

PORTAL RESCUE NEWS

February 2001

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Helen Snyder, editor

DOUGLAS HOSPITAL'S FUTURE IS TOPIC OF ANNUAL MEETING PROGRAM

Portal Rescue's annual meeting is Thursday March 8 at 7 pm at the fire station.

After elections of board members, Dr. George Spikes of Douglas will speak to us on his work to ensure the future of the Douglas Hospital and its purchase by a non-profit organization. Please come with your questions! Refreshments will be served.

OFFICERS RETIRE FROM BOARD

Spring 2000 brings many changes to Portal Rescue's board.

President Devorie Griffiths will soon retire in order to devote more time to her family, and she will be sorely missed. Her special talents for this job were many and include listening to all sides of an issue, as well as her ability to run open, productive meetings.

She found ways to make the best use of everyone's skills and talent, a tough job in a diverse, all-volunteer organization such as Portal Rescue. We are a stronger organization as a direct result of her managerial skills.

Devorie worked many volunteer hours a week on Portal Rescue affairs, often not starting until the store was closed and her kids were in bed. Her Portal Rescue emails always bore a time stamp of some time after 10:30 PM. She says she learned a lot about time management too while serving as President!

Yvette Rehurek has served as our 'pick-picky' (her term) treasurer for 6 years. She'll be turning her green eyeshade over to Carolyn Dearing, who's agreed to take on the challenge of balancing the budget and making us stick to spending only what money we actually have. Yvette has agreed to stay on the board for another year to help with the transition.

Fire Chief EMT Max Rothpletz, also an EMT, has been trying to balance full-time university studies 100 miles away and the need to attend a total of 36 Portal Rescue meetings a year. He'll be stepping down as Fire Chief to give himself more time to concentrate on schoolwork. Barney Tomberlin will be taking his place.

Earlier in the year Mary Carson, board secretary, had to retire as she was moving away from the area. Kate Arambula took over her job for the last few months of the year. Tamara Smejkal is moving to Sierra Vista, and Marv Goldfogel felt he just wasn't going to be here enough to serve on the board, and resigned last month. Thank you to all that served us this year!

SOUP KITCHEN 2001

Portal Rescue's fifth annual soup kitchen was held Feb. 11-13. \$3,007 was raised from sales of food and a raffle. All proceeds go towards a fire truck.

More than 300 people stopped by for a noon meal of homemade soup, bread and dessert. Fifteen different soups were served each day. All foods were prepared and donated by community members. The Douglas Safeway meat department lent its support.

Nancy Hays of Portal organized the event this year, with assistance from Carolyn Dearing, Jan Gee, Barbara Miller and Cathy Reinbold. Izzy Escobar of Rodeo helped assure a good attendance by publicizing the soup kitchen in her community.

Marvin and Janice Goldfolgel donated handsome aprons printed with **PORTAL RESCUE SUPPORTER**, and proceeds from the sale of these went to the general fund.

Kim Gee managed the raffle and arranged for the donation of the prizes, including a saw, a sewing machine donated by Penny Johnston, a bird print by David Utterback, wall quilt by Carolyn Dearing, and 100 dollars worth of lottery tickets.

The most coveted prize was a helicopter ride, donated by LifeNet Air Medical Transport. Sally Spofford was the winner.

On Monday morning Sally joined the LifeNet crew in Safford and flew to Portal with a few sightseeing detours along the way. Portal EMT Kay Ralston, also a flight nurse with LifeNet, helped arrange the donation.

Sally Spofford's return to earth at the fire-house landing zone was cheered by a large (for Portal) crowd of well-wishers and more than a few jealous losers. The LifeNet crew joined us for lunch and gave tours of their helicopter. **HS**

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

by Max Rothpletz

One constant of being a firefighter is to expect the unexpected and 'the unexpected' is a good way to describe some of the calls that had nothing to do with fires. Our first chance to use our Jaws of Life came when we received an SOS for one of Teddy Troller's cows stuck in a cattleguard. We (and Teddy) were surprised at the damage the tool can do to a cattleguard, and Teddy was thankful to have his cow returned to solid ground. We also got to take out the extrication equipment to Larry Rivers house to practice cutting up some cars. I hope we cut up the right ones.

