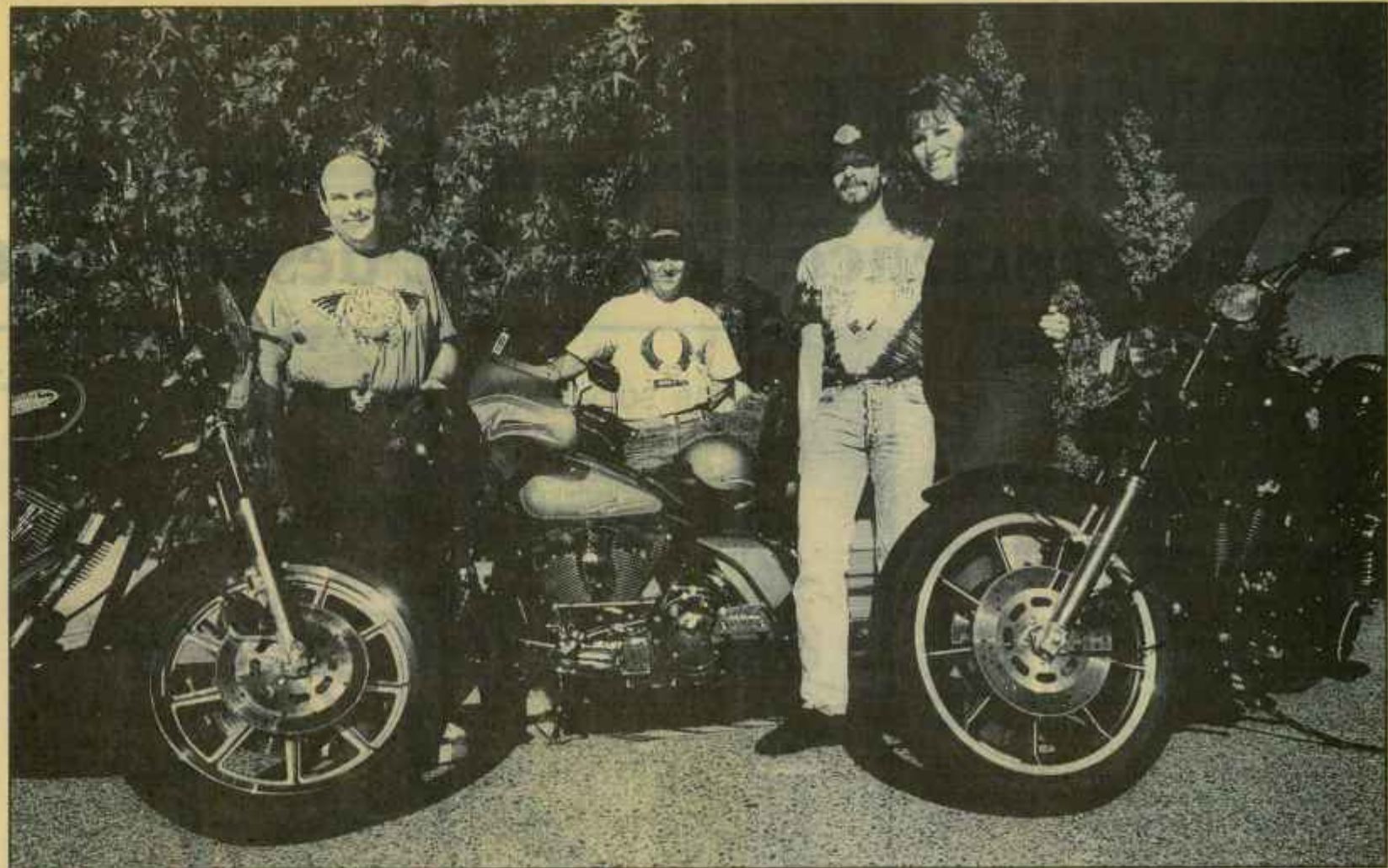
"People lined the streets and it was as if the whole state had come out to celebrate," said Bob Lobenberg, a former race car driver who works for a business that puts computer equipment on race cars.

"It made one feel as if they thought the president was coming through town. People were waving flags, cheering, slapping five and asking for autographs," he said, as they rode about two miles per hour along the parade route.

His wife Dolores, who rode on the back of the Harley her husband drove across the country and in the parade, says she would repeat the trip.

