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## Fred Dykstra

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**Fred Dykstra: Oral History, #1**  
**Interviewed by Ann Lundberg**  
**January 10, 2020**  
**35:01**

AL: Is January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I am Ann Lundberg and I am interviewing Fred Dykstra who was a longtime member and chief of the Orange City Fire Department. So Fred, can you tell me where were you born and when were you born?

FD: I was born in Orange City on January 18 of 1939.

AL: Oh, happy birthday coming up. Oh my goodness. And you are getting birthday cards already. Great! Great! So, when did you join the Orange City Fire Department and why did you join the fire department?

FD: Well, I joined in, I think it is 1964 and because of the history of my father and my grandfather I always have had an interest in the fire department.

AL: Were they members of the fire department?

FD: My father was for quite a few years and going back to my grandfather, he was kind of a caretaker of the old ladder wagon and the hose cart and lived in the City Hall, the old wood city hall in Orange City where they stored those units and I think you have pictures of...

AL: I do...

FD: of those.

AL I do. I do. Oh my goodness! So he lived in City Hall?

FD: They either, in the old wooden City Hall, or into a building attached to it, where they, the old wooden water tower was there.

AL: Yes, uh, huh.

FD: And that, um, he was kind of a caretaker during the day of the water works and so on, and was the night marshal at night, night police at night.

AL. Huh uh. And what was his name again?

FD: Albert Mouw.

AL: Albert Mouw. Okay. And do you know the years of his life?

FD: I really...

AL: Born in?

FD: I really have no idea off hand. No, I do not.

AL: Okay. So, wow...did you know him when you were...?

FD: I never knew any of them...

AL: You never knew any of your grandparents, right? He died in the influenza...

FD: Yes, he did

AL: ...epidemic.

FD: His wife died, about two weeks apart.

AL: Oh dear...

FD: My father was six years old when they died, so...

AL: Oh my goodness.

FD: Yeah. And then he was adopted by the Dykstras, an old Dutch couple, and lived on a farm.

AL: Very good, very good.

FD: Yeah...

AL: So was your dad a member of the fire department?

FD: Yes, my dad was in the fire department in the late 30s and the 40s. My dad was in the department for, I don't know how many years, I really haven't studied that...

AL: Researched ...

FD: or researched it...

AL: Yeah. Did he tell you any stories about that you can recall?

FD: My first thoughts about that were remembering that black, leather fire hat and black raincoat hanging in the back entryway, so when I was very small I knew he was a fireman because that's where they kept their gear, at their home at that time.

AL: Right!

FD: And, if he went, out on a call then, as I got a little older, I would have to go find out where they went, and go look.

AL: So you followed him?

FD: No...my mother would okay it if I went with one of my uncles or with...

AL: Okay.

FD: So I could go see what they were doing, but I would have to stay in. My mother's orders were to stay at least a block away.

AL: Okay. Do you remember going to any fires when you were young? Do you remember going to any of these fires with your uncles?

FD: Oh yes! I don't think I missed any of them.

AL: Okay...so...

FD: Yes.

AL: Your uncles lived nearby so you could just...

FD: Yes.

AL: ...go grab one.

FD: Yes, they were within a half a block were I was.

AL: How convenient!

FD: Yeah..very! And my one, my mother's mother, my grandmother that lived right there.

AL: Oh my goodness.

FD: Yeah.

AL: Wow. So do you remember any of those fires?

FD: Oh, probably I think one of the first ones that I remember there was a large hatchery, just east of the cemetery.

AL: Okay.

FD: And it was at night, and I remember my dad leaving, and looking out of the window of our bedroom window and just orange over there and that big wooden building was burning.

AL: Ah...

FD: And I had to stay home with mom until the sun came up and then we could go look.

AL: Oh, and what did you see when you went to look?

FD: Not much!

AL: I would think not!

FD: It was gone. There is a place in Orange City, Silent Sioux Manufacturing,

AL: Hmm, um.

FD: And it is in the area of where the college is now.

AL: Okay.

FD: And that was a Sunday fire and I was able to go watch that for all day Sunday.

AL: Oh wow.

FD: And some of those were very interesting for me.

AL: Yeah. Yeah. So your father would have been paged by a siren? Is that correct? Or was this in the party line call era?

FD: Well, they had, uh, first it was just the siren.

AL: Hmm.

FD: And then they, uh, had a solid ringing phone, and then you picked it up and they told you where the fire was. At one time it came from, the answering came from the power plant and then later on the hospital.

AL: Okay.

FD: With the dispatch.

AL: Dispatch, yeah.

FD: That's it. But the power plant, the old power plant, under the water tower, was probably one of the few places that was open all night.

AL: Hmm.

FD: You know.

AL: Somebody there, tending it. Yeah. Yeah.

FD: And that's where my dad worked, at the power plant.

AL: Oh, okay!

FD: And, so...and under the water tower is where the fire truck was.

AL: Hm.Hm.

FD: And so naturally when I went along with dad, I had to make a visit to the old white building where the fire truck was.

AL: Okay. And which fire truck was that?

FD: The old, uh, REO.

AL: Oh, okay.

FD: Yeah. The '27 REO.

AL: So you knew that from more than just pictures? I know we have talked a lot about that...

FD: Yeah.

AL...before...

FD: My dad being a very handy person...

AL: Hmm.

FD: ...would work on the old ...

AL: Okay.

FD: ...firetruck if something was wrong with it, and I wouldn't miss that. I would get to go along with and sit in the big truck and so on...

AL: You sat in the driver's seat?

FD: Oh definitely!

AL: Okay! [Chuckles.]

FD: You bet! Yeah! So my interest goes back to when I was very small.

AL: Yeah. I guess. I guess.

FD: Yep.

AL: So, what can you tell me about that REO, since we're on the topic? It is one of the things I wanted to ask you about, so...?

FD: Well, it was an old open cab.

AL: Hmm...

FD: Um, very plain and simple. It had a pump and a place for hose on it. And that's...but at my age that was an awful big truck.

AL: Ah. Yes.

FD: In today's age it would be just about a toy, but it was...

AL: Dinky, yeah. 1920..what year?

FD: 7

AL: 1927, okay.

FD: '27 REO. Yeah.

AL: Hmm.

FD: Yeah, I think the department has records of where it was made, and I gave it to 'em anyway.

AL: Yeah...I think they are probably there somewhere. I will go digging.

FD: M kay.

AL: I will go digging. Yeah...so...when did you join the fire department?

FD: 1964.

AL: 1964, okay. And, what, you joined because of your family history and what was your first fire, do you remember?

FD: First big fire the first year I was on was the Vogel Paint Factory.

AL: Oh dear.

FD: Yes.

AL: Tell me about that fire. Tell me about that one. What do you remember about it?

FD: Well, being new on the department, it was uh, working for the city, first I was, had to be there to shut off power and so on.

AL: Hmm hmm.

