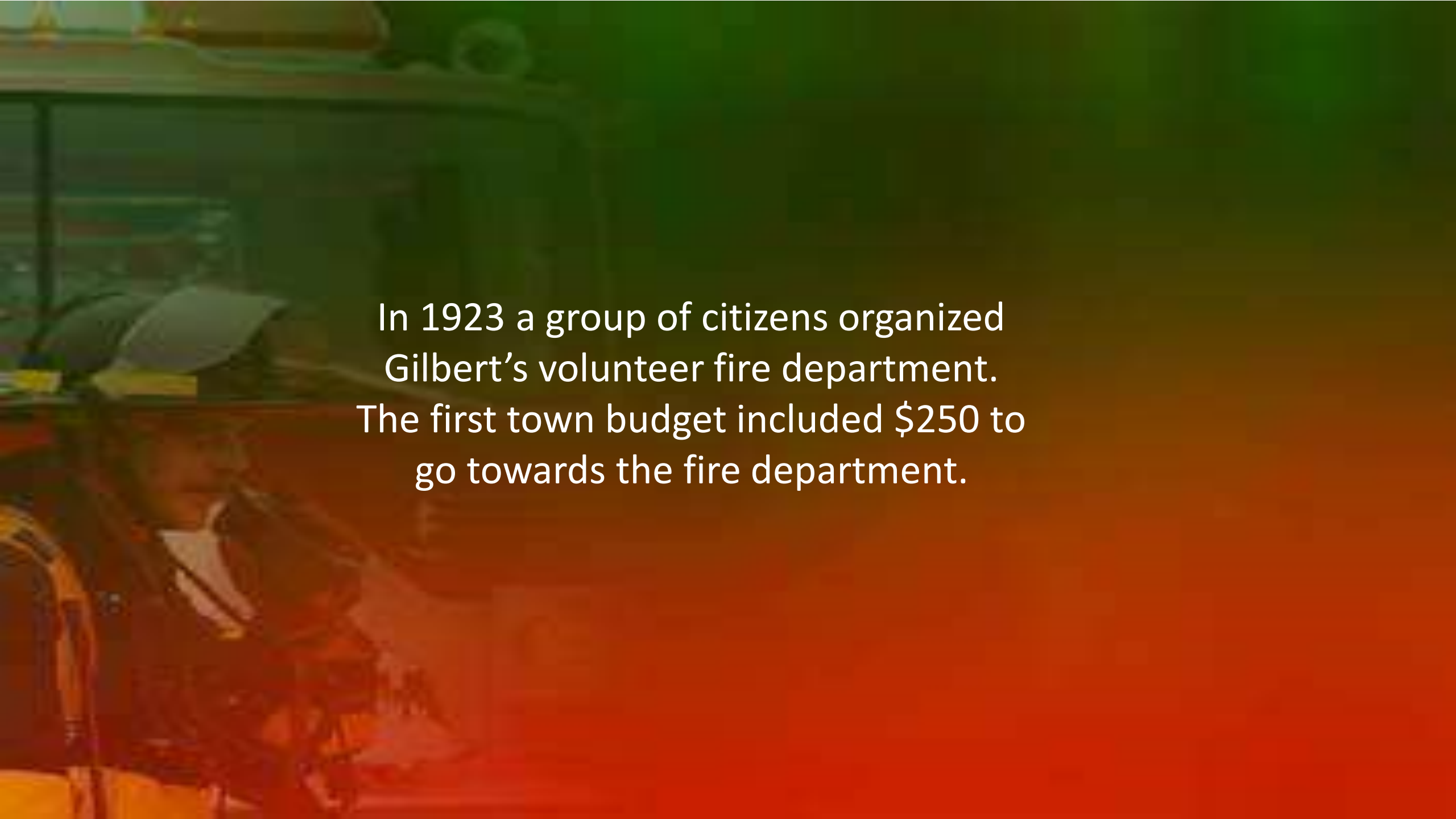




**Gilbert Fire
Department
1923-2023**

In 1922 Gilbert purchased its first “fire apparatus”, which was a tank on wheels.