"It was a great experience, and I'd do it again," said Dolores, adding that she started riding to join her husband in his passion and hobby. "He's been riding since 1968, and I decided I could sit at home or join him."

Talking about her trip last week at the end of a work day, the executive with a graphic communications company wore a business suit. But like



Gordon Nathan, Angelo Tomassi, Bob and Dolores Lobenberg rode their Harley-Davidson to Milwaukee where they joined thousands of other bikers for the motorcycle company's 90th anniversary celebration.

most riders, she dons leather when riding her motorcycle.

The trip was ideal, she said, because she and her husband love riding their Harley and wanted to see the

United States.

"It was a combination of the two things we wanted to do," she said.

Tomassi, a Santa Clara resident who owns towing companies in that

city and San Jose, met Nathan through contract work they do together.

With the coffee machine and a cellular phone on his bike, he says he

was asked on the trip because of the toys he carries.

"When Bob realized I had a

See BIKERS, Page

I've never really been into the Harley Owners Group, one of the hog members. But I definitely am now."

According to statistics provided by the company, Harley riders are slightly older than average motorcycle riders at age 38 versus 31, make slightly more money with household incomes of \$43,100 versus \$33,200.

a woman.

The foursome fit in with many of those characteristics, and especially age, pointed out Bob Lobenberg, who is 42. Nathan is 50, Tomassi is 47 and Dolores is 41.

"That's how we decided who paid for gas," he said, noting that the old-

GE 3

me my

anniversary festival took place at Summerfest Park

BIKERS

FROM PAGE 3

cappuccino machine he became my friend," Tomassi said.

The all-day 90th anniversary festival took place at Summerfest Park on Lake Michigan. In addition to the parade, there was a stage show and party hosted by talk show host, comedian and Harley enthusiast Jay Leno. Bob Lobenberg met Leno in 1984 when he was car racing.

"He's definitely a Harley guy," Lobenberg said.

Others celebrities who ride or own Harleys are Elizabeth Taylor, Cher and Colorado Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

The four friends toured the Harley-Davidson plant and spent a lot of time people-watching and people-meeting.

There were entire families at the celebration, costumed riders such as the man whose entire Harley was covered in a buffalo costume, corporate executives and movie stars. They even ran into Ms. Harley-Davidson — and Tomassi was lucky enough to have his photo taken with her.

"We met more than 200 people," said Lobenberg. "We met everyone from outrageous and bizarre-looking people to really nice people," he said. "I've ridden Harleys since 1968, but

I've never really been into the Harley Owners Group, one of the hog members. But I definitely am now."

According to statistics provided by the company, Harley riders are slightly older than average motorcycle riders at age 38 versus 31, make slightly more money with household incomes of \$43,100 versus \$33,200. Bike prices range from \$4,700 to \$15,000, and one in four purchasers of the entry level model in 1991 was

a woman.

The foursome fit in with many of those characteristics, and especially age, pointed out Bob Lobenberg, who is 42. Nathan is 50, Tomassi is 47 and Dolores is 41.

"That's how we decided who paid for gas," he said, noting that the oldest bought the first "round" of gasoline and the rest followed. "We drove 600 miles before I had to pay for gas."

7-21-93

Financial woes spark fire merger

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran
STAFF WRITER

Looking for a more cost-efficient way to provide fire protection, the county Board of Supervisors last week ordered a study into consolidating Contra Costa's five fire districts, including those that serve Lamorinda cities.

By asking county staff to come up with several merger proposals, the supervisors effectively declared their intent to move forward with the hotly debated issue of consolidation.

Under consolidation, stations in Central, West and East County would share one budget and chief, and firefighters could be moved to different communities if needed.

The study has concerned several Moraga fire officials who fear a lag in response time and reduced paramedic staff under an administrative merger. For the last 13 years, the city has augmented county funds with a special fire tax and fund-raising to provide additional services.

Supervisor Jeff Smith, who represents Lamorinda, said he favors consolidation plans only if Moraga is not included. "People are entitled to consideration for remaining separate," he said.

Scott Tandy, chief assistant county administrator, said merging the districts "makes practical sense" and would save money. The elimination of a special district augmentation fund — brought about by a recently passed state budget trailer bill — makes the study of consolidation imperative, he said.