We regularly get asked to help when folks lock their keys in the car. Barney Tomberlin is our in-house expert, and his skill was put to the test on a late-model Mercedes whose theft deterrent systems activated progressively through the break-in. Barney outsmarted the laser beams and lockdown

COME TO THE
ANNUAL MEETING THURSDAY
MARCH 8
7 pm,
PORTAL FIRE STATION

systems and finally fished the keys from the glove compartment with one of the specialized tools of his 'day job' as a reptile expert, an extra-long snake stick.

We were lucky to receive the Arizona State Land Department's Severity Patrol again this year, in which we drive the State Land truck around our response area, looking for fires, familiarizing ourselves with back roads and gates. The income from this provides a good chunk of the Portal Rescue annual budget as well as income to the firefighters. While we were doing the patrols we were called to respond to several fires and were able to get to the scene in record time and control the blazes before they got out of hand.

This past year the board voted to begin paying our firefighters \$10 an hour when they respond to any fire, as well as for the Severity Patrol. Most of our firefighters work locally and must lose pay when they leave their jobsites to fight a wildfire. Our callouts are often long, running for the rest of the day and into the night, and can add up to many hours of lost income. This pay was on a trial basis, for one year, to be renewed annually if finances permit.

Firefighters doing the Severity Patrol were able to respond quickly to several fires. We were patrolling one day when a call came in for a fire south of Apache. It sounded big -- units from Bisbee were responding, and air tankers were on the way. They rolled up on the scene to find one empty pickup truck, several acres on fire, and the startling sight of a 10-year-old girl wearing a pink bathing suit and tennis shoes with no laces, squirting a bulbous pink plastic water gun at a smoldering clump of grass. She appeared to be the only living person in a huge expanse of land between Highway 80 and the Mexican border, but her dad, a local rancher, was actually nearby, out of sight for the moment. The rest of the responders turned up in due course.

We in the fire department appreciate all that the local residents do to make their homes safe from wildland fire. Not only is it good for you as a landowner to make your property as safe as possible, it greatly reduces the risks for your neighbor.

In addition to fires and MVAs we had several good trainings, including a pump class given by Gary Wisdom, an Incident Command class given by Bill Miller of Fry Fire Department in Sierra Vista and a Blood Borne Pathogen Class given by Bonnie Roach from Tucson Medical Center. In March, 9 firefighters attended a Squad Boss class.

In May, Fernie Flores of the Forest Service and Gilbert Gil of Ft. Huachuca gave a Basic Wildland fire refresher course. By the time September rolled around it was time for our annual Arizona State Fire School. Seven firefighters and two EMTs attended this year's classes. But my favorite training of all was our annual BBQ to thank the firefighters for all that they do.

This year Eric Jones left us and Larry Rivers joined up as a firefighter. Larry is also a member of the Rodeo Fire Department. Welcome aboard, Larry!

A big thanks to all the people who gave of their time to bring us to a higher level of training, community service and awareness, to the community for their continued support of Portal Rescue, to the Board of Portal Rescue and my fellow EMTs but most of all I wanted to thank the firefighters for another great and safe year.

FUND-RAISERS

by Yvette Rehurek

WOW! Over \$9700 was raised for Portal Rescue this past year from various fund-raisers. Many people worked long and hard. Thank you all!