FD: And then switch from doing that to be one of the fire fighters and being new was kind of amazing, did what you were told...and then..

AL: Hmm hmm..

FD: Some of those decisions were great or not. The hotter it got the more I wondered why I joined the department.

AL: Okay! So were you on a hose line then, or what were you doing?

FD: A little bit of everything.

AL: Okay.

FD: We did a lot of switching around and ended up hauling water up from Alton and so on because we ran out of water in like two hours!

AL: Okay.

FD: And they had uh, an old water truck, and they got people from like Russell's Ready Mix and so on to haul water into Orange City to ...

AL: Okay.

FD: ...because we were out of water pretty much, and my Dad was still working for the city at that time and he was in charge of the water department and he was a little nervous about things, but,

AL: Yeah. Well, you would be. So, did you have a drop tank operation then, or were you just pumping from the tank...

FD: We got water in the reservoir so we could pump it into the municipal system.

AL: Oh!

FD: Yes.

AL: Oh! Wow!

FD: Some of it, some of it we did haul directly to the fire...

AL: Okay.

FD: ...but very few, mostly they were trying to build up the reservoir and so on to get some water in there.

AL: Okay.

FD: Yes.

AL: The reservoir, do you mean the water tower, or standing body.

FD: No, no. Underground reservoir near the old water tower.

AL: Okay.

FD: It's no longer in existence.

AL: Okay.

FD: It was right near the alley, you could dump water right in there, in the reservoir there.

AL: Okay.

FD: But they had to have a lot of water haulers and haul from Alton and some other places, I don't know where all came from, but I know we were hauling water at that time the truck was a 1,000 gallons of water and it didn't go very fast.

AL: Yeah. Goodness. So, when you came up on the scene, um, you were driving your personal vehicle, or were you driving the engine? Were you on the engine?

FD: No, it was at noon-hour when the call came in.

AL: Okay.

FD: And, as I left, home, I went to the shop first knowing that, where the fire was, that was one of our responsibilities in the light department was to check on power and so on, so went out there first for that and then just ended up staying there. All day and all night. It was probably a good fire in progress for probably six to eight hours so...

AL: Oh my goodness! I have heard about, um, tanks exploding. Do you have any other memorable details?

FD: There were like fifty-five gallon drums would be exploding in the storage area attached to this building.

AL: Yeah.

FD: And some of them inside would be exploding once in a while.

AL: Hmm mmm.

FD: With the amount of water at that time, which we thought was a big amount of water, not today...

AL: No...

FD: ...but there was kind of a creek running back there and that creek was on fire because of the stuff, uh running out of the factory.

AL: Really?

FD: Yeah. But it was all in a pasture and going east of town, so...

AL: Yeah. Going to the Floyd.

FD: Quite an experience.

AL: I guess! Yeah!

FD: Yeah. [Buzzing noise.]

AL: Yeah! So did you make any attempts to like extinguish the fire in the creek or in the fields?

FD: No...the only thing...

AL: Pouring water on the building...

FD: We tried to keep the storage tanks cool.

AL: Hmm mmm.

FD: And between two sections, the new section and an old section of the building, there was a sealed fire door between there...

AL: Hmm hm...[Clock chimes.]

FD: And we kept that door cold, cool, all the time.

AL: Yeah.

FD: And, ah, the part of the building that we were in, the fire never got into that, but the rest of the factory and the storage area and two of the big tanks, one of them blew the top off and the other one opened up and [unclear 13:06] and was burning just about all night from the heat, so.

AL: Yikes. Was anyone injured on that call?

FD: No. No.

AL: That's good. That's very good result. Very good result. Yeah...did any community members turn out to support you in any way at that time?

FD: Oh, we had people bringing us cold drinks and people bringing us sandwiches and we had a lot of people out there. We were the hit of the town for a while. [Chuckles.]

AL: Yeah, I bet! Town heroes!

FD: Everybody was real supportive and getting some of the Vogel products out of the one part of the building, there was a lot of people there that was loading stuff on trailers and trucks and got it out of there.

AL: Yeah.

FD: But we were able to save that part of the building so...

AL: Yeah, but better safe than sorry.

FD: Yeah.

AL: So, who was the chief at that time?

FD: George Huizenga.

AL: George Huizenga.

FD: Yeah.

AL: What do you remember about him as a chief?

FD: He was very serious about his job. Ah, that was at the time when we actually didn't have any specified training and you just learned from somebody else. And, uh, George was always patient with you and was helpful and tried to help you learn things and so on. And there were a couple of other guys on the department that were very helpful. George was a very good, I think, very good chief.

AL; Do you remember any interactions with him? Where there any moments that come to mind?

FD: Well, he worked at Cambiers, ah, Punt,

AL: Hmm, mmm.

FD: Which was like a ½ block from the fire station at that time. And George was running to the fire station on a call one time and George broke his leg right outside the door. He fell and broke his leg right there.

AL: Oh my goodness! Okay! Oops!

FD: George was a very conscientious person and he really, he worried about things and worried about us. Very good guy.

AL: So when you were on the fire department you were first in the bandshell fire station?

FD: Yes.

AL: Correct?

FD: Hmm mm.

AL: And it was built before you were on the fire department?

FD: Yeah. It was built in '51.

AL: Right. So what do you remember about the old station?

FD: That one?

AL: Yep.

FD: It was small.

AL: Very small! [Laughter.]

FD: But when it was built, it was a much improvement over the single stall station.

AL: Yeah. Yeah.

FD: It had windows in the doors and people would be looking in there. We had, I think, two trucks in there and then later on we added a water truck when we started going to rural fires.

AL: Uh, okay.

FD: The old REO was in there, the '46 Ford truck was in there...

AL: Is that the one we still have?

FD: No.

AL: Okay, that is the tanker tenders.

FD: That one was retired, in fact it was retired when I got on the department.

AL: Okay.

FD: Later on they got a Dodge Fire truck that was built in Brookings, South Dakota.

AL: Okay.

FD: And I think that was like '55. Then there were three trucks in the station for a while.

AL: What happened to the old REO?

FD: The old REO was used to pump some sewers out at one time, and they ruined the pump on it. Got sand in it. Somewhere from a small town in South Dakota they bought another one that looked just like

it but it was a Cosmopolitan they called it. It had an open cab. And that one stayed in Orange City until it got replaced and both of them ended up in the junk yard in Orange City.

AL: Okay. So, scrapped.

FD: Scrapped. You bet.

AL: Alas! Yeah. Huh. So, did you buy any new engines while you were on the fire department?

FD: When I got on we got our first truck from Luverne, or not our first our second truck from Luverne.

AL: Okay.

FD: I think 1964 Chevy truck built in Luverne.

AL: Hmm.

FD: That was the first new one and then after that we started getting newer ones.

AL: A little more regularly?

FD: We were shooting at about twenty-year intervals. Something like that.

AL: So by then, you were developing a replacement plan...