A historical photograph of a man in a suit sitting at a desk, with a green overlay on the right side of the image. The man is looking down at papers on the desk. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

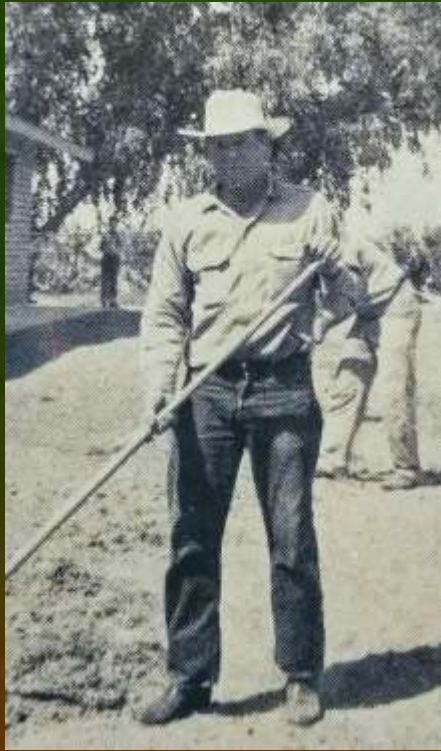
In 1923 a group of citizens organized
Gilbert's volunteer fire department.
The first town budget included \$250 to
go towards the fire department.

Lester "Mickey"
Johnson, who also ran
Mickey's Café, was the
first fire chief.





Ward Burk



Morris Cooper



J.T Hunter

Other early volunteers included Ward Burk, Walter Harmon, Morris Cooper, Hy Johnson, J.T Hunter and Glen Martin.

The Fire Department had an office and stored its equipment in the Gilbert Town Hall, beginning in 1938. Other volunteer fire chiefs were Cecil Webster, C.C. Ross, J.C. Hicks, James Harl and Gilbert Rosales



The “Gilbert Enterprise” featured this article in 1938:

“The dedication celebration program for completion of Gilbert’s new \$18,000 Town Hall and Fire Department building was held Wednesday evening commencing at 7:30 P.M. and was attended by a large crowd, many out of town visitors being present. The new building was open for inspection throughout the evening. Tommy Frost of Chandler was master of ceremonies and the program consisted of music and speaking by many prominent state and county officials: Governor R. C. Stanford, W. J. Jamieson and R. M. Vyne, state WPA officials; Warren Peterson, president of the Board of Supervisors and a number of mayors from valley towns were guests of honor. After the dedication program a 15-piece orchestra furnished music for a dance held in the Gilbert High School auditorium.”

Liberty Market Fire

October 26, 1938





OCT. 26, 1938

Fire Damages Store

The Liberty Grocery and Market, housed in a brick building on main street at this place and owned by E. Dong was badly damaged by fire Wednesday noon, when a gasoline stove exploded upon which they were cooking rice in the living quarters in the rear of the store building.

After an hour of fire fighting by the local fire department and assisted by volunteer fire fighters, the fire was brought under control, thus saving the entire west side of main street business buildings.

The entire living quarters in the building were burned and the interior of the store and grocery stock were badly damaged fire and water and the intense heat broke the plate glass windows in the front of the building. An estimates of the loss is not known but we understand was covered by insurance.

The Center Market stock in building which adjoins the Liberty Market was slightly damaged by heat and water.

Our local fire department and all others who assisted in controlling the fire are most certainly deserving of much credit for their heroic fire fighting and deserving of the sincere thanks of every business man in the town.

Purchased by the Town of Gilbert, this 1934 REO SPEED WAGON was Gilbert's main fire truck until 1967 when the town purchased a new fire engine, and it became the No. 1 truck for calls. It was used in parades and events until it came to live at the Gilbert Historical Museum in 1984.



Gilbert Fire Department in the Headlines

Fire Strikes Cotton Mill

A late afternoon fire occurred in the Gilbert mill of Producer's Cotton Oil Co. Monday. Winds whipped the fire into a two-hour battle for members of the Gilbert Volunteer Fire Department and for Producer's men.

According to Mr. Tedford, supervisor at Producers', the damage could have been a lot worse, without the prompt action of the Gilbert Fire Department, but was confined to an outdoor hull pile.