Birdathon	\$3200
Soup Kitchen	\$1400
Aprons	\$575
Cookbooks (all gone)	\$336
Dinner at Cathedral Rock Lodge	\$675
Painting class at Magic Brush	\$675
T-shirts	\$500
Forum on the Amazon, by Tom Moise	\$100
Raffle during Soup Kitchen	\$780
Pancake Breakfast	\$1400
Easter Cook-out	\$87

Another Birdathon is planned for June to raise money for our general fund and the Goldfogels and Rehureks will again host a gourmet dinner at Cathedral Rock Lodge on March 3rd. Bill Reinbold is teaching a bird carving class, with proceeds going to Portal Rescue.

EMS CHIEF'S REPORT

by Jeff Gee

Y2K was a record year for Portal Rescue. We cared for 88 patients in 2000 and had more total calls and more helicopter evacuations (23) than in any previous year (9 was the record before), including a midnight landing at the Paradise Cemetery (actually, it's the best good landing spot for calls in Paradise, but it can be hard to convince the air ambulance dispatcher that we have a patient waiting for them at the cemetery).

We have seen a huge increase in the numbers of UDAs, or undocumented aliens, in our patient population. In 2000, over half our patients were UDAs. Most of these are trauma calls, the result of motor vehicle accidents; dehydration is another common problem and UDA deaths from these two things occur regularly.

SUMMARY OF EMS RESPONSES FOR 2000

TOTAL CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE	43
TRAUMA PATIENTS (ACCIDENTS)	71
MEDICAL PATIENTS (HEART, FEVER, ETC.)	17
AVERAGE AGE	25
ORIGIN OF PATIENTS:	
PATIENTS RESIDENT IN RODEO-PORTAL AREA	28
VISITORS	60
NON-RESIDENTS	11
UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS	49 (6 CALLS)
TOTAL PATIENTS	88

With some of the funds raised by the pancake breakfast we have stocked 8 "fast packs", small pouches with everything an EMT needs for a fast diagnosis, triage and treatment of a victim in a multi-casualty incident (MCI) of the type we had twice this year. We keep the packs on the vehicle and any EMT arriving on scene can grab one and know just what's in it -- gloves, pocket mask, tape, stethoscope, triage tags, flashlight, reflective vest, and more - - and go right to work, safely.

More of those funds are going to purchase new plastic spineboards. Our old homemade plywood ones are splintering and impossible to sanitize to modern standards.

EMTs are required, like doctors and nurses, to attend a certain number of hours each year of Continuing Medical Education. This year's trainings included some intensive in-house sessions (Advanced Pediatric Life Support and a Basic EMT refresher class) and we were fortunate to be

able to send some of our folks to conferences in Tucson and Phoenix.

Being a volunteer in a rural area often means EMTs have little sense of being part of the larger community of health-care workers, but attending a trauma conference does great things for our EMTs' sense of professionalism. They always return from these conferences with their heads a little higher.

TREASURER'S FAREWELL WISHES

by Yvette Rehurek

This is my final article as Treasurer for Portal Rescue. After serving for six years, I am giving up the position in March.

2000 was a very good year due to income earned by the Fire Department and by the generosity of community members. I will provide a complete financial report at the Annual Meeting, so please try to attend. My intent in this article is to mention a concern for the organization and its financial future.

For the past two years, our income has exceeded that which we projected for expenditures. This is because of the fires fought and the State Land Severity Patrol. We received a whopping \$27,277 in fire monies in 2000. Eleven thousand of that was paid to the fire fighters and some \$5,000 was paid out in vehicle expense incurred during these activities.

When we have this kind of money coming in, we tend to forget that we cannot - must not - keep counting on this source of funding. Last year's \$27,277 was extremely "soft money". *In 1998, we received \$1,930 in fire monies; \$3,411 in 1997 and only \$609 in 1995.* Our projected expenditure budget for 2001 is \$31,300, and we've just been told by Tom Warfield of the Arizona State Land Department that Governor Hull has said she won't be transferring funds to the southern part of the state for the Severity Patrol this year, because of the good winter rains we've had.

