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Don Schreur

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Don Schreur
Time: 59:19
October 6, 2017
Orange City Iowa
Ann Lundberg
Orange City Fire Department Oral History Interview

Transcript:

A: There it is. I'm talking to Don Schreur, fire Department member from 1959.

D: From 1959 and 36 years later, I retired.

A: Thirty-six years! So why did you retire after 36 years?

D: I felt that I no longer could pull my weight. When I decided to retire some of them suggested oh, why don't you stay on and you can be a pump operator. But, from my experience and responding to fires of different nature, I realized there were times that everybody depended on somebody else. And that might be somebody that was on the roof or working on a ladder or inside of a building, and I felt that I no longer should be working on ladders or on top of buildings, so I decided that it was time for me to retire and turn it over to the younger people.

A: But you're still an active retired member, I know you are...

D: Do I miss it? Sure, I miss it but I realize that there comes a time when you turn things over to younger people for them to operate and so it was it was good 36 years. My father served 35 years.

A: Oh, my goodness! When did he leave the department?

D: You know, Ann, I'm not exactly sure. And I hope that you can find those old records.

A: I will be looking for them.

D: Because, you know, there's a lot of information there and I'm...I'm reciting from memory and as we get older sometimes our memory fails. [Chuckles.]

A: It does that!

D: What I did in this particular case, to make sure I was correct, I checked with Frank Vogel who also lives here and also John Zeutenhorst who also lives here and double checked to make sure that I have the names correct.

A: That's great. Thank you for your work. For the sake of the recording, I'm going to note we're looking at a picture of fire department members taken somewhere between 1950 and 1957. Mr. Schreur and I are talking today about the accident that claimed the life of Stan Duven in 1962 and you were telling me that when you got to the fire scene, that the cars were backed all the way both sides of the driveway and along the road?

D: That's right. It was the Kooiker dairy farm in Middleburg. And it was a fairly long lane going into the farmstead and there were cars parked along the gravel road and also on both sides of the lane entering the farm place, so it was a narrow path for vehicles to enter. I was riding with George Huizenga, at the time, and we were in the pumper truck and followed by the tanker

truck. And from what we understand, and of course neither George or I observed it because we were ahead of it, but along the side of the pumper truck there was a rail and the thinking is that he probably tried to grab the rail and slipped and went under through and in front of the wheels. That's one story. Another story was that maybe he was sitting on a vehicle on the side of the road and as it went by he slid under, but we think that he tried to grab onto the truck and slipped and went under through the dual wheels.

A: Was this on the road or was it on the driveway?

D: On the driveway.

A: So you heard pretty quickly then, after the accident happened.

D: We heard pretty quickly. Yes. It was, everybody was in a state of shock, to think that was one of our members, you know. Of course, he was still living and he was brought to the Orange City Hospital and then the word got out that we should go to the hospital in case blood was needed. So many of us just stayed right at the hospital to see if they needed our blood.

A: Was Sioux Center already on scene at that fire? I know they relieved you so that you could go attend to Mr. Duven.

D: To the best of my knowledge we were the first one to arrive, but you know I can't—I can't really say for sure, but I think we were the first ones to arrive and then Sioux Center arrived and yeah.

A: So how soon after accident happened did you leave for Orange City?

D: Of course, when we got there the barn was totally engulfed and so it was a matter of saving buildings around it. There was no way to save the barn anymore, so it didn't take long and the barn was down and that's when we left and then Sioux Center took over.

A: Where was the hospital in 1962?

D: OK I gotta...well let's see. From uh, you know where the fitness center is on 3rd and Central Avenue?

A: Hmm....mmm.

D: Okay, it was one block north and a half a block west.

A: So, pretty much where the hospital the old hospital is now.

D: Yes.

A: Okay. And was it Lee Kraai who is with you to give blood? I think you mentioned his name before.

D: Lee Kraai is no longer living, but Lee Kraai and I were young members of the fire department. Lee got on shortly after I got on.

A: Ok, and did they eventually tell you to go home or did you decide it was getting late?

D: I'm not sure the exact hour that he passed away.

A: Of course not. The newspaper says two hours, but—

D: But we were told he had passed away and we all left. And there were others there also, not just only Lee and myself. There were others also.