Damage reports have not been completed, but are estimated roughly as being several hundreds of dollars.

August 17, 1967, Gilbert Enterprise

Phoenix Fire Dept. Show Film Here

Members of the Gilbert Fire department were shown a movie film a week ago Thursday evening by the Phoenix Fire department. The film was an educational feature showing how to ventilate a building before entering to fight the blaze. Chief Lawrence Fuller said all members were present, and wants to express his gratitude to the Phoenix department for the film.

March 7, 1952, Gilbert Enterprise

VALLEY."
GILBERT, ARIZONA, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1951

What To Do In Case Of Fire

As soon as the alarm starts sounding jump into your car and get it started.

While you are backing out of the yard have your wife look for smoke as you will know which way to go.

If you have two cars have some other member of your family bring the other one with all possible speed. Thus, you can park one on each side of the street, at the scene of the fire. This will enable your neighbor, who should be right behind you, to park in the middle.

Whatever you do, don't fail to get to the fire before the fire truck. (This is imperative.)

In case you are late and cannot get right up to the fire, dash middle back and forth on the street in the vicinity.

In case you are the first one there and find yourself hemmed in by the cars of other idlers, it is wise to suddenly decide that you have to leave there.

This can be easily done by going ahead, and madly backing up a few times until you finally run over the hose. This important move should always be accompanied by continuous blowing of your horn.

Don't pay any attention to the firemen. If they get in your way run over them. They are just there through curiosity while your presence is important.

And before you leave don't fail to make some snooty comparison of our fire department with one you saw in L. A., or some other city you once visited.

We've been saving these whistles to BLOW at our first convention after war, NOW the only thing we are sure of is the Convention, so we'll let you blow them anyway.

GILBERT FIRE DEPARTMENT
Courtesy Safford Fire Department

Highway Accident Puts Mrs. Bryant Southside Hospital

Mr. and Mrs. B. R. Bryant were killed Friday afternoon about 2:30 p. m. on the Scottsdale-Mesa highway as they were in their tractor.

Mrs. Bryant was driving the tractor when she saw the on-coming car and drove off the road to the right. The tractor struck a large bush and overturned against the embankment.

Mr. Bryant said that he was pulling the tractor back and was going at an angle when the tractor lost control and the tractor rider jumped off the tractor.

From all appearances the tractor rolled to the length of which was extra long, and one just back of it and then rolled over the side of the road and to the embankment.

A highway patrolman immediately took Mrs. Bryant to the hospital. She was badly injured and suffered considerably. Mrs. Bryant said she was probably yesterday afternoon to bring her home.

Mr. Bryant said he was on his car. It occurred if the owners of the tractor had insurance.

OHIO PEOPLE PURCHASE NORMAN PROPERTY
Mr. and Mrs. E. N. Widenor, Ohio, have purchased the property on Palm Street.

They moved here the last week. They have eight children and a 2 years old son. They work and have a

GROWERS GIN COMPANY

September 14, 1951, Gilbert Enterprise

Councilmen Place Order For New Fire Truck and Equipment

An order was placed with Joe Doljard, salesman for the Thunderbird Sales Corp. Monday night by the Town Council for a new fire truck and fire fighting equipment. The truck is a Seagrave Yankee Volunteer with high pressure tank and rescue equipment complete ready for operation. The cost is \$7,000 with the city paying half the cost while the government pays the other half, under the Civil Defense appropriation set up.

The truck will be used for fighting fires and training under the Civil Defense program and the old truck used as a standby. However, most of the training will be with the old truck. The firechief will organize a training group, and the CD training will get underway within a couple of weeks after the new truck arrives.

A fire prevention code is being considered, and the code to be adopted is being studied by the councilmen this week. A special meeting is called for 10 o'clock Monday morning, June 16th and a Fire Prevention Code applicable to the Town of Gilbert may be adopted. It is believed by making a fire zone and adopting the Fire Prevention Code that fire insurance rates can be lowered. The public is invited to this meeting as it is also called for the hearing of a request by the Town Council for an increase in the town budget.

J. S. Clay made the town an offer of paying for half the cost, if the town would pay the other half for tile to be used in the irrigation ditch in front of his place on Washington street. The offer was accepted.