It is quite clear that if we do not have fires and the Severity Patrol, we must depend on other sources, mainly our regular fund-raisers and your unrestricted donations to the general fund, for our day-to-day operations. We must pay a huge annual vehicle and medical malpractice insurance bill (\$5,700), purchase supplies, keep our vehicles running, pay our utilities and provide training for our members. These are basic costs of doing business, and cannot be avoided.

This year's Soup Kitchen organizers have said they are dedicating the proceeds toward the fire truck fund. In years past we've counted on the Soup Kitchen for the general fund, and now without the Soup Kitchen income we face a February shortfall in operating revenue. My concern is that everyone will get enthusiastic about the fire truck and earmark their annual donation to this cause!

NONE of our regular grant sources will award us monies for the basic expenses of upkeep and insurance. Equipment such as fire truck and rescue gear, on the other hand, is easy to get from grants; money for gas, tires and insurance is impossible to raise any other way than through donations (or taxes, if we become a fire district). Used fire trucks in good condition are common free-of-charge "hand-

me-downs" from large urban fire departments, and we can seek one from this source too. We have already been given restricted donations of over \$11,000 from two anonymous parties for the fire truck project.

The Board has been diligent in their efforts over the past decade to build a reserve to cover one full year's operating expenses. We hope we don't have to dip into this reserve this year, but it could happen if fire income is low and donations to the general fund don't make up the difference. Before we spend reserves, though, we will cut expenses as much as possible. Likely areas for reduction are:

- Last June the board voted to pay our firefighters \$10/hr. when they respond to a call. This was done on a trial basis, for one year only, and it will be the first thing to be cut if we have a budget shortfall.
- Each year several lucky EMTs benefit enormously from our being able to send them to a regional trauma conference each year but this expense too will be trimmed if we can't meet our operating expenses.

Portal Rescue's bylaws say that the board has the ultimate say on how monies are spent, and I hope all of you will continue giving your annual donations to the general fund so that the board can best decide how and when it should be spent - on the bare-but-critical necessities, on new vehicles, on pay for our firefighters, to pay travel to conferences for the EMTs, or on whatever is needed.

FIRE GRANT UPDATE

by Helen Snyder

As a result of the devastating 2000 fire season, \$1.8 million dollars was given by Congress to western states to help communities better prepare for wildfire.

Portal Rescue has been approved for two grants totaling about \$12,000 from this funding source. One is to do individualized fire-preparedness planning at about 40 residences, and the other is to prepare a community evacuation plan should we ever experience a fire season like 1994, when the Rattlesnake Fire began to threaten occupied areas.

The money is earmarked for equipment and to pay some of the labor costs involved in doing fire prevention inspection and cleanup in cases where homeowners aren't able to do all the work themselves.

Although our grants were approved, the money has not actually been made available. Once it is, we will hold a meeting to present the fire prevention program.

"IN MEMORIUM"

by Yvette Rehurek

The Portal community mourns the loss of the following community members and former residents this past year: Henry Beumler, Philip Bagwell, Ted Troller, Sr., Nancy Sowanick and Mary Ann Stidham.

To all the families, we want to express a heartfelt "thank you" for naming Portal Rescue as the recipient of memorial donations. For the year 2000, we received \$3000 from memorials.

Memorial donations are a wonderful way to honor friends or relatives, even those who are not community members. The family receives an acknowledgment of the donation, so it is very important that a name and address of a

BILL WALTERS DONATES PROPANE

In spite of the recent near-doubling of the cost of propane, Bill Walters has continued his quiet practice of topping off the tank at the fire station whenever he has gas at the end of the day. He never sends us a bill. It's been a cold winter, and Bill's propane keeps the fire trucks' pipes from freezing.

Thanks, Bill!

family member is sent along with the donation. All donations are tax-deductible.