FD: Yeah..pretty much.

AL: for the trucks?

FD: Pretty much.Yeah.

AL: Did you help to purchase that new truck when you were first on...

FD: Naw...

AL: or did you just enjoy it?

FD: I just got on and it probably was delivered shortly after I got on and it was a big deal. It was quite a truck. Not by today's standards, but then, yeah.

AL: Well, what made it quite a truck?

FD: Well, it was, it had compartments on to store things in which the old trucks didn't have.

AL: Ahhh...you kind of just hung it off the side.

FD: It had a feature on it, an extra pump on it for rural fires.

AL: Okay.

FD: So you could move along and pump water and...

AL: Pump and roll.

FD: Yeah. And it had a bigger pump on it then we had had before...

AL: Okay.

FD: And so that was, Orange City was starting to grow a little bit and start getting something bigger.

AL: How much water did it carry?

FD: Very little.

AL: Okay.

FD: Probably 200 gallons or something like that. But, yeah, I would say about 200 gallons.

AL: And did you buy any other trucks? Memorable trucks when you were in the company?

FD: Well, I think our next truck, I need to think now, was in '71, built by General, North Branch in Minnesota and that was our first 1,000 gallon a minute pumper and the council was a bit hesitant on spending money on something they said, "you don't need anything that big."

AL: Hmm, mmm.

FD: But by that time we were starting to grow, and we were starting to pay attention, let's say, to the insurance agencies and what they recommended and they did get it purchased and built in North Branch and after that the next one was in '77 and we kept...

AL: Just kept on going.

FD: Yep.

AL: And when did you become chief?

FD: '71, I think it was.

AL: Okay.

FD: Yeah.

AL: And how did you become chief?

FD: [Chuckles.] I really don't know!

AL: Okay, fair enough!

FD: In a meeting, you still have your elections?

AL: We do.

FD: I had been assistant chief for about three years I think.

AL: Okay.

FD: And at the December meeting I was voted in as chief.

AL: Did you know that was coming? Had there been scuttle?

FD: A little bit, a little bit. I was still surprised because I was probably one of the younger guys on the department.

AL: Okay. Okay.

FD: But, ah, at the time that I was elected chief, I was the assistant chief under Orville Beltman. He really didn't want to remain as chief, so I was elected chief then.

AL: Hmmm, mmm. Okay.

FD: Started something that was very interesting to me.

AL: I guess!

FD: You bet!

AL: Did you have one or two assistant chiefs under you?

FD: For a long time, I would say for the majority of time, just one.

AL: Okay. And who served as your assistant chiefs?

FD: This may surprise you, but George Huizenga was my assistant chief for a while.

AL: Really! Really!

FD: Yeah, and ah, Stan Van Otterloo was, and I am trying to think, I think Bob Schock was for a while. Now you are really scratching my memory!

AL: Well, that's my job...

FD: [Chuckles.]

AL: That's my job!

FD: What we started to do is add a couple of captains, and then I think we ended up with having four captains after that.

AL: Kay.

FD:...after that. Um, as long as I was chief, I don't think we ever had a second assistant chief. I think it was just the one.

AL: Hmm. And so when you became chief what was your vision for the fire department?

FD: Well, my first thing was training. We wanted to start training. For that part, it was not too popular.

AL: Hmm, mmm.

FD: In fact, we lost a few of the older ones at that time. They said they would not do that.

AL: What was their reasoning? Do you have any sense of that?

FD: Well, I think the transition, from the fire department being, if you are a friend, or the good old boys, they would show you how to do something, and if they decided they didn't want to do things...

AL: Really?

FD: A little different way of doing things.

AL: Sure, huh uh.

FD: I started becoming interested in knowing some of the other firefighters and having gone to fire school in Ames got to know some of the people down there and they, I thought their programs were...and it was first started through the extension services.

AL: Okay.

FD: And then later on became through the community colleges and so on. Ah, under different heads at different times. Shuffled around from fire marshal's office to different, whoever seemed to think they could do a better job, some of that got into politics, which we don't want to talk about.

AL: Of course, of course.

FD: Got to know some of those people and one of my very good friends was the training officer at Sioux City Fire Department.

AL: Okay, who was that?

FD: I knew you were going to ask me that! [Chuckles.]

AL: Sorry!

FD: I will think about it.

AL: It will come to you.

FD: It is such a long time ago.

AL: Right. Right. Did you go to training before you were chief or that's just something you started?

FD: It started a little bit, started to get interested, me knowing the training officer in Sioux City. He, ah, had his own programs and some of that could be used in a smaller department.

AL: Hmm, mmm.

FD: He kind of lit my fire about being an instructor and all that. And we got the originators from the training service in Ames, got them to come up here and put on some programs occasionally.

AL: Really?

FD: Sometimes it was for all the departments in the county.

AL: Great.

FD: Some of the departments were very cooperative, some of the Orange City guys were very cooperative, and other ones were decided they didn't want any part of it, and so...

AL: Huh. So what were some of the training programs that you did? What were some of the skills you learned?

FD: Well, I think the basic startup of the training program was how to use the equipment that you had.

AL: Ah, good idea! Fancy that.

FD: Start very basic. And, uh, kind of build up from there. Methods. Observing different color smoke. We started some house burns to get some hands-on experience.

AL: Yeah, without all the stress of having somebody's house burn down!

FD: It wasn't getting into the theory of the fire or anything like that. It was just basically learning how to use your equipment to the best of your abilities and learning about it and maybe how to use it better than you thought you could.

AL: Right. Yeah. So, um, in the 1970s what were you doing when you came up on a house fire? You were not entering the building, I am assuming, for the most part if it was really engaged?

FD: If you go back to when I got on, I think we had maybe two breathing apparatus in suitcases somewhere on the truck.

AL: Okay!

FD: [Chuckles]

AL: Okay! So in the '60s you had breathing apparatus.

FD: Ah, the first ones ...

AL: A few.

FD: ...they had were the Second World War carbonite box mask you had on front of you, it was a mask...

AL: Really? Okay!

FD: We had a couple of those and then, ah, we got self-contained breathing things.

AL: So in the late '60s.

FD: I would say so.

AL: Kay.

FD: Yeah, I would say the late '60s because we had them in suitcases on the truck and very seldom did they get looked at or anything like that. We just didn't use that kind of stuff. We weren't trained to use it and we didn't, you know,

AL: Think of it.

FD: Well, we didn't think it was necessary. We thought we had to get in there and get it done.

AL: M, kay. Not spend the time putting that thing on!

FD: No, no, no.

AL: Yeah. So you actually entered the house to put out fires...

FD: Oh definitely.

AL: ...wasn't it engaged.

FD: You betcha.

AL: Did you feel sick afterwards at all? I mean I have heard stories about this...

FD: Well,

AL: That was part of the deal.

FD: I think just about everybody on the department smoked.

AL: Okay! Right!