A: The whole community turned out.

D: But we stayed until we were notified that he had passed away.

A: So, I know that the fire department made a resolution to attend his funeral and to carry his coffin as honorary pallbearers. Were you a part of that?

D: Yes, we were dressed in our white shirts.

A: Yes.

D: White shirts, caps, we all had caps because we also served as auxiliary policemen. We parked cars at football games and things like that for public service.

A: And patrolled Tulip Festival? Did you do that too?

D: Yes.

A: We still do that today.

D: So, it was at the old Trinity Reformed Church and there were steps going up into the sanctuary and we, and when they left the church, left the sanctuary then we formed a line at the bottom of the stairway, and that's where they carried the casket through where we were standing.

A: So, Honor Guard for him. Is there anything else you remember about that tragic event?

D: No, in those days unfortunately, whenever the siren sounded, people would get in their cars, head to the fire station and follow the firetrucks to find where they were going. And it was not uncommon to have a steady stream of vehicles following the firetruck. Well, after this accident, I think people, well, the whole community was shocked. And of course there were many letters written and a lot of conversation about, you know, this is not the thing to do. And I think it was the beginning of the end of people following the firetruck.

A: A good and necessary thing, that.

D: Yeah. Unfortunately, it took that to get the people to think about it.

A: Yeah, that is unfortunate. Do you know where there any benefits for firefighters in that day? Today we have life insurance provided by the state if we are killed in the line of duty. Was there anything for his family back then?

D: No. In fact, I'm still a member of the mutual aid. It's an insurance policy.

A: Yes.

D: A very small one. It only pays out \$500.

A: Right.

D: But it wasn't mandatory; it was an option. But most of the firefighters at that time did pay into that, and we paid a dollar for every seven debts or something like that. And you know, in those years it was costing us maybe five, ten dollars a year to be a member. And I think the last time I paid, it was something like \$23 or something like that, but I've been a member ever since. [Chuckles.]

A: Sounds reasonable. Did you have that before Mr. Duvén's accident or was that something that the fire department started doing after?

D: Well, this is through the state.

A: So similar to what we have today.

D: Probably. And I don't know what the payout is today...

A: It's not extravagant, it's enough to help with funeral expenses. I think we're also covered by the city as employees. As soon as our pagers go off, we are considered city employees for workman's comp and all of that so I'm pretty sure that there would—

D: That has all changed since.

A: Yeah, and probably a good thing. I can't imagine losing husband, father, breadwinner all at once.

D: Not as a volunteer.

A: Yes, and as a volunteer. As a volunteer. So at that point in time, you were in the band shell fire station, is that correct?

D: Yes, prior to that there was a garage, it's, you know where the treasurer's office is on main street?

A: Yes!

D: Okay, the first building to the south. I think there's a women's clothing store there?

A: Oh yes! Uh huh.

D: There was a small entrance to a larger garage in the back, and that's where the fire truck was parked prior to the time that the station was built in the downtown park. And the night before the election, there was a citizen in Orange City who published a news item and circulated that around town asking the people to defeat the vote, to vote no.

A: On the band shell fire station?

D: On the band shell fire station.

A: Oh my.

D: And it really upset the fire fighters at that time to think that there was somebody that was against it.

A: Did they do it anonymously or did they sign their name?

D: Oh they signed their name. It was known who it was. [Laughing.]

A: What was their reason? Did they give a reason?

D: Well, I think it was a person that was maybe anti-taxes, you know, that sort of thing. But anyway, I can remember my father talking about this and saying that there were several other fire fighters that at that time decided if this issue was defeated, they were going to build it themselves!

A: And they probably had the skills to do it too!

D: And I think the means to do it too! [Laughs.]

A: But they weren't going to let that happen. Oh my goodness!

D: But anyway, the vote was taken and the majority of the people voted to have a new station. So, that was the new station then.

A: Right. Why don't you tell me what you remember about that station? How was it set up? Did it have a meeting room?

D: Well, it had three stalls and behind the three stalls there was a meeting room. Of course, that building still exists today. It think it's used primarily by the parks department for storage.

A: Yes, right.