THE CALL THAT WASN'T by Fran Zweifel

It was a damp, cold, gray day. Tamara, Diane and I were doing our usual vehicle check at the fire-house. The supplies inside the vehicle had been surveyed, the shelves restocked, equipment batteries checked. As we were going over the outside of the vehicle, the red telephone rang - emergency! Seconds later, Devorie, the Portal Rescue dispatcher, put out a page: EMTs and firefighters, please respond to a rollover on Route 80, Milepost 398.

We called Devorie to let her know that we were available and on our way. Hurling down the road towards Rodeo with siren wailing and vehicle lights flashing, we all had on our minds the carnage of just a few weeks before, when a van with 19 people had rolled on Route 80. Every available EMT worked on that scene and every piece of our equipment was used up. Would this be a repeat?

We looked out the window, anxiously searching for signs of the accident. Coming up fast behind us was Helen, driving to the scene in her own car. Following her was the Portal Rescue fire engine, always called out for a motor vehicle accident.

We tore down the highway, past the Arizona state line, past Apache. Where WAS this accident? How much farther? As we hurtled onward, I handed latex gloves to the others.

We flew past the Price Canyon turn-off. Far ahead, we could see a car listing to the right in the grass on the east side of the road. Hmm... hadn't I seen this wrecked car, or one like it, in the same place yesterday?

We parked in front of the wreck. Yes indeed, this was the same car I had seen the day before. There were heads visible huddled low inside, looking out of the broken windows.

Then the Highway Patrol pulled up, followed immediately by a Douglas ambulance. A Border Patrol vehicle pulled up as two cars with EMTs from Portal Rescue arrived on scene.

Helen approached the car and asked the men if they'd been in an accident. They said no, but they thought there was one farther south, as they'd seen the Rodeo fire truck go flying past (Rodeo was responding to the same call but

recognized the "wreck" as having been parked there all week). The four Mexican citizens climbed slowly from the wrecked car as more and more emergency vehicles rolled up and more responders walked over to stare at them.

They were not hurt; they had merely discovered the abandoned car after an all-night march from the border in cold rain, and crawled in to sleep and warm up. "Why were all these people here?" was written on their faces.

This wreck had sat by the highway for days, perhaps weeks. A passing driver this morning had noticed its broken windows, flapping fender, flattened tires and the great spiderweb crack in the windshield. He saw four bodies leaning this way and that inside; *there must have just been an accident!* As soon as he could reach a phone, he had called Portal Rescue, and Douglas, too, for good measure.

Feeling a bit foolish we climbed back into the ambulance and slowly drove back to Portal. No whirling lights, no siren, just great relief that no one was hurt. And four illegals got a free ride back across the border.

THE BIG ONES, 2000 by Helen Snyder

Every year brings one or more especially memorable calls. We often go for several years without really saving someone's life -- most of our calls really just result in making someone's life better.

Any time our EMTs actually save a life, as opposed to making a difference in someone's quality of life, it's a special call. This happened a number of times in 2000.

With Barney Tomberlin's permission, here's a bit about one such memorable call in 2000. Our team member Barney Tomberlin's had a near-fatal encounter with a Mojave rattlesnake that resulted in his being airlifted to the hospital. Barney's condition deteriorated so much that the EMTs were not sure he'd be returning to Portal alive when they loaded him onto the plane. The last scribbled entry on the paperwork on the call was an ominous "PT [for patient] ↓↓ hill". Barney recovered, thankfully.

Then there was the big MCI (multiple-casualty incident) in September which happened when a small van carrying 20 young UDAs (undocumented aliens) blew a tire and rolled several times, ejecting many of its occupants.

One definition of a disaster is any incident that overwhelms the available emergency services. By that criterion, this call certainly qualified.

We had every EMT and firefighter on the scene, and were helped enormously by the many bystanders who stopped to hold IV bags or blankets for shade, translate, carry patients to helicopters and ambulances, direct traffic, fetch supplies or get water for everyone involved. Other agencies responded too and helped treat the injured.