Contra Costa Sun

"We're almost put in a position where we have no choice if we want to preserve the quality of the system we have."

—Scott Tandy

"We're almost put in a position where we have no choice if we want to preserve the quality of the system we have," Tandy said.

The county currently operates under "functional integration" system in the Riverview, West County, Moraga, Orinda and Contra Costa Consolidated — which includes Lafayette — fire districts whereby some services are shared but personnel and budgets are controlled locally.

The merger plans were not unexpected in Orinda, where a majority of voters in June approved an advisory measure calling for consolidation. Lafayette has been part of a consolidated district for 22 years.

Many Moragans, however, voiced their displeasure at consolidation plans that would affect their city.

"If we get involved in a consolidation program with several different districts, I feel we'll lose efficiency," Moraga Fire Commission member Art Comerford said.

He wants the fire commission to explore ways to run their own depart-

See MERGE, Page 2

MERGE

FROM PAGE 1

ment, possibly funded through the city's fire-flow tax — an assessment based on home size that the city has long used to augment its paramedic and fire-protection services.

Merle Gilliland, a member of a Moraga Fire District citizens' support committee, said the city's isolation makes consolidation a bad idea. He said the Moraga district should look at trying to maintain the current level of functional integration, whereby some leadership positions are shared but the city has control over budgetary matters.

"It's critical to maintaining our paramedics program," he said. If paramedic services were shared, he said it could take more than 20 min-

"If we get involved in a consolidation program with several different districts, I feel we'll lose efficiency."

—Fire Commissioner Art Comerford

utes for an ambulance from Central County to respond emergencies in Moraga.

Tandy said the supervisors were sensitive to Moraga's concerns, asking county administrators to draft "a number of options on how consolidation could be achieved, including different options relating to Moraga."

Other Moraga Fire Commission members said the district should wait until the actual consolidation plans

are developed before looking at other options.

"We'll have to see just how expensive it would be to finance our own district," Fire Commission member Linda Borrelli said.

The county must cut \$4.4 million — or 10 percent — from fire district budgets in order to balance the budget. Currently, supervisors plan to do that by eliminating 29 positions and cutting back overtime and holiday pay.

Officials simmering over fire measure

By Karen Emanuel

STAFF WRITER

8-11-93

Orinda and Moraga fire officials are simmering over an advisory measure headed toward the November ballot.

County supervisors voted last week to ask voters in most county fire districts if they favor a consolidation of eight districts into one superdistrict.

If the current proposal stands, voters in Contra Costa and Riverview fire districts, including Lafayette residents, will decide on the measure.

So will residents in Kensington, Richmond and El Cerrito — even though these independent districts will not be included in the proposed superdistrict.

But Orinda and Moraga voters will not be able to vote on the matter, even though Orinda is one of the dis-

tricts to become part of the new district. Supervisors said Orinda voters will not be asked their opinion because they already approved a similar advisory measure in June which asked if they favored a merge with an unspecified district.

The Moraga district is not currently included in the consolidation proposal.

Supervisor Jeff Smith, whose supervisorial district includes Lamorinda, opposed placing the question before any voters. He was outnumbered 3-1, with Supervisor Sunne McPeak absent.

"An issue like this is best decided in a public meeting, rather than at the ballot," he said.

Smith preferred holding off on any consolidation plans until the ac-

Contra Costa Sun

See SIMMER, Page 2

SIMMER

FROM PAGE 1

tual effect of the state budget on fire district incomes is known. He said the ballot measure could be changed at Tuesday's board meeting, after the Sun deadline.

At the Aug. 3 meeting, Moraga and Orinda representatives failed to convince supervisors not to place the question on the ballot.

Key among their objections is that the consolidation issue is going to voters before a jointly sponsored study on ways share resources is complete.

"I see no mad rush to get this to the electorate until more is known about income from the state and the (Orinda and Moraga) fire study is done and we know what our options are," said Orinda Mayor Bobbie Landers.

The study, commissioned by the two cities for nearly \$21,000, is expected to identify ways in which the districts can work together and separately to reduce costs and improve operation.

Moraga residents fear any consolidation would jeopardize the district's paramedic program, which has a non-profit foundation, and income from a self-imposed fireflow

tax.

"It's a throw-away vote," said Sue Noe, a fire commissioner and the town mayor.