FD: And would just come out of a house and be coughing and the first thing you did was light a cigarette, you know. [Chuckles.]

AL: [Laughs.] Oh funny!

FD: Ah, we, hey, that was the way things were done at that time and that's...

AL: And you did it. What kind of equipment were you using, personal protective equipment? You have talked about your dad's leather helmet and jacket.

FD: The old, old stuff, when I first started, uh, they still had the, uh, composite helmets. The old style. They weren't, [guffaw] they weren't paper but they almost looked like they were pressed paper. They were getting rid of the old leather black fire helmets, but they still had the black raincoats and hip boots.

AL: No boots. Did you say boots or not boots?

FD: Hip boots.

AL: Hip boots, okay.

FD: A few of us had them because the department couldn't afford everybody to have them.

AL: Okay, so the department bought a few?

FD: Yeah. And some of us bought our own stuff...

AL: Okay.

FD: ...as far as hip boots and so on. Um, I think that at that time, when I got on, we had like about 16 or 18 on the department.

AL: Okay.

FD: And we kept our equipment at home at that time until we built the new station.

AL: Band Shell Station?

FD: '71.

AL: Oh, oh! Until the '71 '72 station.

FD: That also was the time when some of the guys didn't agree with bringing their equipment to the station.

AL: Right.

FD: Because they said it was much handier to have it at home or the trunk of their car. Like when your wife is in Sioux City with the car...

AL: Hmm...that's handy.

FD: Anyway, we lost a couple of guys then.

AL: Right.

FD: Who decided they weren't going to play by those rules.

AL: Hmm. Mmmm.

FD: One of my more unpopular decisions, but then..

AL: Well.

FD: Yeah.

AL: You were the chief!

FD: So where were we? The equipment we had?

AL: Yeah! We were equipment and...

FD: Oh yeah. Then we got our first, they were kind of like a silver color reflective coats.

AL: Oh, okay!

FD: Instead of heat absorbing black rubber raincoats.

AL: Yeah. Okay. Good idea.

FD: We got some of that stuff, and it was quite a later before we went to bunker gear and so on.

AL: Yeah. Let me think, what's the next question? My next question is, um, so, it was the late '60s, early '70s, did you watch *Emergency*, the television show?

FD: I don't think so.

AL: You don't think so? That's one of the things I'm serious about, yeah.

FD: No, I don't remember it. No.

AL: Alas, that was one of my childhood memories was watching *Emergency*.

FD: Nope.

AL: Yah. Um, let's see here. Other fires that you remember or major incidents? I think in this photobook I have here a picture of you at a train derailment? Let's see if I can find it. I think that was down near Carnes.

FD: Oh yes, south of Carnes.

AL: Can you tell me anything about that incidence while I am looking for the pictures in this antique book?

FD: There wasn't no, no dangerous chemicals or anything, it was mostly grain spills. Nobody was hurt.

AL: That's good.

FD: It was a mutual call with Le Mars and Alton were there.

AL: So I am seeing this fella in the funny looking space helmet.

FD: Oh yeah. That was one of the stages we went through we with a new style, almost looked like a motorcycle helmet and then the space age.

AL: You kind of look like a Storm Trooper, like from *Star Wars*.

FD: They were something that we tried for a while.

AL: Hmm, mmm.

FD: Before we went to different ones again.

AL: Do you recognize this man?

FD: Let's see...

AL: Or this guy?

FD: That could be Mert Vander Burg.

AL: Let's see if we have another page. I'm pretty sure one of these is a picture of you, if I'm remembering correctly. That's you?

FD: Yes, because I'm the only guy that still had the leather helmet.

AL: So you in the leather helmet next to the upside down car, the Northwestern car.

FD: [Chuckles.]

AL: All right. And when was this?

FD: That's a good question. I can't answer that.

AL: I'm not sure when that was either. Is this you?

FD: No, that is my assistant chief George.

AL: Assistant chief George.

FD: Huizenga.

AL: And where are you there?

FD: Woudstra's Meat Market.

AL: Oh okay!

FD: They had their smoker...

AL: Oh dear. Okay.

FD: ....and it had gotten too hot and part of their roof was burning.

AL: So these two pictures at the top of the page are from that fire? Do you remember this fire at all, with the skeleton of a metal building with barrels out in front?

FD: No.

AL: Okay.

FD: Some rural fire we went to.

AL: Okay. Kay.

FD: Hmmmm.

AL: So, this train crash despite the fact that it looked so dramatic wasn't such a big deal?

FD: No. There were small fires, but it wasn't a big, major thing.

AL: Well, that's probably a good thing.

FD: Mostly grain cars.

AL: You can see mostly spillage in the pictures. Well, I think since that it is 5 minutes to 2:00, we will take a break for your clock. And we will resume after 2 o'clock!

FD: That's fine.

AL: Okay.

**Fred Dykstra: Interview #2**  
**Running time 43:15, but continues to record until 1:08:28**  
**January 10, 2020**  
**Orange City, Iowa**  
**Ann Lundberg**  
**Orange City Fire Department Oral History Interview**

AL: This is Ann Lundberg. It is January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and I am still interviewing Fred Dykstra after a brief intermission. So, Fred, why don't you tell me something about the, ah, changes you saw in the fire services over your history? What are some of the biggest changes?

FD: Oh, I think the protective equipment...

AL: Okay.

FD: ... was one of the big things. And we had gone from wooden, fabric fires to plastic...

AL: Yes!

FD: ...which is ...

AL: Nasty bad!

FD: ...breathing in of it the safety again of the firefighters is one of the big, big changes. Ah, equipment has improved. Easier to operate, easier to drive.

AL: Hmm...hmm.

FD: Um, I think learning more about the basics of fire, the fire triangle, and stuff like that is probably being brought out more, and, and that the fear of fire, I think, the more you learn about it the less you fear of and you can do more.

AL: Hmm...hmm.

FD: Those are, yeah, basic things I guess.

AL: Good. Why don't you tell me about the jaws of life?

FD: Oh boy! We had looked at the possibility of buying that. And there was a person in Orange City who if I remember right worked at K-products, I'm not sure...

AL: It's okay.

FD: Anyway, he and his wife were traveling, they were near Kansas City, involved in an accident, and he was killed.

AL: Hmm...

FD: But, the family wanted to do something what they saw with the jaws of life around Kansas City. So, they donated our first jaws basic tools to Orange City, ah, in their name of course.

AL: Hmm...hmm.

FD: But, ah, were very quiet about it but that was what, after seeing what capabilities were and how it got her out of the car and what they were able to do. And our first basic jaws were clumsy, big...

AL: Heavy. They are still heavy.

FD: Man! And I would say probably not real reliable.

AL: Okay.

FD: Getting the bar unit started and so on sometimes was next to impossible and um, I think weather conditions had a lot to do with it and so on. But, ah, I think probably one of the big things also was because it stood still half the time and wasn't used.

