

Fog—Not Water—Best Enemy Of Flames

Modern Fire-Fighters Use Scientific Methods of Naval Origin

By W. W. EDGAR
Observer Staff Editor

This may come as a slight surprise, but styles have changed in fire fighting, too.

For years and years, the only known method of fighting fires was to drown them with water or, in the case of grass fires, to smother them.

Those were the days when the firemen, despite yeoman efforts, often were accused of doing more damage to a building with axes and water than was done by the fire.

"WE'VE COME A long way since those days," Plymouth Chief George Schoeneman remarked of the newest methods. "and we can trace most of the modern methods to the developments in the use of fog."

The Plymouth chief pointed out that with fog, which is produced by use of a specially designed nozzle, you can extinguish more fire with less water than ever before.

"The fog," he said, "absorbs the heat, turns to steam and smothers the fire."

FIRE CHIEF Cal Roberts, in Livonia, and Robert Deadman, head of the Public Safety Department in Farmington, also credited the use of fog as the greatest style change in fire fighting.

All three agreed that fire fighting could be rated as a science compared to the old days—before World War II—when water—and more water—was the prime remedy.

Now, according to them, the entire method has changed. And aside from the use of fog, they listed the following reasons:



THE OLD WAY — One of the common methods of fighting blazes in the attics was to chop holes in the building or rip out windows with little concern to damage. Here, a fireman fights his way into the upper portion of a home to apply the stream of water.

Better communications.
Better fire codes.
Better safety measures.
Better fire stops built into the buildings.
Better materials.

"MOST OF THE changes in actual fire fighting," Chief Deadman explained, "can be traced back to the U.S. Navy, where much of the experimentation was done in World War II. It was out of these experi-

ments that we got such things as fog and foam, and they changed the entire concept.

"Another thing," he said, "is the use of additives to water. The additives allow the water to penetrate and are most helpful in stubborn fires."

Along with these changes in materials, there has been a great change in equipment.

The old wooden ladder has given way to aluminum; ray hoses are now made with rayon

and nylon instead of cotton—all lighter; and pump capacities have increased. Where pumping capacity used to be a maximum of 750 gallons a minute, it now has increased to 1,500 gallons.

"AND A GREAT change has come about in grass fires in the suburban areas," Paul Albright, chief of the Plymouth Township department, stated.

"With the rush to suburbia and the increase in the number of subdivisions, wide open acreage is diminishing with a resultant decrease in grass fires. But even when we do get called to them we have been using new methods."

The Plymouth Township chief smiled as he recalled that bur-lap bags were once the chief factor in fighting the grass fires.

"We'd just rush in and smother them," he commented, "but today it is done more systematically."

"When we get called to a grass fire we go with chemicals in tanks strapped over the shoulders of the men—and brooms. The chemicals take off the top fire, and the brooms are used as a follow-up to sweep the flames back into the burned area. This keeps the fire from spreading."

HE REPORTED that the cause of many grass fires still is the same—the railroads.

"Even though they are using Diesel engines today, there still is a chance of sparks after the engine has been idle a while. The sparks come from the sediment gathered in the stack—and we can follow the fires from town to town once they start."

Chief Roberts, in Livonia, was quick to point out that high pressure fog was one of the best things to come along in quite a spell.

"We have found that this high pressure fog which turns to steam when it hits the heat penetrates into the smallest openings in partitions and has been of considerable benefit in holding down fire losses."

"We also have found that the use of C-42 is an improvement over soda acid in fighting deep-seated fires. It is especially useful in fighting blazes in the home kitchen and ovens."

ANOTHER IMPROVEMENT has been the development of the telescoping boom or "snorkel," which enables the fire fighters to reach the center of a fire more quickly.

It was the telescoping boom that aided materially in fighting the Penniman Avenue building blaze in Plymouth a year ago. This was one of the worst fires in the area in years, and it wasn't until the boom got there that headway was made.

"It took us several hours to fight the blaze," Chief Schoeneman explained, "as much as it started in the basement and then went up the walls and into the false ceilings."

"In the old days we'd just pour water and water in the direction of the smoke. But now we have smoke masks, oxygen tanks and other safety features. In this particular case, our only hope was to get the flames into the open."

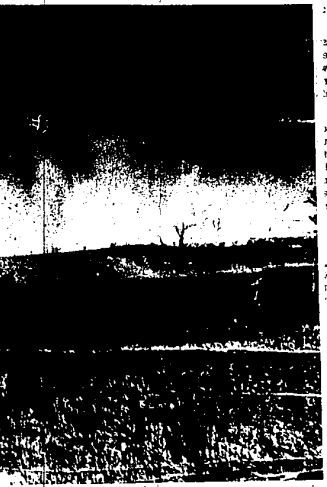
"THAT WAS DONE when we were able to put a man on the telescopic boom and pour water into the center of the building from the top. Once the roof caved in and gave the blaze a chance to break through, the rest was rather easy. We knew where the flames were and could concentrate on them."

Chief Albright pointed out, too, that there no longer is any justification for criticizing firemen who break windows or punch holes in the roof.

"This isn't done haphazardly," he said. "We usually try to remove a window or a door and use the regular openings in a building before they deliberately punch holes in the side or roof. Haphazard tactics now are old-fashioned."

"THERE IS A misconception of these actions at times," Chief Deadman, of Farmington, explained. "More often than not, the openings in buildings are used to let heat escape—and not to get a new avenue in which to pour water."