Noe said she is concerned over the cost of an advisory vote she believes unnecessary and upset that the board wants to ask the views of voters in Kensington, Richmond and El Cerrito.

"If they want an advisory vote, they should wait until they have more information," Noe said. "They're asking for a vote in three districts where they have no jurisdiction. Let's do a reality check here."

Orinda Fire Commissioner Bill Gross said that if residents of other fire districts are to vote on a consolidation measure, they should have a clear idea on which fire districts would be merged and what the cost savings would be.

"I'm afraid that if the wording on ballots for other districts is as indirect as it was on ours, people won't know what they are voting for," Gross said.

Consolidation has its supporters, however.

Orinda Fire Marshal Ron Garland said he believes consolidation can be done effectively in Lamorinda without reducing response time or service as long as no stations are closed.

"I think that consolidation is something that needs to take place,

and not just in fire protection," said Garland. Since March, when Moraga's fire marshal position was eliminated, he has assisted with some of that district's fire inspection duties.

"My personal and professional opinion is that we would be better in the long term as far as cost goes," he said.

Mike Price, president of firefighters union Local 1230, said the group supports the consolidation of services.

"The issue in Moraga is maintaining existing service levels within the geographical area and maintenance of their paramedic program," he said.

"We stand behind them in that," he added.

Noe said she believes the district can be functionally integrated through administrative services, training and other shared functions that would reduce costs.

It is the threatened loss of the district's paramedic program and the fireflow tax that concerns district officials and residents, she said. Noe said she was unconvinced Moraga would be left out of consolidation plans.

"I have a feeling if you ask Supervisor Powers, he would say Moraga is still part of the equation," Noe said. "If we ask Jeff Smith, he would say take a look at where Moraga stands."

Still waiting for fire district efficiencies

By John Wolfe
GUEST COLUMNIST

8-11-93
Contra Costa Sun

Saying that our government is run in a businesslike fashion sometimes is not a compliment.

Nowadays, it seems few important business decisions can be made without hiring consultants and taking a survey of customer and employee opinions. A slow and costly process. Are the decisions better? Do the stockholders benefit? Maybe. Maybe not.

Our county government works much the same way. For years, our county has wanted to make fire service more efficient. They have proceeded in a businesslike fashion. Consultants have been consulted. Customers and employee opinions have been solicited. The results to date? We can have better service at lower cost through merger, functional integration and consolidation of the dozen and a half separate districts that provide fire service in the county. But sometimes it appears that the process has become more important than the results.

The most recent act in this seemingly endless drama has (1) the City of Orinda and the Town of Moraga, both served by county managed fire districts, jointly hiring yet another outside consultant to "evaluate the options for alternative fire service delivery," (2) the County Administrator recommending aggressive pursuit of integration and continued exploration of the desirability of consolidation but deferral of final action and (3) the Supervisors themselves putting yet another advisory measure on the November ballot that asks selected voters: "Should exist-

ing separate fire services be consolidated to the greatest extent possible into one fire department in order to pursue cost savings and/or improve efficiencies?" Come on! We'll never get ashore if we keep treading water.

Before last June's election, proponents of the fire district tax increases said fire service faced a fiscal crisis, that an emergency existed. And yet, after all eleven tax increases were defeated and squeezed budgets forced operations to be funded from reserves set aside for equipment replacement, we find that we're still plodding along, very businesslike, spending scarce tax dollars on a less than efficient organizational structure.

We're told that the impediments to quicker action are all political—egos, personalities, protection of "turf," preservation of autonomy. That's probably true. These same things slow down business decisions. And our Board of Supervisors deserves credit for trying to reconcile the big differences before they act. Unhappy people can frustrate the most worthy changes.

But in the case of reorganizing fire service to save money and improve effectiveness, the process has reached the point where it appears it is being used to postpone the inevitable. We don't need another consultant, more exploration or additional advisory votes.

Everyone knows what needs to be done. Everyone deserves the economies and efficiencies that will result. Let's get on with it. Please!

John Wolf is Executive Vice President of Contra Costa Taxpayers Association

7-21-93

Financial woes spark fire merger

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran
STAFF WRITER

Looking for a more cost-efficient way to provide fire protection, the county Board of Supervisors last week ordered a study into consolidating Contra Costa's five fire districts, including those that serve Lamorinda cities.