D: But that was our fire station and that was our meeting room. And that was the first time that we had a place where we kept our gear at the fire station. Otherwise we always had our gear at home.

A: Right, that was a long tradition.

D: Sure, gear at home and often times many of the fire fighters would take their own personal vehicle to the fire.

A: I think you told me too, that the Kooiker fire that was part of the traffic was fire fighters showing up from their places of work from their homes on their own.

D: Let's see, we were notified by means of the telephone. That was before pagers even. We were notified by telephone.

A: So you were notified by telephone, but the siren also went off.

D: The siren also went off.

A: Okay.

D: Of course, that notified everybody in town. [Laughs.]

A: And started the rush. So, what was your bunker gear like when you were first on the fire department and how did it change in the years you fought fire?

D: Well, of course it was the old rubberized boots, the, you know, hip boots, and the rubberized rain coats, and—

A: And those were not insulated, correct?

D: Oh no. No, they weren't. And of course the helmets that had the peaked top.

A: And they were leather helmets, too.

D: And they were leather helmets, yes. In fact, I still have mine and my father's.

A: How cool is that?! Oh my goodness! Wonderful. So did they protect you well enough? Did you not go into buildings at that point in time? How did you fight fire?

D: Well, most of the fires were fought from outside.

A: Right. Okay. I think I had heard that.

D: We did not have breathing apparatus. It was before that. And so most of the fires were fought from outside.

A: You'd want to stay outside.

D: Which now has drastically changed. But, I think that we felt that the gear we had was the best at the time. So that wasn't really an issue. And of course when somebody retired, they passed their gear on.

A: Except for their helmet.

D: Except for their helmet. So we really didn't, well, they didn't keep the helmets at that time. At the time, we got different helmets, then some of us kept some of the old ones.

A: I remember when we changed helmets several years ago that we reinstated the policy that if you had been on a certain number of years, you could keep your helmet when you retired. I think that's a good idea for many reasons, but for sentiment, certainly. So how did the bunker gear change in the time you were a fire fighter? You were a fire fighter for a long time, so what changes do you remember?

D: Changes in the gear took place 20 years after the first station was built, and the new one, at that time, was built on Albany Avenue. That's when we got new gear.

A: Okay. So that was kind of part of the deal, getting a new station was—

D: Well, you know, at that time, funds were a little more plentiful and we always had good rapport with the city, and in fact there were several council members that were also fire fighters, several employees that were on the fire department and there was a good relationship and so when there was something that we needed, the city provided the funds for it. Also we did a lot of community projects to raise money and so forth.

A: What sort of projects did you do?

D: You know, like an open house and asking people if they were willing to donate. So, it was always, PR was always an important part as it is today.

A: Right. Right. Did you tell me that you used to have chicken dinners as a fire department festivity? Could you tell me about that?

D: We had an annual fire department chicken supper and it was always held in the basement of the city hall and at that time, people were assigned different responsibilities. Some actually had to go out and purchase the chickens from the farmers, clean the chickens, sometimes we brought the chickens over to Mouw's butcher shop and they had a chicken plucker, and clean the chickens.

A: Is that a person or a machine, a chicken plucker?

D: It's a machine.

A: Okay! Just curious!

D: Yeah, it was a machine! And the the wives of the fire fighters prepared the meal. They fried the chicken and made the mashed potatoes, the gravy, and the salad. And this was an annual event. And then of course the new fire fighters had to go through a period of initiation.

[Laughs.]

A: What did that involve?

D: They probably called on us and we had to get up and sing or whatever. But anyway, it was just a fun time. It was a close knit organization and everybody really supported each other and it was just a fun time and we did that on an annual basis.

A: Was there any sort of program? Did the chief have to give a speech?

D: Oh yeah! There was uh, the chief would talk and the president of the fire department would have a few words, and so forth, but mainly it was just getting together for a meal and in those days we didn't go out to restaurants very often. We provided our own meals.

A: There's something homey about that, that is um, very community based. It's a good thing. So what other kinds of activities did you do as a fire department? Did you train together? Did you help each other build your houses?

D: No. We did some training, you know, hooking onto fire hydrants, things of that nature. And prior to Tulip Festival, we would wash down main street.