AL: Right.

FD: And then we started spending more time like on Saturday's exercising the different machines and so on. But, the jaws were donated, the whole first units, were donated to Orange City.

AL: That's wonderful. Do you remember many calls on which you used the jaws of life?

FD: No. [Unclear.] We did a lot of training with it at first to try and understand what, because this was all new.

AL: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

FD: Yeah. And then we from experience of other companies and so on how to make some of your own like blocks of wood for, for...

AL: Crimping.

FD: Yeah, all that, and, ah, again, training with it, and different style of cars, and things not to do. [Chuckles.]

AL: Uh huh.

FD: At that time there were, I think the front bumpers on a lot a cars had these shock, shock absorber things in them.

AL: Oh dear, yes.

FD: And those were things not to be punctured, er, and some other things in cars at that time were not to be punctured, and to treat with respect, I would say.

AL: Uh, huh.

FD: But, it was quite a plus for Orange City because we were one of the first around here to you know have anything like that. We went on a few calls that were quite a ways away because we had jaws and so on. Get called once in awhile.

AL: Oh, so like to Sioux Center, or further away?

FD: In the area, in the area, but basically in Sioux County. Yeah.

AL: Okay. What were your relations with other fire departments in the area? Did you, did you often do mutual aid? Did you get along? Did you compete with each other?

FD: We were, I think we pretty close, had the Sioux County Fireman's Association was a pretty close knit outfit, expect for a couple towns in Sioux County.

AL: Right.

FD: And, we were worked on, going back to that, we worked on the first taxation for rural areas.

AL: Oh, okay!

FD: Ah, it was basically through, at that time, when they had their first civil defense director in Sioux County and we coordinated that. We worked on the first communication center.

AL: Really?

FD: Because we had no communications.

AL: We had the water plant! [Chuckles.]

FD: Yeah. I think we all respected each other, we got along with each other, but we were in the same boat as most of them, no training, you know that and as the training starting catching on I think we became closer too.

AL: Okay. So did you invite them to training at events at the Orange City station?

FD: We did and our first, let's say, foray into training wasn't expensive. So we would have training in each individual town a lot of times. I was fortunate to, by that time, had been one of the training officers in the counties, I had five counties I did training in.

AL: Uh, huh.

FD: The first work, like I said was through the extensive service, and later on through the community college. And, uh, I think that brought us all together more when we would train together and, and we spent a lot of time on exchanging yearly books on equipment that we had made up for equipment so you knew what another town had so you could call them for a certain thing if you wanted to and so on.

AL: Oh, that's great!

FD: Yeah it was. It was very good.

AL: Yeah.

FD: I don't know if they still have that organization today. Do they?

AL: Yes.

FD: Oh do they?

AL: Yes, they meet um, once a month. Yep. We always have a notice if we want to go that we can come along. I used to do that sometimes, but I haven't for a while.

FD: And we had a couple of towns outside of Sioux County that were members, covered like Hudson, South Dakota.

AL: Okay, yeah.

FD: And Sheldon.

AL: Ahh..we've always had a close relationship with Sheldon.

FD: Yeah, that's, that's always been good. Sheldon had a couple of guys that were fire instructors too at one time.

AL: And you went to Ames to get that certification?

FD: You did your basic, yeah, they had regional meetings.

AL: Okay.

FD: And then you, to be a certified instructor you had to make a presentation to the group that was there. It was like your, your, firefighting certification, similar to that.

AL: Good.

FD: It was a good program, got into the wrong hands for a while let's say.

AL: You mean recently?

FD: No.

AL: Oh dear. Back then? Oh dear.

FD: When they were, who was the leading entity of who controlled this fire service.

AL: Hmm...mmm.

FD: And it got juggled around for a while, like I said, between the fire marshall's office and different things and it got involved with the college for a while and we had some people writing lessons that were book learned and didn't have the slightest idea what they were talking about. And you go into a small community and teach them something about what big city stuff is, is a waste of time for everybody.

AL: Right.

FD: And especially if they had a hard time just using the equipment that they had...

AL: What they had. Hmm...mmm.

FD: ...and understood it. We, as instructors, felt there more time should be spent on that sort of stuff, but the powers that be, said you had to go by the book. And there was kind of a revolt and a bunch of the instructors quit after a while and ah, yeah.

AL: Oh, and this was in what decade?

FD: Oh, I would say in the 80s, late 70s and 80s.

AL: M kay.

FD: And ah, it, because I think I did it for about eight years and then it became they jacked up the price and it became so expensive that small towns couldn't do it anymore. And we started combining towns...

AL: Good.

FD: ...to cut the cost and so on. Got around that, but the powers that be didn't like that so.

AL: Yeah.

FD: Yeah.

AL: Hmm. Do you remember...

FD: I remember, I remember the association with most of the towns and Orange City, was around the county and Sioux County, was really, very good, really, very good.

AL: That's good. That's a benefit. I know we enjoy automatic and mutual aid today.

FD: I think just the meeting each other, exchanging information was one of the big things.

AL: Sure!

FD: [Cough.]

AL: Did you go to any major fires in any other towns?

FD: Oh yeah, definitely! We were at a, oh, big fire in Sheldon.

AL: Was that downtown or...?

FD: Yeah, it was at, I am trying to think of it, it was a department store, Vogel...ah, I can't remember exactly what it was.

AL: Hmm, mmm.

FD: I remember Rock Valley elevator, Sioux Center elevator.

AL: Were those both grain explosions or just fires?

FD: The dirtiest one was Sioux Center, they had a factory in Sioux Center that make these mats, where you clean your feet, out of rubber tires.

AL: Oh dear. Okay.

FD: We came home kind of black after that one!

AL: [Chuckles.] I guess!

FD: It was dirty. Um, Alton. We had, you know, quite a few, let's see, quite a few fires in Alton that we were called to.

AL: And in town we've been looking through the photo album and we've, um, seen some pictures of the fires you responded to. First Reformed Church had a steeple fire at one point? Is that right?

FD: Yes. There is the one picture in there, yeah. I was not on the department then. That was before my time.

AL: Okay. So before your time then.

FD: Yeah, that would be when my dad was on the department.

AL: Oh, okay. Okay. And so, a lightning strike.

FDL: Yeah.

AL: Did that make it any further than the steeple did you know?

FD: That, ah, that was it. They got it stopped. When the steeple finally fell off they were able to get at the fire then.

AL: Okay! [Laughs.] That was convenient then!

FD: Yeah.

AL: Yeah. And then the Woudstra Meat Market fire?

FD: Oh that was just the smoker in the back.

AL: Hmm...mmm.

FD: And one of the bigger ones was the bowling alley in Orange City.

AL: Oh, tell me about that one.

FD: That one was where, um, the Vogel Paint Store is now uptown.

AL: Oh okay!

FD: The top was a hardware store and the basement was a bowling alley.

AL: M, kay.