By asking county staff to come up with several merger proposals, the supervisors effectively declared their intent to move forward with the hotly debated issue of consolidation.

Under consolidation, stations in Central, West and East County would share one budget and chief, and firefighters could be moved to different communities if needed.

The study has concerned several Moraga fire officials who fear a lag in response time and reduced paramedic staff under an administrative merger. For the last 13 years, the city has augmented county funds with a special fire tax and fund-raising to provide additional services.

Supervisor Jeff Smith, who represents Lamorinda, said he favors consolidation plans only if Moraga is not included. "People are entitled to consideration for remaining separate," he said.

Scott Tandy, chief assistant county administrator, said merging the districts "makes practical sense" and would save money. The elimination of a special district augmentation fund — brought about by a recently passed state budget trailer bill — makes the study of consolidation imperative, he said.

Contra Costa Sun

"We're almost put in a position where we have no choice if we want to preserve the quality of the system we have."

—Scott Tandy

"We're almost put in a position where we have no choice if we want to preserve the quality of the system we have," Tandy said.

The county currently operates under "functional integration" system in the Riverview, West County, Moraga, Orinda and Contra Costa Consolidated — which includes Lafayette — fire districts whereby some services are shared but personnel and budgets are controlled locally.

The merger plans were not unexpected in Orinda, where a majority of voters in June approved an advisory measure calling for consolidation. Lafayette has been part of a consolidated district for 22 years.

Many Moragans, however, voiced their displeasure at consolidation plans that would affect their city.

"If we get involved in a consolidation program with several different districts, I feel we'll lose efficiency," Moraga Fire Commission member Art Comerford said.

He wants the fire commission to explore ways to run their own department.

See MERGE, Page 2

MERGE

FROM PAGE 1

ment, possibly funded through the city's fire-flow tax — an assessment based on home size that the city has long used to augment its paramedic and fire-protection services.

Merle Gilliland, a member of a Moraga Fire District citizens' support committee, said the city's isolation makes consolidation a bad idea. He said the Moraga district should look at trying to maintain the current level of functional integration, whereby some leadership positions are shared but the city has control over budgetary matters.

"It's critical to maintaining our paramedics program," he said. If paramedic services were shared, he said it could take more than 20 min-

"If we get involved in a consolidation program with several different districts, I feel we'll lose efficiency."

—Fire Commissioner Art Comerford

utes for an ambulance from Central County to respond emergencies in Moraga.

Tandy said the supervisors were sensitive to Moraga's concerns, asking county administrators to draft "a number of options on how consolidation could be achieved, including different options relating to Moraga."

Other Moraga Fire Commission members said the district should wait until the actual consolidation plan

are developed before looking at other options.

"We'll have to see just how expensive it would be to finance our own district," Fire Commission member Linda Borrelli said.

The county must cut \$4.4 million — or 10 percent — from fire district budgets in order to balance the budget. Currently, supervisors plan to do that by eliminating 29 positions and cutting back overtime and holiday pay.

Fire damages Moraga house

8-15-93
Contra Costa Times



CHRIS MAYER/Special to the Times

FIREFIGHTER TIM BARTOLOMEI takes a breather Saturday after battling a two-alarm house fire in Moraga that caused an estimated \$400,000 worth of structure and content damage. Moraga Fire District investigators believe a short circuit in a television started the fire at 1144 Sanders Drive. The blaze was reported at 11:10 a.m., and was under control shortly before noon. A passerby who tried to help extinguish flames with a garden hose suffered smoke inhalation.