Arizona Public Service Co. has approached the Town Council for the renewing of their franchise which comes due this year in September. Harold Germaine was appointed to secure data and information concerning power rates from various sources for comparison.

In 1952 a second fire truck was purchased by the town costing \$7,000. The town paid half and the other half was paid by the government under the Civil Defense appropriation set up.



1962



Gilbert Fire trucks
May 1958



1950's Gilbert volunteer firefighters



1960's Gilbert volunteer firefighters



Eddie Virzuela



Fire Chief CC Ross - 1963



Jim Nunn



Jim Criss



1962

The Gilbert Enterprise



38 Years in Gilbert-- the Valley's Oldest Weekly Newspaper

VOL. 38 NO. 48

GILBERT ENTERPRISE, THURSDAY, JULY 7, 1967

10 CENTS

All the excitement in town last Friday was due to the arrival of the new fire engine driven down from town by Ray Henderson of the State Fire Apparatus Co., Tempe. Fire Chief Cecil Ross, and Assistant Fire Chief Dick Thomas look justifiably proud as they stand by the gleaming beauty, with its state-of-the-art motor and most efficient fire-fighting switches and gadgets.

The new fire engine was built by the American Fire Apparatus Co., at a cost of \$20,400.38, and features a 30-horse-hp. for easy maneuvering. It will pump 250 gallons per minute rated capacity, and the gear, built by Boston, America, is reported to be the only one of its kind in the state. It has the advantage of simpler operation than most fire apparatuses because the fire mechanism is in one, having the gears completely enclosed in a shell which is changed only once a year.

There are 1,200 feet of 2-1/2 inch hose, and 300 feet of one-inch 3-1/2 inch hose, a feature which could save crucial time in fire areas, where the hose speed with the speed of tightening.

Lloyd Sutherland, of the Tempe Fire, will spend time in training periods with our Volunteers until they are completely familiar with the apparatus.

The new rig brings the number of trucks of the Gilbert Fire Hall to three. Numbers one and two will be backups in time of emergency. Cecil Ross envisages a split into two divisions for the town. At an alarm, Nos. 2 and 3 will go to the scene of the fire, and if one truck is adequate to handle the fire, No. 2 will return, leaving the men to help fight the fire. These rules are all based on the Fire Underwriters insurance regulations.

Cecil Ross stated that he wished to thank the town of Gilbert and the people for recognizing that a new truck was needed. He said the new addition would mean more efficient operation, and that the truck exceeded all expectations.

Not to be overruled by the sleek white beauty, Glenn Martin and Red Clay, who recently retired from the force after 20 years of service, get out their old and polished up the old red fire speed Riggs which was acquired in December 1946. The first time out with it, Red landed over two babies. Glenn, Cecil Webster and L.D. Tash. "I won't use it all that often," he says.

The old lady, all capable of doing her job, is a star attraction in nearby parades, and has won trophies.



NEW GILBERT FIRE TRUCK ARRIVES

July 7, 1967, Gilbert Enterprise

Fire Chief Cecil Ross resigns

After 17 years with the department Fire Chief Cecil Ross, 39, announced his resignation at the Council meeting Monday night.

"Gilbert has grown considerable, and there's more pressure on the department all the time," he said. "At my age I feel it's time for me to slack up rather than work harder."

"The Town has reached a point where they have to make a decision whether to go paid or non-paid," he said. "The position as fire chief now requires more time in paper work and fire-fighting than it has in the past. Ross said he does not have the extra time or the inclination to spend it on the fire department.

As a mechanic and machinist for Roosevelt Water Conservation District, Ross said he works nine hours a day six days a week. "I didn't feel I had the time to take care of it (the fire department) the way it should be taken care of.

He said he does not know how the Council feels about hiring a paid fire department. "Nothing much has really been said about it." But if it remains a volunteer system, he said, the man who replaces him will have to have a lot of free time.

One of the changes which has been made since Ross became chief is the initiation of a retirement plan. When he started there was no retirement of any kind for the volunteers. He said when he first arranged if the plan paid \$10 a

month. Now it is up to \$15. Unfortunately he resigned three years too soon to receive the pension.