A: Oh! Before the buckets!

D: Yep, we would wash down main street and the high school football field was located just west of where the old power plant is in veterans park.

A: Oh, okay.

D: And often times, if it was a dry season, I can remember in my day in high school where the fire department would come out the night before and water down the field, try to soften it up a little bit, things of that nature.

A: I bet that felt a little better to fall on than hard ground. And what role did you take in Tulip Festival as a fire department? Did you have a truck in the parade or did you...

D: No, in those years, along Main Street, on each side of the street, they would have ropes to keep the crowd back and often times the fire fighters would help man those ropes to keep the crowd back.

A: So you were doing the special police.

D: Special police.

A: And wearing your hats.

D: Yes, oh yes, and our white shirts.

A: Yes! Very good. Do you remember any of the fire apparatus that you drove fondly or otherwise?

D: Well, going way back, you know, the firetrucks were red and then we bought a new Laverne pumper and that was white.

A: When was that approximately?

D: Well, that was during the time when the fire station was in the downtown park and we had, the trucks were white and then later on when we got, uh, no that truck came from Brookings. When we got a truck from Luverne, the pumper truck from Luverne, that was red.

A: Okay. Big change. When you built the new station on Albany did you push a truck into the station?

D: I don't recall that. No! That I don't recall.

A: We're going to push the old Chevy tanker truck in this next week. We chose it because it's the smallest. We're going to empty it first.

D: Since I retired, that's the only vehicle that's still in service. All the other ones have been replaced.

A: Still going strong. Still going strong. Yep. Yep. And what are some memorable fires that you attended. I know we've been talking about the Kooiker farm fire, but what were some other fires that were really important?

D: I can remember a fire call to assist in Hospers, Iowa, and it was probably one of the coldest nights of the winter. And we got to Hospers and we were called back-up and when we got there we realized their pumper had froze. So they hadn't even begun to fight the fire. So it was a narrow building between other buildings.

A: Was it a downtown building? Commercial?

D: Downtown. So we fought that from the front and the back, but it was really a total loss. I remember that. We also went to Alton one time and I think it was the liquor store that burnt down and that was also a cold, cold night. But you know, even back then, there was mutual aid. Departments helped each other out. So, we'd get a call from Hospers or Alton or whatever the case might be, and we would assist Sioux Center, uh, major fire downtown was when Vogel Paint Store, that was downtown, that was where Boonstra Kirby - in that area - that was, well, where Vogel store is now. That burnt down. That was right next to the Camber building. It was right next to physical therapy.

A: What's now physical therapy?

D: Yeah, what's now physical therapy. That was Camber Motor and right next to that was Vogel Paint Store and that burned down completely.

A: Was that a different fire from the warehouse fire? I think I've heard, maybe incorrectly, that where Jaycee park is now there was another Vogel paint factory fire?

D: Oh yeah, that was probably, I'm not sure the exact year, but maybe it was around '68 or something like that. I'm not sure. Maybe sooner, but that burnt down. And that's when they relocated to the industrial area. The city purchased the De Jong farm, at that time it was the De Jong farm, 120 acres for the purpose of industrial lots and also for an airport. And I think Vogel's was the first one that relocated in industrial park. And that's where they are today.

A: Yes. So when the downtown Vogel Paint Store burned, about when was that? Was that before or after the factory fire in the late sixties?

D: Well, that would have to be, let's see, in the later fifties, when that burned downtown and then they moved next to where Jaycee park is, you know. And of course then they had a major fire there and now they moved to the industrial area.

A: Any other fires you remember of import?

D: Well, where the Stadscentrum is downtown, there was an old old bank building...

A: Oh yes, I've seen pictures of that

D: And then there was a post office, and then there was a restaurant, and then there was a bar.

A: The Topsy Tulip?

D: The Black Knight.

A: The Black Knight okay.

D: And that burnt down.

A: And that was in the old building from before the turn of the century, right? That bar?

D: Oh yes.

A: So that was the end of that historic structure.

D: Yes. And of course then the Hawkeye Hotel caught fire.

A: The recent fire? Five years ago, yeah that was a big one. Did you go downtown on the event of that fire? I can't remember, I was late getting to that fire.