Wednesday, August 18, 1993

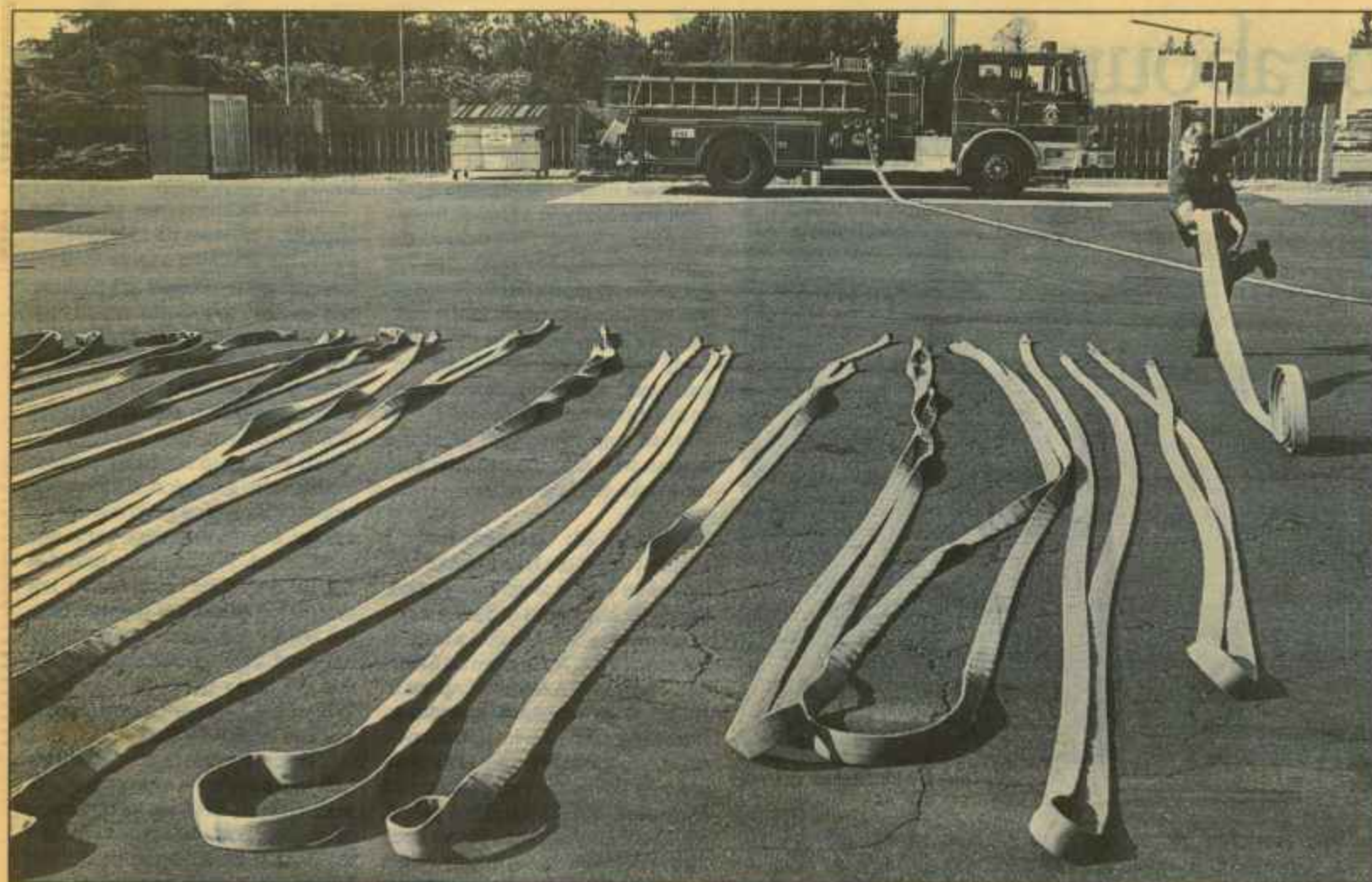
Contra Costa Sun — 3

Fire in Moraga



CHRIS MAYER/SPECIAL TO THE SUN

A two-alarm fire at a Sanders Drive residence Saturday caused an estimated \$400,000 in damage. The blaze was reported at 11:10 a.m. and was under control within 40 minutes. Fighting the fire were two units from Moraga, three from Orinda and three from Contra Costa fire districts, said Moraga fire Capt. Ed Borden. A neighbor who tried to fight the blaze before firefighters arrived suffered smoke inhalation. Borden said the point of the fire's origin was at the television set.



TRENT NELSON/SUN

Fire Captain Dave Brisbon uses his hose bowling skills to unroll Lafayette Engine 17's hoses during a test. Any hoses unable to withstand a certain pressure are discarded.

Students get a lesson in safety as firefighters prepare for national Fire Prevention Week

By Stephanie Roberts
STAFF WRITER

LAFAYETTE — The Hazard House may sound like an early Halloween hangout, but it's actually part of the curriculum for Moraga fourth-graders.

Senior Firefighter Mark Watson has taken students through the rickety building behind the Moraga Way Fire Station for the past four years as part of his public education stint during Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 3 through Oct. 9.