"I had planned to stay 20 years but sometimes things just get to going faster than you expect," he said.

Ross said he never could have done anything with the department without the help of the men. He repeatedly praised them as being responsible, hard-working and helpful. The volunteers practically built the fire station themselves, including pouring the floor, he said. They always kept an ear open for the fire alarm.

Between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. all fire reports have come through on Ross's home phone.

From the time he received a call until the men were on the truck ready to go took only four or five minutes, he said.

After taking the call, Ross went three blocks to City Hall and sounded the alarm. The men dropped whatever they were doing and came, he said.

Ross will remain fire chief until April 1. After that he will be able to do some of the things he could not do before.

"I've had to stay pretty close to the phone on weekends and holidays," he said. Now, maybe he can take a trip somewhere.

Volunteer fire chief, Cecil Ross, resigned from fire department after 17 years of service in 1974. This prompted the town to hire a new fire chief, Jim Harl. Jim was the first employee the town hired for the fire department. His salary was \$26,485. The 15 other volunteers for the Gilbert Fire department received \$10 per fire, insurance and a pension program.

New fire chief looks to future

BY DICK CEDERBERG

A strong advocate of the safety, Gilbert Fire Chief Jim Harl calls himself a volunteer. "I have to sell the safety and prevention," he explained, "after there's been a fire, it's too late."

The town's first paid chief, a 33-year-old volunteer learned from Assistant, Ted Harl is enthused about his new position, from calling it "very challenging."

With the department's new chief, the rate chief has devoted much of his time to assessing the needs of the department and adjusting himself with the area. His department is responsible to provide fire protection for:

Concerning the department as a whole, he took the group of 15 volunteers and "let them, and those groups, doing the best work, what they have."

Obviously not satisfied with the status quo, Harl is already planning ways to improve and expand the department and the quality of the protection provided the town's residents.

He said an extensive training program for firemen will begin this fall. The program will include actual drills on various modern fire fighting techniques.

"Changes in operation and the vehicles used and kept in houses and commercial buildings make the fighting more technical today, than ever before," the chief said.

Explaining he sold the popular use of floods and ventilation creates a better fire and fire that are gaspans faster which can be deadly to firemen. "Like everything else, fire fighting is changing all the time."

Away of these changes, and needs of the local department, Harl said that with a training program "however, it all takes money. Money we don't have."

Asked about the department's financial situation, the chief stated his budget this year is \$29,685. Of that amount, he continued, \$26,485 is earmarked for his salary, payments to firemen they receive \$10 per fire, insurance for firemen and pension program, "that doesn't leave much for new equipment and equipment."

Harl said the most urgent problem today is communication. "We don't have one," he said strongly. "We've depended upon the Maricopa County Sheriff's office and the Gilbert Police."

Explaining, the chief said the department has two small walkie-talkies which can be used to communicate from much to much, but that's essential in their communications equipment.

As an illustration, the chief outlined the procedure recently used to respond to a fire call. According to the chief, calls come to the city hall. During working hours it's not too late because someone there answers the calls located there. However, after regular working hours (5 until 1) the calls are forwarded to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department substitute in Mesa. They in turn call a Gilbert policeman who responds to the city hall to activate the town alarm.

"The real concern is one of time," the chief said. "If they're busy in Mesa, the response may get unnecessarily delayed and if the town officer is busy, he's patrolling the outlying area it takes time for him to get to the alarm. Even the firemen must respond to the station and we go to the fire."

The problem doesn't end there according to the chief. Continuing he said the firemen have no means of "shouting for help" after they're at the fire unless a Gilbert Police car is there. "If they're not there, we've lost it. We need help or at least SFP for a power shutoff or the railroad to stop a train. We have no way to call anybody."

These problems, the chief said, could be and is now being solved with the purchase of a base station radio and two-way radios for each of the trucks.