D: Well, I wasn't on the department

A: I know you weren't.

D: But I passed out water bottles, cold bottled water.

A: You were still on duty. I know Fred Dykstra was directing traffic for that fire. I was out of town and I saw him directing traffic by the fire station and smoke filled streets.

D: I went to the grocery store and I got some bottled water and I went out and peddled water.

A: Thank you.

D: And, of course, in those days, you know, there were a lot of farm fires.

A: Barn or field fires, or both?

D: Both. Barn, field fires, equipment combine fires, you know. And then there was a time when rural protection was free, they didn't pay for it, but then there was a change in the law and we could assess them x number of dollars per thousand dollars of assessed evaluation. And that was pretty controversial with some of the farmers. They didn't accept that very well! [Laughs.] And I think Orange City, at that time, was a part of serving parts of five different townships. And maybe that still exists today.

A: I think it might, I haven't counted. But we do serve townships.

D: Yeah, uh huh. And they would pay into our department.

A: And that was some of the money that we used to get our newest tanker tender truck. It was from the rural districts, which was hugely helpful in getting that project together. Very cool.

D: And I can remember those days if our mutual aid, if the chief of the one department requested or called the chief of a neighboring town, there was no charge for that. But if the farmer called more than one town, the farmer had to pay that particular...

A: Okay! Well, it kind of seems fair, especially if there not paying a tax to contribute to that.

D: And of course, you know, the fires that you would like to forget is when lives were lost.

A: Did you attend fires where lives were lost?

D: Yes, it did happen.

A: I'm sorry, we've had fatal car accidents since I've been on the department, but we have not had a fatal fire.

D: We had one in particular, it was in a trailer house and both of them perished. We had another one when we arrived, we got the person out but it was too late. So, those are ones you remember, but you'd like to forget.

A: But they do stay with you.

D: Yeah. That's right. So, there were good times. You know, to see how being summoned by a telephone, the old operator, you know.

A: Were you on a party lines then too?

D: Party lines.

A: Oh my!

D: Although fire fighters could have a private line. It was a long ring. In other words if the telephone rang, it was a steady long ring, so when you picked it up you knew it was a fire call and the lady would report or whoever was the telephone operator would report where the fire was.

A: So did you all have to be on the line before she would give the information or did she repeat the name?

D: No. She would just repeat. I mean she could hear 'click click,' you know, when phones would be answered.

A: Here we go again. When did you change methods of being called out for fires? Did you have pagers while you were on the department?

D: Oh yes, it was again, and I'm not sure of the year, but we got pagers and that really shortened up the response time from the time that we received the call to we got to the fire station. And there were times that they recorded that at night and within four minutes from receiving the call, the trucks were on there way.

A: That's great. That's our response time now. So we're keeping up a proud tradition.

D: The dead of night to get a call and there was always kind of interesting to see the attire that the fire fighters would come to the station in. Called out at night! It was pretty interesting! [Laughter.]

A: Do you remember anything specific?

D: I can remember one fellow had his underwear over his pajamas! [Laughter.]

A: Oh goodness!

D: We laughed and we joked about that for a long time. But you know, he's just hurried up and got dressed and you know, even to this day, when I go to bed at night, I lay out my clothes. It was just a habit I got into and I still lay my clothes out. I got my pants. I got my coat. I got my shirt. I got my shoes. Ready to go! It's just something, you don't forget those things.

A: What did Nelva think about you being a fire fighter?

D: She was supportive, very supportive of me. There were times, I am sure, that wives then or spouses today are concerned. Another thing we did as a fire department when there would be a tornado warning, we didn't have a warning system. So we would take the trucks out and each truck had a route.

A: Really?

D: And we would take that route with our sirens blaring going up and down the residential area. Pumper truck would take a route, and the tanker truck would take a route, and the little rescue unit would take a route, and that was how we notified people of the tornado warning.

A: Was there a tornado while you were on the fire department?

D: A minor one.

A: Was that the one that was just south of the courthouse?

D: Yes.

A: Did the fire department have any response to that? Did you have to rescue anyone?

D: No, but we did go out warning the people of it.

