

The Sirens Were Silent

by Lynne Belluscio

When I heard that the 1945 American LaFrance had been put in running order and was going to lead the Oatka Festival Parade down Main Street, I thought what a great opportunity to tell folks about the Fire Department and their commitment to this community. Of course that meant that the guys driving the new trucks behind the American LaFrance had to agree not to blow the sirens. That's asking a lot, because they like to open those sirens up during the parade.

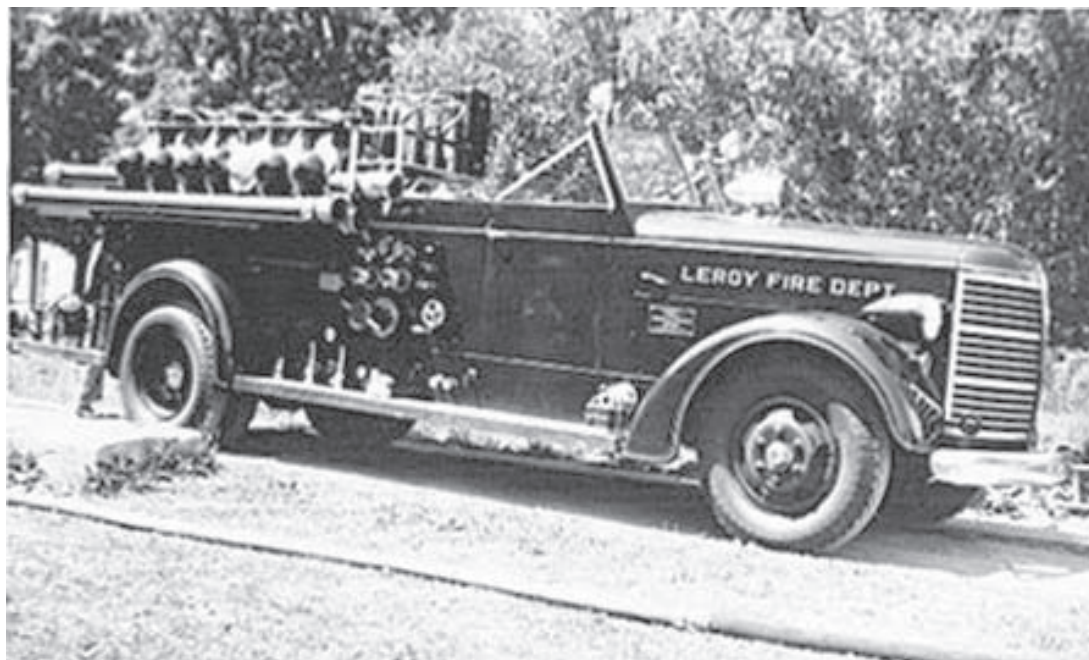
So the fire trucks were silent as they came down Main Street and folks around the announcing stand heard a little about the proud tradition of the LeRoy Fire Department. But a lot of folks were out of hearing range of the PA system and so for you, here is information you should know.

This year, the LeRoy Fire Department responded to 290 fire calls. That includes mutual aid, motor vehicle accidents (including those on 490 and the Thruway), gas leak calls, and giving assistance to the LeRoy Ambulance when they need help moving patients.

The Department is under the direction of Chief Tom Wood, and Assistant Chiefs, Dale Erhart and Tim Hogle. These three men alone have over 80 years of service. They command 65 active volunteers who have given over 3,000 volunteer hours in the line of duty. If you do the math, that means that each person has given one week of volunteer service. That includes many hours of training on the local level, as well as county and state level.

And if you consider the recent accounts in the news, that means that each person is ready to put their life on the line for our safety and well being. Compare that to 1946, when the American LaFrance was put into active duty. The year before, the LeRoy Fire Department responded to 35 alarms - 18 in the village and 14 rural calls. And there were 6 calls outside the district. The American LaFrance was ordered in 1945, immediately after the huge fire on Main Street (where the Town Hall and adjoining buildings are now).

The Fire Department just wasn't equipped to fight fires of



that magnitude. In addition, the Rural Fire District was in dire straits. Fire Chief Joseph Lapp had declared that the local firemen were answering rural alarms "with two strikes against them." They had a 1936 Buffalo pumper that carried 350 gallons of water which didn't go very far, but neither the Village Board nor the Fire Commissioners would approve additional equipment. It wouldn't be until 1951 that the Rural Fire District was able to put a large tank truck on line.

In the meantime, it wasn't easy to get new equipment because of the war. It required a request of special need, which ultimately made it possible for LeRoy to purchase the 215 horse power V12 LaFrance which was manufactured in nearby Elmira. When it was delivered to LeRoy, the *LeRoy Gazette* noted that Chief Joseph Lapp was very pleased with the first test. They took the new pumper up to Red Bridge (Munson Street) and were able to pump 1,031 gallons of water per minute. The pumper remained on line until 1976, and was retired. It is a reminder of the dedicated history of the LeRoy Fire Department to this community.

Today, the Fire Department has custom built equipment. Engine #68 is a 2009, F450 and carries a 300 gallon water tank and a 10 gallon foam cell. It goes on 95% of all the emergency calls and is equipped to handle traffic control on the Thruway and 490.

It often gives assistance to the ambulance. Engine #62 is a 2010 Pierce with a 1,000 gallon tank and a 30 gallon foam cell. It has 1,200 feet of large diameter hose and carries 6 personnel. Engine #62 is the first truck out on all motor vehicle calls and carries the "jaws of life." Engine #65 is a 100 foot Pierce platform truck which carries six people. It takes a year to train people for this truck which provides ventilation and an elevated platform for aiming water from above.

Engine #63 is a 2007 Pierce with a 1,800 gallon tank. It is the first truck out for any fire and carries the jaws of life. Engine #66 is a 1996 Peterbuilt rescue truck. It is the communication center for any event and is able to communicate with five surrounding counties. This truck carries the "cascade system" that

fills air tanks for rescue fighters.

The fire chief drives the command vehicle which is a 2012 Chevy Tahoe. It carries all the equipment for set up and preparation.

So the next time you hear the fire sirens, remember these folks are on the way to help someone. It might be you or a neighbor, or someone who is in an automobile accident. We've come to expect them to be there - - with all their equipment, the jaws of life, thousands of gallons of water, and the ability to get more help if they need it. They are always looking for volunteers. If you might be interested in helping, stop by the fire hall or show up on a Monday night when they have their meeting. Join the proud tradition of the LeRoy Fire Department.

WE ARE THERE
WHEREVER
YOU MAY GO

AP NOW AVAILABLE ON ITUNES