We seemed to find one of every type of injury possible - head trauma, broken limbs, internal injuries. Six

GUESS WHAT I JUST HEARD!

Patient confidentiality isn't just a good idea, it's the law - Arizona state law, to be specific.

When we respond to a call for help we are not permitted to give details to anyone, except family or law enforcement, who's not directly involved, whether it's about the patient's identity, their condition, or even the appearance of the scene.

We try to keep patient status details out of our radio transmissions because so many people have scanners.

Did you know that Federal law can't prohibit anyone from listening to radio transmissions, but it definitely does regulate what you can do with the information you hear?

FCC regulations specifically stipulate that if you listen to two-way radio transmissions, you are prohibited from revealing to any other person (that's not a party to the transmissions) the contents of those transmissions. Or discuss, or comment on them.

This applies not only to what you hear on your own scanner, but what you overhear when you are sitting in the Portal Café, and there's a call in progress with loud radio traffic between the dispatch center there behind the Lotto and popcorn machines and the EMTs in the field.

It applies too to what you hear when you are sitting in an EMT's home, and their two-way radio sitting in the charger comes to life with emergency traffic.

Federal law says: you can listen to it but you can't pass it on.

helicopter flights carried the most severely injured away, and our equipment scattered with the patients in all directions - spineboards and oxygen bottles had to be retrieved from Douglas, Bisbee, Willcox, and several Tucson hospitals.

By the end of the call, six hours after it started, we and our supplies were depleted. One of my memories of that day is the sight of our ambulance standing with all its doors flapping and cabinets open, nothing inside but a few scraps of paper swirling in a little breeze on the floor and a latex glove dangling from the rear bumper.

One of the helpful bystanders was John DeRosalia, a new landowner in the area. He had been the first to stop after the accident, and it was John who raced to make a call for help, then returned to the scene to help. Afterwards he wrote a letter about the experience and our teamwork. We thought we'd share some of it with you:

"This letter is being written in the hope of shedding some light on the incredible work being done by the men and women volunteers of Portal Rescue. On Friday I was first on scene of a devastating accident...One person was killed instantly, a number were ejected.. and most of the remainder were seriously injured. The scene resembled a bloody battlefield with people screaming, crying and moaning...To say it was utter chaos is an understatement.

"As a specialist for over 25 years in the field of group dynamics, team building and stress management, I looked on with amazement at the working of this group...[their] effort succeeded in transforming chaos into order in a brief period of time and was executed with a harmony and focus that was truly remarkable.

"While there was clearly a chain of command and varying levels of medical expertise... at no point did individual egos interfere with the life saving service that was being delivered. Everyone cooperated with everyone else -- everyone was supportive to everyone else -- and everyone did what needed to be done regardless of the task. There was one focus and one focus only -- to attend to the injured. This was truly a team in every sense of the word.

"Frankly I've never seen a more cohesive unit in operation...Considering the magnitude of this emergency I had expected much higher stress levels... [but they] remained calm and professional at all times. Everyone was treated tenderly, with respect, and with the utmost compassion. This included their treatment of one another and of the passersby like myself who were lending a hand.

"...I wonder if the reader will think that I'm exaggerating a bit in my praise of these EMTs... Please be assured that I have been very careful to paint an accurate picture of what happened and not magnify any of the facts. I don't know any of these volunteers personally and this letter is completely unsolicited. I am grateful to each and every one of them and deeply proud to have been a part of them if only for a brief time."

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

ET Collinworth is a Portal EMT and firefighter except in the summer, when he works for the US Forest Service as a line EMT. He vanishes abruptly at the start of fire season and comes back whenever the west is no longer smoldering. In the meantime he may have been taking care of firefighters in the Gila, Montana, Idaho or anywhere else that burned. We asked him to give us a peek into his other life...

Finally, a warm quiet sunny July day to begin painting the porch. Just as I'm stirring the paint, Laurie calls from the Gila Fire Dispatch. Laurie is the only married woman for whom I allow a personal attraction. Whenever she calls I irrationally wish for a hot date.