Watson gives the children a

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Who: Moraga Firefighters
What: Open house, pancake breakfast
When: Oct. 9
Where: Moraga Way Fire Station
Call: 376-5154

worksheet titled "Hunt for Home Hazards" and they check off the ones they find in the house, including toys on the floor, matches and medicine in reach of children and frayed electrical wiring. He said many of them go home and look for hazards there.

"It's good to do this while they're young so it becomes a part of them,"

Watson said.

Janet Carlson, mother of 9-year-old Adrienne, agreed.

"They're still at an age where this is fun," she said.

The children also see a video and then have a game-show quiz session, where the competition flares.

Nine-year-old Ryan Eidson in Carol Scott's Camino Pablo class was quick to "buzz in" over and over on the same question, eventually getting the answer right on his fourth try. His teammates cheered and gave him high-fives.

Fourth-graders aren't the only

ones getting a lesson in safety. Throughout the week, Watson goes to grade school classes and teaches a different aspect of fire safety to each grade. Kindergartners learn the stop, drop and roll method; first-graders learn all about firefighters; second-graders take on home fire drills; third-graders learn earthquake safety; and fifth-graders learn more advanced exit drills.

Moraga firefighters are also busy preparing for their annual Open House and Pancake Breakfast, which will be at the station Oct. 9. For more information, call 376-5454.



TRENT NELSON/SUN

Ali Cotrell checks for fire hazards in Moraga's Hazard House.



Students check for fire dangers using a checklist provided by Moraga firefighters.



Fire district 'haves' fear losses of cash to 'have-nots' in mergers

By TOM LOCHNER

Staff writer

Officials in some of the county's healthier fire districts are worried that a consolidation plan would reallocate resources from their districts to needier ones.

The consolidation is an advisory measure on Tuesday's ballot in five fire districts.

"Once you put money in a gigantic pot and the (county) Board of Supervisors has the power of distribution, it always happens that the guy who cries the loudest gets the money. It never fails," said Rico Cinquini, a commissioner of the Oakley Fire Protection District.

Oakley is one of the districts with a ballot measure asking voters if separate fire districts should be rolled into one to save money and increase efficiency. The other districts are Bethel Island, East Diablo, Riverview and Kensington.

Bethel Island, East Diablo and Oakley are volunteer districts in East County. Riverview, also in East County, and Kensington, in West County, are salaried districts. Kensington is an autonomous district with its own elected board. The other four are county-run.

This week, county supervisors proposed a new plan for two superdistricts, one to encompass the Orinda, Riverview, West County and Contra Costa fire districts, which are salaried, the other to consist of the three East

County volunteer districts.

Supervisor Tom Powers said Thursday the new plan does not undermine the ballot measures. He said the two-district plan is within the scope of the measures, which call for consolidation "to the greatest extent possible" into one fire district. He said the two superdistricts would share the same chief and be "functionally integrated."

Advisory votes in June in the Orinda, Pinole and West County fire districts on merging with adjacent districts passed handily. But those measures did not specify how many districts would be left after consolidation, confusing some voters.

"People thought that meant consolidation with Moraga," said Orinda Mayor Bobbie Landers. Moraga's district is autonomous and was left out of the consolidation plan.

Landers said Orinda is in a high-fire-hazard zone and needs more resources than, for example, Pinole. She worries that in a consolidated district, fire protection in Orinda would be brought down to the level of other districts where fire hazard is lower.

All districts would benefit from consolidation because "fires of significant magnitude require resources from all of the jurisdictions," Powers said.

"If they want to keep an adjacent fire department weak, it won't just hurt the adjacent fire department, it will hurt them," Powers said.

Published as a Community Service by



Richland
Development
Corporation

Palos  Colorados

MORAGA COMMUNITY NEWS

4th Quarter 1993

Volume 1/Number 4

UPDATE ON THE MORAGA FIRE DISTRICT

After months of research into the most cost effective way to run the fire districts in Contra Costa County, it appears the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors is closer to consolidating firefighting forces in the County by proposing two superdistricts. However, at this point it appears the Town of Moraga's request to be left out of any consolidation is being granted. This means the Moraga Fire District would remain intact while sharing management personnel with the superdistricts.