Another step of prime concern to the chief is that of the town alarm system. "Now it takes men five minutes from the alarm, they can't hear it. A remedy, he said, would be a siren alarm or placement of other signs to



CHECKING GEAR — Fire Chief Jim Harl inspects the headgear for a fireproof suit available to local firemen to fighting fires. The new chief spends much of his time inspecting and servicing equipment making sure it is safe and available whenever it might be needed. He is also starting regular training programs teaching local volunteers new and safe fire fighting techniques. (Cederberg photo)



Thursday, Aug. 24: Lasagna, French rolls, tomato salad, chocolate pudding, milk.
 Friday, Aug. 25: Green chili burrito, shredded lettuce & tomatoes, Mexican corn, chili, milk.
 Monday, Aug. 26: Pig in blanket, baked beans, green salad & dressing, apple, orange, milk.
 Tuesday, Aug. 27: Bacon spaghetti, tomato salad & Italian dressing, French rolls, cream, milk.
 Wednesday, Aug. 28: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes & gravy, green peas, buttered rolls, blue jello, milk.
 Thursday, Aug. 29: Beef-Stroganoff sauce on beef, French fries, cole slaw, orange squash, milk.

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 •Generator & Starter
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 YOUR HOME FOR FINE MEXICAN FOOD
 Your Host and Hostess Arturo Romero - Sally Romero
 228 N. Gilbert Road 891-9333

different areas of the town. "The firehouse that most of my men live within several blocks of the station so we don't get much time that way," he said.

Discussing fire brigades, chief Harl said the department is presently at full strength with 15 members. As with most small volunteer departments the chief said he has a shortage of "positive" personnel. "We're out at night when the men are home, but during the day many of them work out of town and aren't available."

The chief has organized the group of volunteers, creating three officers positions and a secretary. Under the chief, the chain of command includes William J. Harl, J.C. Harl, Captain Jim Harl, Captain Curtis O'Brien. Gilbert Harlman serves as the department's secretary.

Members of the local department are charged with providing fire protection to an initial protection area of approximately 710 sq. miles. "Technically we cover 53 sq. miles," the chief said. The large area is the area contained within the city incorporation which gives the town of Gilbert a 53 sq. mile percentage.

As a safety measure to insure insurance is available should it become necessary on a even the chief Harl said the local department has made an agreement with Royal Marine which services the county land between the corporate limits of Gilbert and the perimeter area. Chandler, Mesa and Williams AFB fire departments.