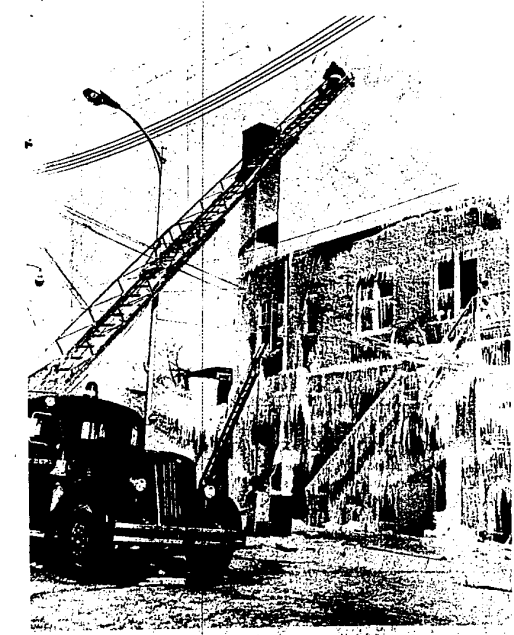
"In many cases the BTU's are built up so high in a building that a fireman couldn't stand it. It is to let the heat escape that the holes are made."



THE MODERN WAY — The latest method of fighting grass fires is by the use of a can of chemicals and brooms. The chemicals are used to "kill" the top blaze and the brooms to brush the ground fire back into fire's path.



CUTTING DOWN LOSSES — It used to be that the water caused almost as much damage at a fire as the blaze itself. Under modern methods this no longer is true. The fireman now remove the furniture from the room where possible and then fight the fire. This has greatly reduced fire loss.



HIGH UP IN ULTRA MODERN STYLE — The latest thing in fire fighting is the "snorkel," or high rise boom, that enables the fireman to get on top of the blaze and, from this vantage point, to apply the high pressure flow. This view is the scene in the rear of the Penniman Building fire last January and it was the "snorkel" that helped contain the fire—and damage.

Rev. Meyer's Chicago Trial Moved Back; Craig Hiring

By TIM RICHARD

Defended by State Sen. Roger Craig, the Rev. James Meyer, the political priest from Pontiac, will go on trial Feb. 24 in Chicago on charges stemming from a "peace" march at the Democratic National Convention.

Father Meyer, who has a strong political following in Wayne County 19th District Democratic circles, was to be tried Nov. 12. But last week he asked a delay in order to have Craig admitted to the Illinois Bar Association to handle his defense.

Meyer is charged with "failure to disperse"—a form of disorderly conduct—and resisting arrest. He was one of about 80 persons arrested on the Thursday night of the Democratic convention, as they marched toward the Chicago Amphitheater.

SEN. CRAIG, an attorney, is a liberal Democrat who supported Eugene McCarthy for his party's presidential nomination. Craig himself had a brush with the law when he took part in a Roseville procession during the curfew following the April slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

It was Craig, a Dearborn resident, who got Meyer interested in politics while Meyer was serving a Dearborn parish.

Meyer is currently assistant pastor at St. Benedict Catholic parish in Waterford Township west of Pontiac.

The bearded priest expressed no dissatisfaction with his Chicago attorney, but just wanted to have Craig, "a close personal friend," handle the case.

Father Meyer has asked for a jury trial. He will be tried alone, despite the participation of dozens of others in the march.

FOR MEYER'S trial, Craig asked a date in late December. "Right away," the priest said, "the prosecuting attorney, Dick Elrod, jumped up and said, 'I'm sure, how about we should try the case of a priest around Christmas Eve.'" The judge set the trial for Feb. 24.

Meyer said his defenses would be two—legal and factual.

The legal ground is the "constitutional right to assemble," he said. "There was absolutely no violence in our march."

Then, he said, there's the question of fact—what constitutes "disorderly conduct?"

"We were marching three abreast—no signs, no placards, no songs, no nothing. You know, there's a charge they added to the one of failure to disperse—resisting arrest. I would like to see how that one is spelled out," he chuckled.

Meyer noted that the group's arrest took place on S. Michigan at 18th Street. "It just happens that 18th Street is the

border of a black precinct," pleading guilty to a lesser charge and getting fined, say, \$500. Father, who intends to fight the case to the end, even at the risk of a \$500 fine if convicted.

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Tuesday 19 LADIES DAY - 9:30 a.m.; free coffee, movie, prizes - Cinema I Drawing for Mink Stole today! WEIGHT WATCHERS in Community Room, 12:15 p.m.

Wednesday 20 COLONIAL SENIOR CITIZENS in Community Room, 12:15 p.m.

Thursday 21 See THANKSGIVING POSTERS done by children of Plymouth State Home in Mall. CUB SCOUTS in Community Room, 7:00 p.m.

Friday 22 CHRISTMAS CREATION WORKSHOP in Community Room, 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. REGISTER NOW!

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Home Rule Loss Bad--Friedrichs

A defeated candidate for the Wayne County Board of Supervisors calls it "unfortunate" that voters rejected the Nov. 5 home rule proposal.

Dr. Donald Friedrichs, Democratic candidate in the 26th District (Livonia, Plymouth, Canton and Northville), made the comment in a post-election congratulations to Republican winner Carl Pursell.

"UNFORTUNATELY," said Friedrichs, "the new board of supervisors will deprive the help of a charter commission and must face this task of reorganizing county business without significant legislative changes."

"All interested citizens should keep in touch with the decisions that face the new board and make their opinions known to our representative, Mr. Pursell."

Throughout Dr. Friedrichs' statement, the supervisor-elect's name was misspelled as "Pursell."

Friedrichs, who by occupation is director of secondary education for Livonia public schools, wasted no time telling Pursell his opinions on county problems.

"WE SHOULD URGE Pursell to initiate immediate action to provide a youth home and short-term rehabilitation center for western Wayne County and to seek county support for child guidance centers, where families can be helped before their children become a menace to society."

The present Wayne County board of some 130 members will go out of business Dec. 31 and be replaced by a 28-member board apportioned on a "one man, one vote" basis.