A: And apparently, you took cover in time to miss getting hit by a tornado. Good Job. Did you do weather spotting at all?

D: Oh yes.

A: Okay, so that was still a part of your duty.

D: Oh yes, spent a lot of time out. We had different locations. I'm sure they do today. We had different locations, so we'd have some over here, some over here, and some over there, just watching the weather.

A: And were you radioing in your reports?

D: Yeah, we used city vehicles.

A: We do today!

D: City vehicles, and that's how we keep in touch with one another.

A: Right Okay. Did you do rescue calls? I know that the fire department was a strictly fire department for a very long time. While you were on the department, did they start doing rescues like for automobile accidents, for farm equipment entanglements, those kinds of things?

D: For many years, the Van Etten funeral home ran the ambulance. And when Mr. Van Etten decided to retire, the fire department, for a period of time, ran the ambulance in conjunction with the hospital.

A: Okay.

D: And that's when we had to go through a series of, first we had to take a first aid course to be qualified for that.

A: First things first!

D: And then we had to take an advanced course and then when they changed the laws where you had to have further training, we felt that we no longer could justify operating the ambulance along with the fire department. And that's when the hospital then took over the ambulance.

A: Ambulance service.

D: But we would still support them and back them up.

A: Sure! We do today!

D: But we no longer were the first responder as the fire department.

A: Right. About when was that that the fire department was running ambulance calls?

D: Oh, I think that would have to be in the 70s.

A: Okay. Makes sense. Were they running it out of the Albany street fire station? The ambulance?

D: No. Out of the downtown park.

A: Okay, so the ambulance stayed at the band shell and the fire equipment moved.

D: Right. Well, no, no, no and the unit we had then as an ambulance was actually a station wagon that was converted.

A: I used to have a matchbox car that was a station wagon ambulance.

D: Station wagon. That's what we used as an ambulance.

A: Were particular fire fighters assigned to get the ambulance then, so was that one of your responsibilities?

D: I was one of them.

A: Okay, so you'd know if you got a call on the phone that you went there and not to the fire trucks.

D: Yeah. Sure. But that was a pretty short period of time because we just didn't have the person power to do both and on either...

A: Stretch.

D: You were doing one or the other and in case there were two calls coming at the same time, we just didn't have enough people.

A: What do you chose?

D: And things were changing pretty rapidly. Requirements were changing. People had to be better educated to serve as ambulance people and actually, what we did basically was transport.

A: Transport. Not medical treatment much at all.

D: It was just transport people.

A: Did you have a favorite job on the fire scene? Like, did you like to drive truck or were you a nozzle man or a ladder man or?

D: Well, you know when the fire call came in of course the first ones to the station were assigned to be drivers. But, there was a lot of cross training at the time.

A: Right! There should be!

D: There was cross training. I mean you were pump operators. You were nozzle people. We had training how to set up ladders and different things. So, there was a lot of cross training. So, even though you might have been designated for one particular thing.

A: You should know how to do everything

D: Because in those days, all 20 people didn't necessarily report to every fire.

A: No, no.

D: It might just be a handful of people to start with and then later on some would come. So cross training was very important in those days, like it is today.

A: Did you have your druthers though? Would you rather drive? Take the hose line? Or?

D: I think I probably prefer the hose line.

A: Very good. Were you ever an officer in the fire department?

D: Yeah, there was a period of time I served as captain.

A: Kay. Very good.

D: But not, you know, each year we would have change personnel and so it would change from time to time. But, we had chief and assistant chief and maybe a couple of captains at that time.

A: Was your father a fire officer ever?

D: He served as chief for a period of time.

A: Oh really! When was that, do you have any idea?

D: I forget the years, but I know there was time when he was chief.

A: He was not the white helmet, he was the white jacket at that point of time.

D: The white jacket, yeah.

A: The white jacket!

D: See, in those days, Ann, fire fighters would hang on the back of the fire truck.

A: I know.

D: Oh sure. That's the way, you'd have two up front. The driver and shotgun and you'd have three fellows hanging on the back. And that was very common.

A: Yes!

D: And I don't think we ever lost anybody, anybody ever fell off! [Chuckles.]