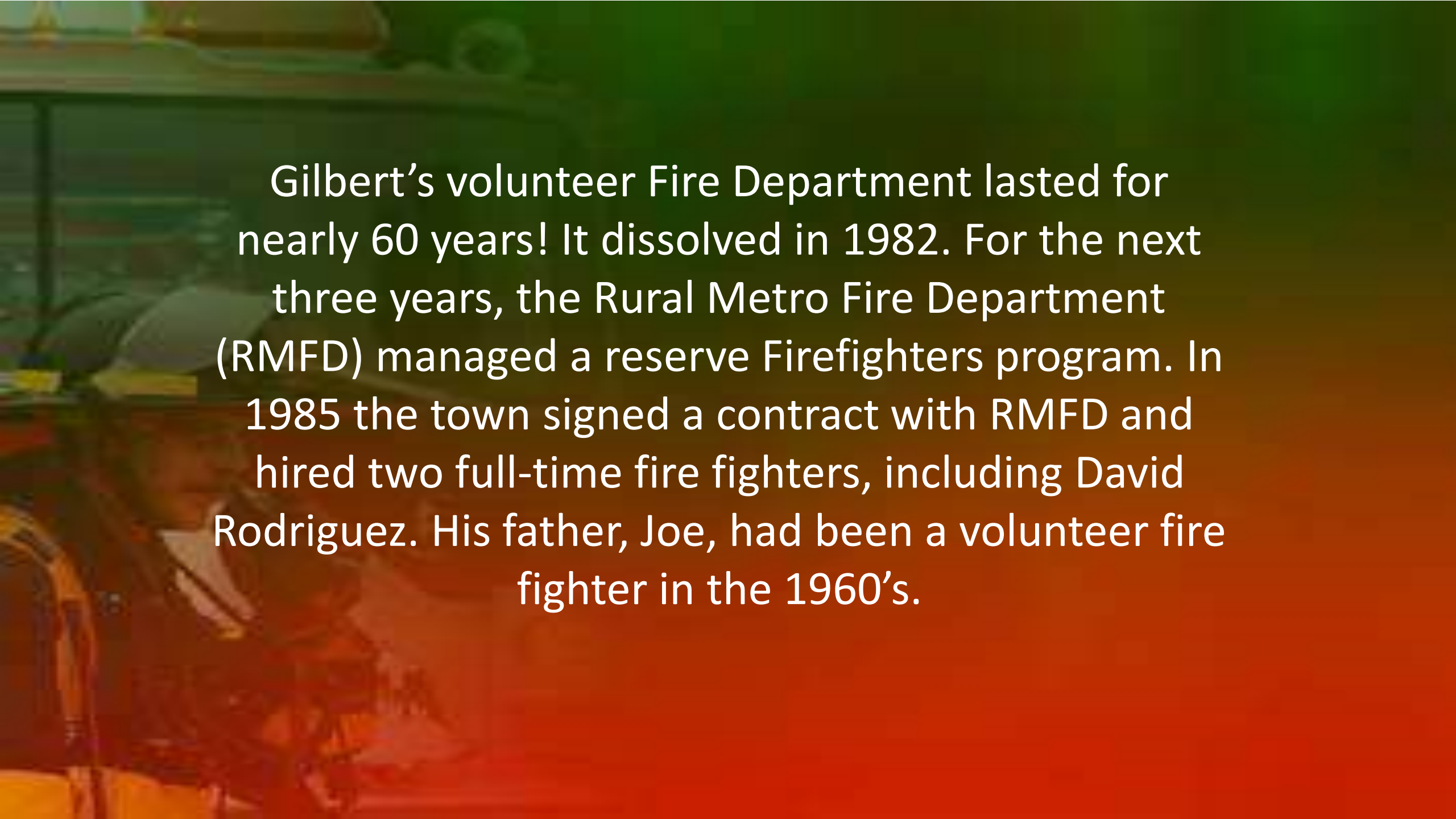
Planning for the future, the chief said he looks now to the time to build up the department. "We're going to grow," he said, "and people must feel so we need to be ready. We'd rather grow than have to put them out."



READY TO ROLL — Glittering in the Arizona sun, three trucks of the Gilbert Fire Department stand filed and ready to respond to any emergency fire call. Manued by chief Harl and 15 volunteer firemen, the local department responds to an average of 60 calls per month. (Cederberg photo)

Cecil Webster (volunteer fire chief)
wearing Gilbert's first oxygen
apparatus.





Gilbert's volunteer Fire Department lasted for nearly 60 years! It dissolved in 1982. For the next three years, the Rural Metro Fire Department (RMFD) managed a reserve Firefighters program. In 1985 the town signed a contract with RMFD and hired two full-time fire fighters, including David Rodriguez. His father, Joe, had been a volunteer fire fighter in the 1960's.



David Rodriguez, 1985

After Gilbert citizens voted in favor of forming a municipal fire department, the Gilbert Fire Department began providing services on January 1, 1993. John Garcilaso served as the first chief of this department from 1992-1999.

NEW FIRE CHIEF



J o h n Garcilaso has been hired as Gilbert's Fire Chief. Prior to coming to Gilbert, he served as a Division chief in Englewood, Colorado. Although Chief Garcilaso has been in Gilbert interviewing individuals for positions on the fire department, he will not begin his regular duties until December 28. He and his wife, Nancy, have two children.

Gilbert Independent December 23-29, 1992

Municipal fire department goes operational New Year's Day

By JENNIFER CUSHMAN
Editor

The Gilbert municipal fire department will go operational 8 a.m., January 1.

Town Manager Kent Cooper said the staff continues to make minor adjustments so the transition from Rural/Metro Corp. to municipal goes as smooth as possible.

Both the Gilbert Town Council and the Mesa City Council recently approved an agreement in which Mesa will provide Gilbert's dispatching services.

Mesa will charge Gilbert an estimated \$43,960 annually for dispatching service — considerably less than the \$350,000 per year Gilbert would pay if it were to provide its own dispatch service, said Mr. Cooper.

Mesa will charge Gilbert \$10 per call and \$320 a month for equipment maintenance. Gilbert gets an average of 200 calls per month.