FD: And that was a pretty good fire. And again, that was when my dad was still on and I was probably in high school but then, yeah.

AL: But you came to watch.

FD: Oh yeah, definitely!

AL: Do you know what started that one?

FD: No. Really don't.

AL: Did it take any other buildings on either side of it?

FD: Ah, the Punt building was right next to it.

AL: Uh, huh. The auto dealership.

FD: Yeah, the auto dealership. And the other side was a plumbing shop, I think. And no, it didn't spread to anything, but.

AL: So they got it.

FD: Yeah, but the building it was a hole in the ground when they were done. It burned. But, a bowling alley is built to burn so.

AL: Yeah.

FD: Well, with wooden alleys and all that oil and everything in that wood, and everything, once it gets started its just about impossible.

AL: Omph. How about when the Topsy Tulip burned?

FD: I was just off the department then. I was just retired.

AL: Okay.

FD: I got called to come uptown if I would. Again, maybe to make a few suggestions.

AL: Yeah. Who was the chief at that time?

FD: Ron Koele.

AL: Okay.

FD: Yep. And the elevator fire, that was Ron Koele, he was the chief then.

AL: Okay. So what suggestions did you make, do you remember?

FD: Not off hand.

AL: Put the wet stuff on the red stuff, and that ought to do it?

FD: [Laughs.] That's right! And when the co-op station blew up that one night.

AL: Tell me about that!

FD: That is right next to the old Hatchery building, r where, uh, Noteboom Electric is.

AL: Oh really?

FD: That was about five o'clock, five thirty, one evening. Built up of small propane tanks that they had refilled and they had them in the building and evidently one of them was leaking. And they had a gas fire heater in the building and we got called that the building exploded. When we got there yeah, there was glass all over the place and within 100 feet of that building and a pretty good fire going. And they had their delivery tank wagon in the building. We got it out of there. It was not burned but it was really black by the time we got it out of there. They were talking about evacuating the hospital at that time because it was ...

AL: Right there.

FD: ...right there. And we got, I would say, within twenty minutes to a half-hour, we got it controlled. That was probably one of our first real exercises with our new ladder truck at that time.

AL: So this was in the 70s? or 80s?

FD: I think it was the 80s.

AL: In the 80s okay.

FD: I think that ladder truck was in '84, so it was shortly after that.

AL: Ladder 61. Was it ladder 61?

FD: Yeah, the old one.

AL: Oh, the old one!

FD: The one before this one.

AL: Okay, oh, well, yeah. That one. M-kay. M-kay.

FD: That was one of our first experiences with using that ladder truck.

AL: Ladder truck...did you go on the roof of that one? It wouldn't seem reasonable since it had exploded.

FD: The Hatchery, or the restaurant...

AL: Oh yeah.

FD: ... was the office for this co-op station and they were connected. So we went over the top to try ...

AL: ...to save the office...

FD:...to keep this fire from getting into this building.

AL: Good plan. Wow.

FD: Which we did because this building was their office building, but the back end of it was all barrels of oil and tires. We thought that it would be a good idea not to have the fire get into that.

AL: I think that is a very good idea. Very good idea. Yeah. And we been talking in intermission about when the fire department had the ambulance for a while and that was while you were on the fire department?

FD: Hmm...mmm. Yes.

AL: And you said that the funeral home stopped running it and the hospital wasn't ready to run it yet?

FD: I don't think that anybody knew where we were going with the whole thing. Our basic training [clock chimes] on the fire department was first aid.

AL: Yeah.

FD: So we had to , we knew we had to, get more than that and there were guys like Gerrit Cleveringa.

AL: Who is still on the ambulance. Yeah. Pretty impressive.

FD: Yeah. They got [chimes] a group of people together, some from the hospital and some from the fire department and starting putting together an ambulance service and bought an old station wagon, and used that for a while, and then they bought an old hearse.

AL: [Chuckles.]

FD: And that was stored in the fire station for a while.

AL: Okay. In this was in which decade?

FD: Oh boy, I suppose mid-70s. I would say mid to later 70s.

AL: And did you go on those calls?

FD: I really wasn't really involved in that other than training and so on so that we could try and train with the fire department, with the new ambulance people.

AL: M-kay. Was there a cross-over? Were the firefighters doing the ambulance work?

FD: I would say the first year there was no time that you had set that you were on duty or anything. You just put a fire call through and whoever showed up...

AL: Right, there we went!

FD: And our first unit was that little step-van. And we figured if somebody was hurt and they survived the ride in that step-van they were going to make it anyways.

AL: Okay. So you moved them in that, in that little step van? So that was the ambulance for a bit.

FD: We had the funeral director had kind of a cot, a stretcher that he gave to us that we had in there, and oh, I think we had one oxygen tank in there.

AL: Okay, wow.

FD: And it was all experimenting. We didn't know what we were going with any of it at that time. There was no set...

AL: Protocols.

FD: ...rules or anything. Everybody was kind of on their own, hunting for which way we are supposed to, what we were supposed to do, what we can do.

AL: Right. Yeah. So, do you remember any fires where you felt afraid, particularly afraid? Any fires you got hurt ever?

FD: No. No.

AL: That's good.

FD: No, I think, again, learning about fire kind of puts the fear away. You respect it but you don't, you know, fear it.

AL: Hmm...mmm.

FD: There are times you probably were in a house that was pretty hot and smoky and maybe burning above you and so on, your first thought is why am I doing this?

AL: That's a very reasonable thought.

FD: Yeah. A challenge! Always a challenge!

AL: Did you lose any people in house fires? Did you respond to any house fires where you lost lives?

FD: Yes. We had a trailer house fire on the west end of town and we lost two people in that one.

AL: Those go so fast.

FD: Yeah. And we had another old gentleman in a chair, smoked a pipe, and set his chair on fire. When we got there he was still alive but he didn't make it through the night.

AL: Oh. No. That's hard.

FD: Yeah, that's hard to do. Yep.

AL: Yep.

FD: But other than that, loss of life, no. A few car accidents, after we started answering car accidents, and so on, there was loss of life, yeah, but that's not from fire, that's usually from something else.

AL: Yeah. Blunt force trauma. There was a lot of time without seatbelts, before people had seatbelts or even used them. So, yeah, that seems likely. Um, tell me about the fire department and Tulip Festival? What did you do for Tulip Festival?

FD: Um, when I got on the department, there were two guys that were kind of part-time police/fire department, but that helped out on with people uptown and so on. And we didn't have any units with people uptown or anything, we really didn't have much to do with it. And then when this transition from ambulance, ah, from undertaker to ambulance service, and we first got that step van and then somebody said at one time, why don't you have that uptown in case? So, that's kind of how it started. And then the fire department got more involved with crowd control and working on, and I would say a half a dozen or eight guys would volunteer their time and work on corners for traffic and stuff like that. Later on the department got more involved in it and...

AL: That's when we had the special police designation?