"ET, Montana's burning big time and they want a line EMT. I can get you on the last flight outta Tucson this evening."

So much for painting the porch, or a date. Hammering the lid back on the pain can I think about what bills need to be paid within the next two, three weeks. For that period of time, the rest of the world will have to wait for me.

Two months race past, and now I'm still somewhere in west Montana. I'm cold and the helibase is muddy from the night's snow. Fire season is winding down. Waiting for the National Guard BlackHawk to warm up and lift the firefighters and me to the fireline my thoughts flash back to the night I got here: it's one in the morning, I'm being driven through the smoke to get to this part of the world, to Missoula.

The man at the wheel is a 200-plus pound Blackfeet firefighter, who with one hand tunes in Tanya Tucker on the all-night radio show, and with the other tries to hold back the blood he's coughing up from bronchitis - blood is oozing between his fingers. His larger than life tattooed eagle covering each pec must sure impress the ER nurses whenever he gets taken in. I wonder how soon he'll be one of my patients. And soon the fires are out and I'm on my way back to Arizona.... The porch got painted by Thanksgiving.

THE FIREWISE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

by Helen Snyder

In December I attended a Firewise Communities workshop in Prescott designed to educate community leaders about how best to prepare for a wildfire in what is called the Wildland Urban Interface, or WUI.

The Wildland Urban Interface exists wherever homes have been constructed near or in areas of natural vegetation. Most Portal and Paradise homes are in the WUI.

The Firewise Communities program came as a response to last year's devastating fire season and the tremendous property losses in Los Alamos NM, Montana and Florida. Fire investigators showed slides of houses that burned and compared these for us with adjacent ones that did not burn.

Many houses burned not because they were incinerated by a fast-moving wall of flame as is popularly supposed, but because flying embers were able to get inside structures some time after the wall of fire passed. The wall of fire passed over relatively quickly, sometimes leaving the trees and wooden fences that surrounded the property unscorched. These houses had often caught and burned after the area had been evacuated and firefighters had moved on with the fire. Firebrands fill the air for miles around a big fire.

Some structural features can make a house fire resistant, and others in common use make a house very vulnerable. For example, large panes of glass were apt to crack from the heat and allow firebrands to enter the house whereas smaller panes did not. Best of all were double-paned windows; in some cases the outer pane did shatter but protected the inner one long enough that the intense heat

A special thank you to Pete Miller, who's kept the Portal Rescue grounds manicured and green!

subsided before the inner pane cracked. It was the flying embers that cause many houses to burn, not the wall of fire.

Some houses in the study areas burned for no apparent reason: they had fire-resistant roofs and sidings, small double-pane windows and were surrounded by lawn and green trees. In one case, a wooden wheelchair ramp had been built to an outside deck and investigators finally identified this as the starting point of the house fire: embers landed under the ramp, burned up to the deck and into the house. The moral is "If it's attached to your house, it is your house".

Houses on a slope or the crest of a hill were much more vulnerable than those on flat ground. Wooden decks on the downhill side of a building were especially apt to trap burning material and cause the loss of the entire structure. Only by enclosing a deck it be protected.

The emphasis is now on encouraging homeowners to create a "defensible space", a zone around each structure that will not permit fire to travel to the buildings. Thirty feet wide is recommended, and more if the vegetation is tall.

Plenty of room for fire vehicle access and turnaround is needed if responders are to be able to safely approach a structure in order to defend it. A water supply with an independent power supply is strongly recommended, as in areas like ours if one power pole burns it takes out the system in a wide area and no one can to pump water.

HOW WE "WASTED" \$500,000 by Jeff Gee

Several Portal Rescue firefighters joined 40 others at the State Fire School in Phoenix last year. Thanks to General Motors and several tool vendors, we learned about vehicle extrication, first in classrooms where we studied airbag systems and crash investigation data. On the last day we got what we'd all waited for: the chance to utterly destroy new vehicles!