One of the proposed superdistricts would encompass the Orinda, Riverview, West County and Contra Costa Fire Districts. The other superdistrict would join together the volunteer districts of Bethel Island, East Diablo and Oakley. The paid and volunteer districts could not be joined, according to County sources, because of the costs involved in replacing volunteers with paid staff persons.

The current plan under which the fire districts operate, known as "functional integration" is one in which some services — such as the sharing of a Chief by Riverview, Moraga, Orinda, Contra Costa Consolidated and West County Districts — are shared by separate Districts. This plan has saved the

County in excess of \$1 million.

The Board of Supervisors has not finalized anything yet, and the possibility that Moraga may ultimately be included in the consolidation is still real. In that event the Town could be required to pay 6% of all of the consolidated district's overhead and the Town could face the possibility of only having one representative on the Fire District Board which will set the tax rate and levels of service.

The Citizens Support Committee for Moraga Fire Protection District Paramedic and Fire Services is still working hard to insure that Moraga does not lose in the effort. For member Ellen Dale, the maintenance of the Moraga District's sovereignty is a quality of life issue, "today, it is comforting to know that paramedics are five minutes away, especially when we know that Moraga is so isolated and far from medical help." Throughout the process, the Committee will continue to push for the high standard of service Moraga residents have come to expect from the Fire District.

If you have additional questions call Citizens Support Committee representative Merle Gilliland at (510) 935-6710.

CHANGE

FROM PAGE 1

"This is one of the sad things about integration," said Gross. "We aren't included, and don't know what's going on in our own district."

Rosalie Block, a former Orinda fire commissioner now living in Moraga, said she has received several phone calls from concerned residents.

She is critical of the timing, which coincides with the district's impending consolidation with other county fire districts, and the fact that no one in Orinda was formally contacted.

"This is frightening because it sounds like there are some critical incidents in which firefighters would not be called," she said. "A change like this should be discussed in the community."

Fire commissioners were to meet Tuesday night after the Sun's deadline to discuss the proposal. Gross said he had invited Allen Little, the fire chief for Orinda and four other districts, to the meeting. Little was out of town last week and unavailable for comment.

Fire Chief Bill Cullen, acting operations chief for Orinda and the other districts, said the proposal isn't a radical departure from the current procedure for emergency dispatch.

"One of the driving forces behind it is to keep services available that may be needed for life-threatening emergencies," Cullen said.

He said the plan is under review by a county medical advisory board, and that the change would provide an enhanced level of emergency response.

The proposal modifies the emergency medical dispatch service in effect since 1986. Dispatchers take incoming calls and are trained to determine to determine what type of medical response is needed.

The director for the Emergency Medical Services Agency, a division of the County Health Services Department, called the modification "a fine tuning" of a system already in place.

The change has been reviewed by a medical advisory board of county physicians, medical and emergency specialists, said EMS director Art Lathrop.

The proposed change would add a middle category to the county emergency response process, said Lathrop. It would fall between a code three call

"This is frightening because it sounds like there are some critical incidents in which firefighters would not be called. A change like this should be discussed in the community."

—Rosalie Block

for ambulance and fire response with lights and sirens and a code two call for an ambulance only during a less serious medical emergency.

"These are incidents where we do want an ambulance, but there may not be much a first responder can do," he said. "For bleeding and breathing problems there would obviously be a first responder, but there may be medical problems where presence of a person trained in first aid might not make a difference."

Orinda Fire Capt. Greg Holm said he sees the overall logic in freeing up firefighters for more pressing calls, but questioned whether Orinda would benefit from such a procedure.

"There are a lot of areas in the central county where (ambulances) get there before fire," he said.

"Here in Orinda it's a little different because (the ambulance) responds from Lafayette," he said, noting that Orinda firefighters are almost always the first to a medical call.

Quick to note that the Lafayette-based ambulance service "has done a great job of providing service to Orinda," he said there is still a community benefit to having firefighters arrive first at a scene.

He estimated that, if the proposal were approved, Orinda firefighters would only respond to about 5 percent fewer calls.

A resident who has closely followed fire district issues believes the move is a step toward consolidation before the county has legal authority to merge the districts.

Henry Saar has long criticized the way much of Orinda's property tax dollars are used for fire service in other areas of the county, while Orinda's fire services have been cut back. He said he believes Orinda should be allowed to respond to all emergency medical incidents.

"Orinda surely should get that service, and has more than paid to be a first responder," he said.