FD: Yes. Yes. Yep.

AL: Hmm...mmm.

FD: And our uniforms were a gray uniform shirt with black ties with black or dark blue like police cap. That was fire department's uniform at that time.

AL: Did you introduce the uniform or was there a uniform when you joined?

FD: That was the old one.

AL: Okay.

FD: The gray shirts and so on. And then, ah I think, about the time we moved to that new station uptown we decided we wanted to go to a uniform, like of a standard uniform, and then we bought jackets, white police caps kind of, um, the black pants, and yeah. We then we started getting some badges and so on before that there was hardly anything badges, like that, and um, got our first emblem, you know, Orange City Fire Department emblem and so forth.

AL: Nice. Were you ever in the parade as a fire department?

FD: Ah, no, I don't think so. I really didn't...I did a couple of times because I had an old firetruck at that time, but then...

AL: You did?

FD: Oh yeah!

AL: What fire truck did you have Fred?

FD: Oh, what was it? I think it was an old Reo, I had a couple of them for a while that rebuilt and messed around with, with another guy that was a salesman for fire equipment. A guy from Ashton. We would go to parades together once in a while, we had it in this parade a couple of times. In Le Mars, and oh different places.

AL: Very cool. Very cool.

FD: But the fire department was always involved in like working at football games.

AL: Oh right!

FD: For college, for high school, basketball games, as, again, special police and so on.

AL: Security.

FD: We had a lot of volunteers at that time. I did that, I enjoyed doing that.

AL: Yeah.

FD: Worked with the police department and of course at that time the police department probably only had two guys.

AL: Right. Right. Small town. A lot of engagement. A lot of engagement. So were did you get your Reo speed trucks? Your speed wagons? Where did you buy them? Where did you get them?

FD: Well Earl, the guy from Ashton, actually found them.

AL: Okay.

FD: And then later one then Don Scheur and I had one together for a while.

AL: You did!

FD: We were going to rebuild one and things happened and it didn't get rebuilt. Later on it went to somebody in eastern Iowa, to one of his relation, who wanted to rebuild it.

AL: Wow. Wow. Neat. And uh, tell me about the social life of the fire department. You socialized with each other?

FD: Some.

AL: I know you had a chicken dinner, for a while.

FD: Well we always had our annual fall dinner and always we had our summer picnic. The old way, the original way, was all the women would cook the chicken.

AL: Of course.

FD: In the town hall. And later on then it started being catered and so on. Um, it still continues as far as I know.

AL: It sure does. Well, sometimes we still eat chicken I guess. I guess that would be true.

FD: Yeah.

AL: Yeah.

FD: It was always a get together to get to know each other a little bit, families, and so on, because, like the picnic, was all the kids and everything.

AL: You gave them rides on the fire trucks back then too?

FD: Oh yeah.

AL: That's fun!

FD: They couldn't eat fast enough!

AL: To ride on the fire truck. Yeah. Did Betty worry about you being on the fire department?

FD: Oh, I suppose there was some concern there.

AL: Okay.

FD: Yeah. When we started getting two-way radios and I had a scanner at home then, she then would listen once in a while. She said when she heard my voice she said she knew I was still going so, yeah. Yeah. She was concerned about it, you know. I am sure all the women were.

AL: Well, my husband is concerned for me sometimes when I go out at night.

FD: Hey. That's normal!

AL: Yeah, well, it's reasonable.

FD: Yeah, you bet.

AL: It's reasonable. Did you used to tease each other on the fire department or play pranks on each other?

FD: Oh, I am sure we did. I am sure we did. There's always a few jokers on the department you know that got to play games with somebody else a little bit and pester 'em a little bit about some things they did. Well, I am sure you know, maybe you know Mert Vander Broek. He was a joker.

AL: Oh was he?

FD: Harry Huizenga.

AL: Okay.

FD: Crazy Harry Huizenga.

AL: Do you remember any of the pranks they pulled?

FD: Not exactly, no.

AL: Just that they were.

FD: Teasing each other.

AL: Yeah. Did you have a name other than Fred?

FD: Well, there is still some guys in Orange City, that are older guys, that call me chief yet so.

AL: Well, that's not a bad thing.

FD: No, No. If you ever talk to Simmelink he will probably say chief. He always has. Verlyn Netten, a bunch of those guys.

AL: Okay. Yeah. Calling you chief.

FD: Yep.

AL: Yep. Ah, let's see. Do you have a fond, any fond memories of the fire department?

FD: I guess just, the accomplishment of getting something done. Getting a fire put out with nobody hurt. Least amount of damage. Walk on out of there with a big smile. Pat someone on the back and say, "Hey, we did it! We accomplished it."

AL: Good feeling.

FD: Yeah.

AL: And so when did you retire as fire chief?

FD: Well, it was twenty years of it so early 90s.

AL: Early 90s. So did you retire from the fire department at the same time?

FD: No, I stayed on a little while. Got off the department. Missed it a lot. Reapplied. Got back on the department for a couple of years and then I think I retired in '95 or '96, or something like that. But I,

when I came back on the department, Ron Koele was chief, so he wanted me to spend time with training.

AL: Hmm...mmm. Of course.

FD: We did that and then some other things happened that we won't talk about.

AL: Fair enough.

FD: And I figured it was time enough, I was nearing 60 years old, which I think is old enough to get off the department.

AL: Probably.

FD: Make place for younger people.

AL: Yep. Yep. Anything you would like to tell me that I haven't asked you?

FD: I dunno, we have covered a lot of stuff already.

AL: We have!

FD: We have!

AL: Anything you know about the earliest years of the fire department in the 1880s and 1890s that you would like to relay.

FD: You know, most of it is the time I spent going back over the old records and so on.

AL: Oh, that's right! I wanted to ask you about that.

FD: Ah, I learned a lot about the department.

AL: What kinds of things did you learn by going through the records?

FD: Well, one of the things that I didn't know that the first department was the Orange City Hook and Ladder Company. I didn't know that until I got into those records and so on. And, just how they did things, and how they got paid like twenty-five cents for going to a fire and things like that. Ah...

AL: And the fines.

FD: Yeah.

AL: [Chuckles.] For missing meetings.

FD: Some of the petty things in those minutes about who was mad at who. Some discussion they had at a meeting and somebody was asked to turn his coat and his helmet in because he was no longer, let's say, welcome. But, some interesting things like that.

AL: Yeah.

FD: But.

AL: Yeah. And early on the fire department had a ladder wagon?

FD: Hmm...mmm.

AL: Right. And they had um, a hose, hose reel, kind of the like the one that Doc Neiwenhuis gave to the museum?

FD: Doc Newman did.

AL: Right. Sorry. I should know better. Um. Yeah. So, and so, we had a hose cart and we had a ladder truck. And they were, the hose cart was pulled by horses? Right?

FD: Man.

AL: Oh. Man. Okay. And the ladder wagon was man pulled too?

