

The Start

Around 1980, and prior to GTVFD as we know it now, several people on the Gunflint Trail organized the **Gunflint Trail Fire and Rescue Squad**. EMS was the main purpose or to provide emergency medical service on the Gunflint Trail. As far as firefighting prior to 1992, it was mainly up to lodge owners with portable pumps and hose to extinguish fires. During that time, they had no other firefighting equipment or protective equipment.

I have tried to gather the names of the members of this early rescue squad. The members were Sue Weber, Sue Kerfoot, Bruce Kerfoot, Paddy Leeds, Vicky Leeds, Paul Bauman, Dave Tuttle, Barb Tuttle, Mike Lande, Kathy Lande, Gay Lynne Liebertz, Jack McDonnell, Jim Wiinanen, Jeff Moe and Eric Thompson. I hope that I have not forgotten anyone. The uniforms, kelly green jackets.

Acquiring Equipment

Per Sue Kerfoot:

“I remember Bruce and me driving to Silver Bay and picking up the ambulance. It was a hearse-style ambulance and the kids, Robert and Lee, were with us. The newly received ambulance was used, free and working, so it was a winner. The boys could not wait until we got on the Gunflint Trail. It was then that they could run the siren.”

A few years later, the old ambulance was traded for a modular version. Mike and Kathy Lande did that exchange in St. Paul. By the way, this ambulance was the one that burned in Hall 2 in 2001. You can read about Fire Hall 2 burning on our website.

Trainings

It was a very informal group, with occasional meetings at Adventurous Christians. We received training from Vera Flavell, a nurse from Grand Marais and took first aid classes in Grand Marais from Nurse Chris McClure.

Even back then, we had practice trainings.

Sue Kerfoot remembers...

“As part of the training, Dave Tuttle drove his car into the deep snowy ditch, at the intersection of the Gunflint Trail and East Bearskin Road, with Barb Tuttle as passenger. Barb had broken her femur in this terrible accident. Just to make it look good we took a chicken thighbone and taped it to her leg under her clothes. What a great surprise when they examined her.”

Incidents

We had several runs, some turned out good but many did not. There was the Loon Lake Public Landing incident, where a couple waited days for aliens to pick them up. It was cold, she died and he survived as no spaceship showed up. A woman at Clearwater public landing was run over by a runaway road grader as she was loading up her canoe down at the water's edge. Pinned, with just her head above water, this woman survived.

Thanks to everyone in those early years who helped get an EMS started on the trail.

1992 TO PRESENT

In 1992, the Gunflint Trail Fire and Rescue Squad INC dissolved and the **Gunflint Trail Volunteer Fire Department** was organized. The first fire chief, George Carlson of Poplar Lake.