A: No, but it is risky business. Some of my childhood books have pictures of fire fighters hanging on the back of the fire trucks so I know that was common practice. Do you remember anything of your father's firefighting experience, stories he told you or when you were a child, remember anything about his being a firefighter?

D: Oh yeah, I remember, you know...

A: And what was your father's name?

D: Edward.

A: Edward. Okay. Edward Schreur.

D: He was on the department 35 years. So as young people at home, we knew when there was a fire, because the call would come in on our telephone, and fire at so and so, dad would leave. I can remember sometimes he would take me along to meetings. They would have meetings

and I got to go along with dad to meetings. It was family, you know. That was just the way the operated in those days.

A: Sure. Well, we have a lot of family traditions too. We have the De Cook family. There are a lot of De Cooks, a lot of Dykstras who stay on the fire department. It's kind of nice with the student fire fighter program, we get children of fire fighters who then stick, which is quite nice.

D: Firemen used to police at Halloween.

A: Really?

D: Halloween night.

A: Really? Okay!

D: Fire fighters would be out there assisting the police department.

A: Very good! Did you have any troublemakers?

D: Pranksters! [Laughs.]

A: Yes! Yes!

D: Pranksters, I guess!

A: Okay! Did you stop any pranks do you remember?

D: Oh, I don't know, we were just there observing and preventing.

A: Preventing pranks. Prevention.

D: I think the young people pretty much knew that the fire men were going to be out and...[laughs.]

A: Did you have nicknames on the fire department? Did anyone have a nickname? Did you have a nickname?

D: No. The only one I can think of was Prez, Bob Nieuwendorp, Robert Neiuwendorp, and it was Prez.

A: Prez?

D: Prez Neiuwendorp.

A: Because he was president?

D: No, I don't know, that was his nickname, Prez.

A: That was nice nickname. Hmm.mmm.

D: Prez Neiuwendorp, that was his nickname. Yeah. But otherwise, you know, Robert Dunlap was Bob, Calvin Groen was Cal, Edward Schreur was Ed. And, ah, Stanley Duven was Stan.

A: Just standard issue nicknames.

D: Right.

A: That went with their names.

D: Sure.

A: Not characteristics of themselves so. Yeah, we occasionally have a firefighter who gets a special nickname like ferret or something like that so I was just wondering if you had any of those too.

D: No., I don't think so. [Laughter.]

A: Did you join the fire department because it was a family tradition or were there other reasons that you joined?

D: Well, I think as a young person I was excited that my dad was on the fire department and that was something, hopefully, I could be someday. So, I went into service in '55 and I spent two years in military service and when I got out in two years that's when I applied to be a fire fighter. And got on.

A: Were you married at that time?

D: Yes

A: Did you have children?

D: Yes

A: Did you bring your children to fire department meetings?

D: No, but every summer with the picnic, the children got to ride on the fire truck. I think they still do that don't they?

A: Yes we do. We have a picnic!

D: That was a highlight. Kids in town were jealous because they couldn't ride on the fire truck.

A: Very cool. Did you ever feel you were in danger on a fire call? I know you had hard calls. Did you ever feel personally that your safety was in danger?

D: Well, I think there were times, for example, the Vogel fire, you could hear the drums explode.

A: Ah, the one at Jaycee park or the one downtown?

D: Jaycee park. And so there was always that concern. I think there were times when attempting to go into a building and we did at times go in, we made sure that we knew the person ahead of us and the person behind us, you know, hang on to the hose, you know, always some safety concerns.

A: Sure. Yes.

D: Sometimes you probably push the limit a little bit as to what to do or shouldn't do you know but it was all in the interest of saving lives and property from the destruction of fire. And everybody took it seriously and house fires, we were always concerned about house fires. We get to a rural fire and as we approached and we saw it was a barn, we were relieved it wasn't the house. Anytime there was a house the first thing "is everybody out, is everybody out? Contact the owner. Is everybody out?" And that was always a concern.

A: Did the fire department participate in any statewide activities? Like water fights, or conventions, or training?

D: No. We did go to state fire schools.

A: Oh good! Good.

D: I think that probably started when Lee Kraai and I got on. We were encouraged to be a part of that so we went to Ames in the summertime, state fire school, go to Ames, did that.