And I do mean new, so new we were sworn to silence about all the details of these upcoming models. However, what I can reveal is that we chopped up about eight Suburbans, two or three Escalades (the Cadillac sports-utility vehicle), two or three Tahoes (deluxe Blazers), one nice Buick and of course a new, black Corvette.

It was 106 degrees and we had to wear full bunker gear but we hardly noticed. These vehicles all came right off the test track and were loaded -- leather seats and up to twelve airbags.

These new vehicles are well made and hard to destroy. However, a team of four to five firefighters who practice together can stabilize the vehicle, remove all the glass, remove the roof and all doors in about ten minutes, allowing full access to any injured occupants.

The Corvette was dropped upside down from eight feet by a forklift, so we could practice on a rollover. Some of the SUVs were laid on their sides.

But there's a purpose to this seeming waste. These are the models currently on the road; in the past we've been lucky to practice on junkyard cars, cars without today's features that protect the occupants but which can provide a hazard for the unwary emergency responder. Bumpers can spring and airbags can pop during extrication, and we must be aware of the hazards involved for our own safety as well as the patients'.

ROPE RESCUE

by Jeff Gee

Mescal Fire Dep't. generously donated several thousand dollars worth of new high-angle, or technical rescue, gear to us, including 4 ropes and most of the basic equipment. All that was needed was some personal gear like climbing helmets, harnesses, and gear bags, which we purchased this year.

Four people are now certified in Rope. We have done some joint training with CCSAR (Cochise County Search and Rescue) including rope work, and helicopter ingress-egress -- we have to know how to climb smoothly in and out of a hovering helicopter and be re-certified every 120 days in order for us to be allowed to work with the state DPS helicopter in backcountry maneuvers.

"HOW COME PORTAL RESCUE KEEPS ASKING ME FOR MONEY, WHEN IT HAS \$25,000 IN CDs IN THE BANK? YOU GUYS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION!"

by Helen Snyder

We hear this once in a while and it reflects a misunderstanding about what a not-for-profit corporation really is. The answer is simple: being non-profit means that your *primary* goal is something other than making money.

Portal Rescue's primary goal is to provide emergency medical and fire services to this community, not to make money. We need an income, however, in order to do this job - to pay for day-to-day operations, as well major purchases such as extrication equipment, office furniture and vehicles.

In a way Portal Rescue is a lot more like Harvard, Ducks Unlimited and the Mormon Church than it is like Bank One or Tucson Medical Center. The former don't have the primary purpose of making money; the latter do. The former are free to accumulate as much wealth as possible as long as it goes toward their primary goals of providing the stated service. Banks and private hospitals must show a profit, even though they also supply essential services to a community.

So why does Portal Rescue need money put aside? Compare Portal Rescue to a household as an economic unit.

Some households live in permanent debt, making only minimum monthly payments on their maxed-out credit cards. Others are debt-free, but live paycheck to paycheck with no reserve for an emergency. Still others are fiscally very conservative, spending carefully till they build up what financial planners recommend: a savings cushion equal to one year's living expenses. But all these examples are responsible ultimately for themselves.

Portal Rescue can't afford to live like the first and second examples above. Our income is very irregular and unpredictable (see treasurer's article, p. 3) because most of it comes from fire pay. But people donate to us today with the expectation that we will be solvent next month or next year or whenever it is they suddenly need our services.

We keep a year's expenses in reserve because we have no choice but to be fiscally very conservative -- we owe this to our community.

The money stays in CDs, and earns about 5% on average, giving us \$1,250 a year interest income.

We get letters - some are short, some are sweet and some just get right to the point:
" I TRULY THANK EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU FOR THE GREAT EFFORT YOU PUT FORTH IN SAVING MY B. _ _ " [anon.]