

# A Brief History Of EMS In Port Washington

In 1927, the members of the Port Washington Fire Department first saw the need for an ambulance in the community, and in that year, a 1917 army surplus ambulance was purchased for fifty dollars. Mr. William Hewett, who became the first chairman of the "Ambulance Committee", began working with many other members, at first primarily aiding civilians and firefighters who were injured at fires. However, they soon began treating and transporting the sick and injured whenever needed. The PWFD members successfully performed this function along with their firefighting duties for the next 51 years before Fire Medic Co. 1 was formed.

In 1961, Hewett retired as chairman of the ambulance committee after 34 years of dedicated service, and Ex-Chief Edward Picardo was named to head the committee. Chief Picardo continued as one of the driving forces throughout the vast changes in prehospital medicine during the sixties and seventies.

During the seventies, EMS came of age in the United States and the PWFD was on the leading edge of these advances. Great strides were made in organized basic and advanced life support, medical control through telemetry, and fundamental operating principles which we today take for granted as "obvious." The new technology required a larger ambulance, and in 1975, the PWFD purchased its first "modular / box" ambulance as opposed to the old "big station-wagon" style used up until that point.

During this same time, the demands on the ambulance squad members increased dramatically. Not only was the volume of ambulance calls increasing rapidly due to community growth, but the advances in EMS standards and technology required hundreds of hours of formal training from members also fully involved in firefighting duties. Rather than waiting until the department could no longer handle its EMS responsibilities properly, the decision was made to find a better way of meeting this increased challenge.

In the 1970s, a committee was formed to develop a new EMS plan for the community. The result of this committee's work was the "Fire Medic" concept, wherein a group of fire department members could perform all of their required activities as EMS providers, without requiring firefighting activities as the other three companies did.

In 1979, the "Fire Medic Association" was formed. They began a membership drive, started EMT and AEMT classes, as well as establishing the constitutions and bylaws of the new group. After a year of hard work, under the leadership of PWFD members Robert Johnson, Dennis Dermody, as well as many others, the group became Fire Medic Company No. 1 of the Port Washington Fire Department in March of 1979.

Fire Medic Company No. 1 has grown to an organization that answers some 2000 calls annually with its three Advanced Life Support ambulances that operate twenty-four hours a day. Membership in Fire Medic Co. 1 presently stands at 78 active members. In 1991, FMCo moved into its new headquarters at 65 Harbor Road, thus giving EMS a new home in Port Washington from which it can grow even more.