A: Yes! Been there!

D: So that was something that happened while I was on and I think then ever since, people were encouraged to go. A lot of people couldn't go because of their jobs wouldn't give them time off.

A: Of course. Right! Did the city support you financially for doing that? Did they pay for your gas at that point in time?

D: No.

A: I heard that was only recent that the ...

D: No. We took care of that ourselves. Sometimes, people would arrive at a fire, and maybe they didn't have their boots or they would ruin a pair of shoes or something like that. That was part of being a volunteer fire fighter.

A: While you were on the fire department, did they institute the practice of giving you a token amount of money per call? Because I know since I've been on, we had between \$5 and \$8 per call to cover the expense of ruined clothing et cetera. Did that start when you were on?

D: We got paid, I think it was \$2 for a call that you responded too.

A: Was that from the beginning of your service?

D: No. That was after I was on for a while and I don't recall when that was initiated. And then later on they also included meetings attended.

A: Yes, we get a token for meeting attendance as well.

D: But, first it were just for calls responded to. Later on they also added meetings. But, you know, I think in those years if you got \$20... [Chuckles.]

A: You were pretty happy!

D: ... that was payment. Nobody really expected to be paid. We didn't expect somebody to buy our clothes if we ruined them. That was a chance that you take. We provide a coat, we provide a helmet, we provide boots, and if you don't wear them, that's your problem.

A: That's your problem! Yeah! Goodness! Before we wrap up, I was wondering if you have a favorite or fondest memory at the fire department?

D: I don't know if I could relate to any one instance other than it was a close knit group. It was a family affair. A family of fire fighters and we got along. We were willing to help each other out, back each other up, support each other in the best way we could. It was an honor to be on the fire department.

A: Yes! You told me about the blackball vote.

D: Oh yes!

A: And that was too blackballs and you could not join.

D: Early on if there were two no votes, you were not, you couldn't be on. And later on, of course, that was changed but, as I say, it was an honor to be on the department and you better remember that, you know. And people stayed on for along time.

A: Obviously! Yes! Real dedication.

D: There used to be a plaque at the fire station that had names and years.

A: I've seen the plaques with names, but I've not seen a plaque with years. And I've always regretted that the plaques that we had up did not have years of service on them. I think we're going to change that now.

D: It was a plaque about that wide.

A: Yep.

D: Like that and it had gold strips on them.

A: Yes. Yes.

D: And it would be like Edward Schreur, 35 years. Or, no, maybe it was a plaque of names that had 20 years or more.

A: Oh okay! I will look for that!

D: I think that was it. I don't think it identified the number of years for each one, but I think it was maybe like 20 years or more or something like that.

A: Service! You got your name up in lights.

D: Yeah. I hope all of that stuff was saved.

A: I think it was, it's just that I will be looking for it. So I know we packed it, okay, because I've taken care of that stuff so I think it's really important. So I'll be looking for it as it comes out of the old hospital and into the fire station. I'm hoping to do a little bit more work with organizing the historic materials.

D: If you find that Ann, you might find that my memory has failed me. So some of the dates, and so, I've given you, probably were wrong, but...

A: The important thing is you are giving me ballpark figures.

D: I know the names are right. That I know!

A: That helps me do further research to say, well, somewhere in the 70s this happened and then I can go look that up. But, I know to look for something.

D: Sure.

A: Otherwise, how do I know to look for it? Right.

D: I think on this picture, there is only two still living.

A: Hmm...mmm. Zeutenhorst was one of them?

D: Frank Vogel and this one here is John Zeutenhorst.

A: Very good! Well, perhaps, at some point, you could convince them to talk to me too.

D: I am sure they will.

A: That would really be very cool. Would you mind giving me, for the sake of the recording, your full name and your date of birth?

D: Don Schreur, April 5 of 1933.

A: 1933. And we're doing this recording in Orange City, Iowa on Oct. 6, 2017, from 2:40 in the afternoon to 3:40 in the afternoon. Thank you very much Mr. Schreur for your service and for sitting down to talk to me.

D: You are welcome. Thank you for being a part of the fire department.

A: It's a pleasure.

D: I hear good things about you, Ann.