



By History Web Committee

## Jupiter's Volunteer Fire Department



Mr. Gerald (Jerry) Crooks came to Jupiter in 1950. His brother, Ralph already resided in Jupiter. Ralph had a fishing camp on the north side of the old Damon Bridge. Ralph's Place was famous for their hamburgers, fish burgers, and hush puppies and ..."bar refreshments." Ralph later moved his location to Center Street – and you can still see "Ralph's Standup Bar" today, although Ralph Crooks himself passed away in 1970.

What does this have to do with the Jupiter Volunteer Fire Department? Well, according to Jerry Crooks, the fire district was controlled from Ralph's Bar! When the firemen were needed, people would phone them at the bar. You see, Ralph Crooks was also the Chief of the Volunteer Fire Department. The first fire house was located in a shed on Alternate A1A, next to the old Wayside Inn, which was owned by John Ziegler. The fire equipment was stored there.

*(Information taken from "The Loxahatchee Lament", Vol. 1, © 1978 The Stuart News Company, © 1978 Cary Publications, Inc., All Rights Reserved)*

Around 1954, Mr. Harry G. Jones came to Jupiter to develop a retirement village for the Upholsterers' International Union, which was named "Salhaven." He became a resident of Jupiter, and a member of the Volunteer Fire Department. He got the Union to donate \$500.00 for building a new fire hall, and served on the construction committee. (All pictures of the fire station under construction are courtesy of Barbara Peterson of Indiana.)

According to Mr. Bernie E. Sikes, who moved to the West Palm Beach area in 1924, and then to the Jupiter area around 1956, the volunteer fire department didn't have the most modern equipment to start with. He said they had a used school bus equipped for firefighting, a 4 x 4 Dodge with a 280 gallon water tank, and the firemen carried "Indian packs" that held five gallons of water. He did say that in 1959 a front end pump was finally purchased!

Mr. Sikes knows what he was talking about. He was the assistant fire chief from 1959 to 1968. He said the biggest fire he ever fought was at the Pennock hot house. He was proud that in 1967 the Fire Underwriters voted the Jupiter Volunteer Fire Department as the biggest, best, and most efficient within the State of Florida! (Mr. Sikes' story taken from "The Loxahatchee Lament", Vol. 1, © 1978 The Stuart News



By History Web Committee

Company, © 1978 Cary Publications, Inc., All Rights Reserved) The Town Archives has documents regarding the Jupiter Volunteer Fire Department and the fire house. The fire house was expanded in 1963. The Fire Department requested a variance of set-back requirements so that a training classroom could be added on to the existing fire house. By that time Mr. A. V. "Charlie Baird was the fire chief.

Charlie was another early Jupiter visitor. He was stationed at the Jupiter Naval Radio Station in 1933. He evidently liked the area, because after living several other locations, he returned to Jupiter to as a resident, around the time of World War II during which he worked for the FAA. Mr. Baird was the Chief of the Jupiter Volunteer Fire Department from 1956 until 1966, and then the fire department became a paid district, and he was the new fire department Chief. *(Information taken from "The Loxahatchee Lament", Vol. 1, © 1978 The Stuart News Company, © 1978 Cary Publications, Inc., All Rights Reserved)*

[View](#) the 1966 contract between the Town and the Jupiter Volunteer Fire Department. Can you guess how much the charge was for one year of fire protection service?