Gilbert will pay Mesa \$16,120 for equipments and its installation and

WEAPON

continued from page 1

\$3,840 for annual maintenance of the equipment. Mesa has offered to provide Gilbert with \$6,300 in spare equipment free of charge.

In the past, Gilbert's dispatching service has been provided by Rural/Metro.

In a letter to Mesa City Manager Charles Luster written before the November 3 election to decide the referendum, Mr. Cooper said Gilbert planned to seek dispatching services from another agency regardless of the outcome of the election.

Gilbert voters on November 3 voted by a 2-1 margin with the council's June 2 decision to not renew its contract with Rural/Metro in order to staff the municipal fire department with municipal firefighters.

Mr. Cooper said his decision to seek different dispatching services regardless of the election was based on a desire to align the East Valley with expedient dispatch through automatic aid agreements.

"By aligning with Mesa, we hope to one day work out an agreement with Chandler so the whole East Valley has expedient dispatch," Mr. Cooper said. "Having a 360-degree response system in place will help

with the future building of fire stations."

One of the changes that may take place because of the new dispatching agreement with Mesa is that people who live in county islands abutting Gilbert's borders may see a decrease in the number of mutual aid responses with the new municipal Gilbert fire department.

Rural/Metro is responsible for fire and emergency service for the county. In the past, Rural/Metro's link with Gilbert, and the use of the same dispatching frequencies, made for an expedient mutual aid agreement with Gilbert Rural/Metro.

Although the council and town staff will need to talk about the future of fire and emergency response to county islands, Mr. Cooper said Rural/Metro will need to request mutual aid from Gilbert if they wish backup for service in the county.

"The people who live in county islands do not pay Gilbert taxes and are not entitled to Gilbert services and are not in a position to make any claims on Gilbert," Mr. Cooper said. "The practice of how we will handle fire and emergency service in the future will need to be examined."

In spite of the details that still need to be worked out, Mr. Cooper and Chief Dees have taken care of most of the major issues of the transition.

A team of town staff and council, including the new fire chief John Garcilaso, hired 20 employees for the municipal fire department.

The department consists of 20 people, including one fire chief, one fire marshal, two shift captains, one secretary and 15 firefighters/emergency medical technicians. One of job requirements for a position was every firefighter hired also had to be an EMT, Chief Dees said.

According to the council's June 2 motion, Rural/Metro firefighters were to be given hiring preference in the municipal fire department.

"Hiring preference" meant every Gilbert Rural/Metro firefighter was guaranteed an interview, Chief Dees said. It did not mean they were guaranteed a position.

Of the 20 employees hired, 12 of 20 full-time Gilbert Rural/Metro firefighters were hired on with the town, Chief Dees said. Two of the

20 Gilbert Rural/Metro firefighters did not apply and six of the 20 were not hired on full-time. However, five of the six not hired full-time were hired as part of Gilbert's reserve force, he added.

Of the four top positions in the department, all but the chief were former Gilbert Rural/Metro employees.

More than 250 people applied for the 20 open positions. The hiring committee picked 50 of the 250 to interview, Chief Dees said.

"We are extremely pleased with the level of service and the caliber of employees who will be serving Gilbert residents," Mr. Cooper said. "We're not going to let the town down."



Need

Collin DeWitt became Gilbert's second Fire Chief in August 1999. He led the opening of at least seven fire stations, served as the Interim Town Manager for 18 months, and was instrumental in bringing a 1,500-pound steel beam from the World Trade Center to display at Town Hall.





Jim Jobusch became
Gilbert's third Fire Chief in
2013. Jobusch had joined
the Gilbert Fire
Department in 1992.

On July 7, 2022 Chief Jim Jobusch retired from the Gilbert Fire Department. On July 11, 2022, Rob Duggan started as Fire Chief for the Gilbert Fire & Rescue Department.





Gilbert Fire Station 1, Williams Field Road

Today Gilbert has 11 fire stations. The Gilbert Fire & Rescue Department (GFRD) consists of more than 250 dedicated and well-trained individuals who are passionately focused on protecting and serving those who reside in and visit Gilbert.