FD: Later on they bought an old, it was either model T or something, that they pulled some of that stuff with and I don't know if it was donated or designated that this guy would show up or what but, I remember reading in some of the minutes somewhere that they had a vehicle that they pulled this with.

AL: In the early parade pictures that you donated to the fire department, those show horses pulling the ladder wagon.

FD: At first I suppose they had, yeah.

AL: Okay. But no idea where the horses came from, whether somebody road their pony to the...

FD: No. I don't think there was any horses on those.

AL: Hmmm.

FD: I don't think so.

AL: Hmmm. We will have to do some research.

FD: No, I cannot remember anything about that.

AL: I thought there were horses!

FD: I can't remember anything.

AL: Interesting! M-kay. And so um, from the original fire station, where your grandfather lived in City Hall or next to it in the shed downtown, um, it moved. Was it then the movement was to a shop downtown? Did you tell me that?

FD: No, it went to by the old water tower.

AL: By the old water tower.

FD: And then, when they got their second truck, they rented part of that building where Pluim Publishing is.

AL: OK.

FD: While they were building that park.

AL: Oh, the band shell station.

FD: Yeah, hmm...mmm.

AL: Okay. Got it!

FD: They were, I don't know how long they were in, but I remember them being the two trucks they had at that time. And that had to be in the late '40s because they had just gotten that '46 Ford and ah, that and the old Reo were in that building uptown where Pluim Publishing, well part of that building. And that would come right out to, because the band shell one was, 19...started in 1950. So, yep.

AL: Yeah. Oh, and you were going to tell me about building the army truck into a tanker truck?

FD: Oh yeah. We, the army surplus through civil defense two of us, three of us, went to Wisconsin to an army base and got one. An old truck standing in a row of, you know...

AL: Old trucks!

FD: ...old trucks! Got it running. Made kind of a canvas cab on it. It didn't have any top on it or anything like that. And we drove it back from Wisconsin.

AL: [Laughs.] That's an adventure!

FD: Yeah, took us, well, I think we left there like at 7 o'clock in the morning and got home at 9 o'clock that night here.

AL: Whew.

FD: Yeah, but they told you which truck. Gave you a number. They said they'd pull it to get it started. And from then it was yours.

AL: Keep going!

FD: It's all yours, so. Yep.

AL: So, did you put the tank on yourself?

FD: Yeah, we bought a tank, Tolman Welding found a tank. That was too big for it, and cut like a third of the way off. And we sandblasted the old thing. Painted it. You know, went to a lot of work and got that pump on it so that we could go on rural fires and so on. Before that we had an old Chevy truck that had a thousand gallon tank on it, which was too big for that truck, very unsafe, but...

AL: Right.

FD: ...we did it.

AL: Yeah. And then after the Chevy, and then an Army truck, and then what was the next?

FD: The Mack.

AL: The Mack!

FD: We got a truck from Russell's Ready Mix.

AL: The gravel hauler truck.

FD: The gravel hauling truck. It had over a million miles on it.

AL: I know! I just, that still just blows my mind!

FD: We completely, you know, took everything apart on it, cleaned it all up, and repainted it, and some body shop. Harry Huizenga had a body shop.

AL: Okay! Okay!

FD: And um, then moved that tank on and rebuilt it.

AL: Is that a molasses tank? Am I remembering that correct?

FD: It was, at one time it had. We did a lot of cleaning.

AL: I guess.

FD: Yeah.

AL: Were there any baffles in that tank?

FD: Yep.

AL: Good.

FD: Yep. We were pretty proud of that truck.

AL: Yeah, it was a beast. It was beast.

FD: It was, but it hauled water.

AL: Yeah. Did you build any other equipment? I know you built hose drying racks. We have one of those in our display.

FD: Oh, we don't think we have it around anymore. We had these, um, hose washers, I made a couple of those that you pull the hose through it and it sprays water on it.

AL: Oh, I haven't seen this. Okay.

FD: Naw, I doubt it. And then made some, um, what do they say, water wall, you hook the hose line to it, the half-moon shaped things?

AL: Fans.

FD: Yeah, fans.

AL: Yeah.

FD: We made those.

AL: Yeah. That used to be one of the trucks.

FD: Yeah.

AL: You made that?

FD: We used them at rural fires in between buildings once in a while and so on. And when we did house burns, we would set 'em between the house we weren't supposed to burn.

AL: Yeah, the one you'd prefer not to burn.

FD: You see some of those things and look at the price of them and well, hey, we can build that and why not?

AL: Wonderful! Very cool. Let's see, I don't think I asked you about building the new station in the early '70s. Was that one of your projects as chief?

FD: I was assistant chief at that time.

AL: Okay. Okay.

FD: Orville retired as chief right when the building was opened, opening ceremony, let's say. And then I was chief then. But, I was assistant chief while we were building that building and so on. Tearing the old house down that was there.

AL: Did you do that yourselves as a department?

FD: We helped. We helped with a lot of it.

AL: Did the department help build the new fire station?

FD: Nope, not much.

AL: Okay.

FD: A few minor things, but most of it was, ah, it was all in a project that our new water tower, our new water system, new wells, at uh, five miles west of town. Ah, twelve inch main in Orange City. All of this was a bond issue and we put the fire station and that '71 truck all in that bond issue.

AL: Very good.

FD: Yeah.

AL: Very good. Well, it was a good station and it is still is. Transformed!

FD: Yeah, at the time we moved in there, what were we going to do with all this room?

AL: Right. Right.

FD: And again, that was the first time all our gear was in the station.

AL: Hmm...mmm.

FD: And we put in an air compressor and so on for filling tanks.

AL: That was the cascade system?

FD: [Coughs.] Yeah, at first it wasn't really a cascade system.

AL: Okay.

FD: But it eventually developed into that. Yeah. And actually to have a separate meeting room, with a kitchen, and a restroom, and all that, it was all...

AL: Brilliant!

FD: Well, hey, it was quite an advancement at that time.

AL: Sure, because in the 1951 fire station you met in the truck base or was there a meeting room in the back?

FD: There was a meeting room, but...

AL: It was small.

FD: Yeah. [Chuckles.] It wasn't much. And actually when that was built it, the fireman donated money to add a piece to that building for the meeting room because all they were going to build was just for the trucks.

AL: The stalls.

FD: Yeah.

AL: Okay, yeah.

FD: So, some of the firemen borrowed money, or and helped with that.

AL: Yeah. Always doing a lot of support for the department. You know, not just responding to fires.

FD: Yeah. We had some very interesting firemen on at that time when that was being done. Very helpful.

AL: Yeah, yeah, very good. Well, I think I am out of questions at this point in time.

FD: Well, then we did pretty good.

AL: I think we done good!

FD: Yeah! [Chuckle.]

AL: Yeah, so I am going to push the off button.

FD: Mark one off. [Beep.]

Tape cutes off at 43:15, but continues to record until 1:08:28.