

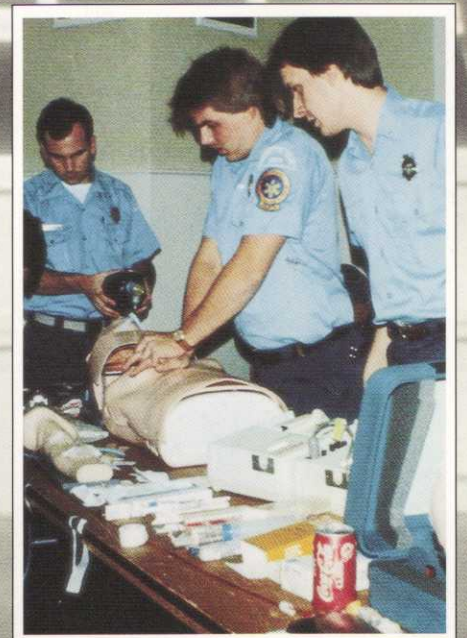


# 70 Years

1928 - Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew  
1998 - Roanoke Emergency Medical Services

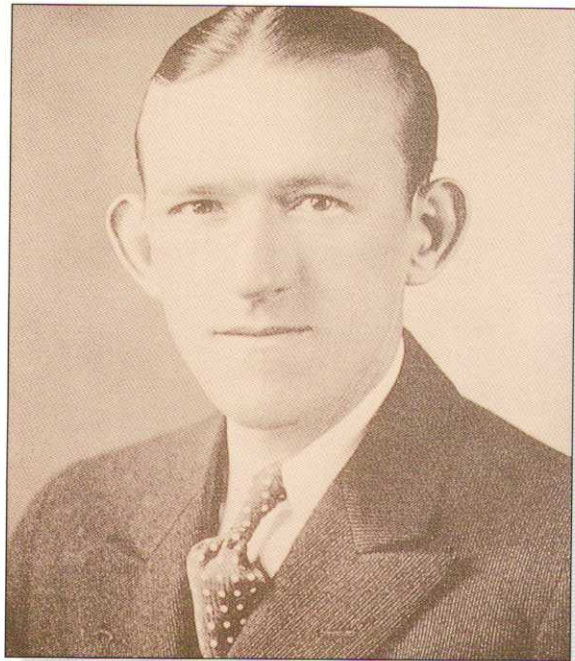


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D MAY 1928





The Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew was chartered in May 1928, but the crew's story really began in 1909. That year a young Julian Stanley Wise stood on the bank of the Roanoke River while two men drown after their canoe overturned. The people on the riverbank tried to help but no one knew how to help them. These events led Wise and nine other men to start the first volun-



teer rescue and first aid crew in the world, the Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew. The Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew was officially chartered on May 25, 1928 in Roanoke, Virginia.

The early years were mainly geared towards teaching water safety and the recovery of drowned victims. The crew members obtained first aid instructor certifications through the American Red Cross and began teaching first aid to firemen, police, and other groups throughout the city. In 1928 the crew answered only three calls.

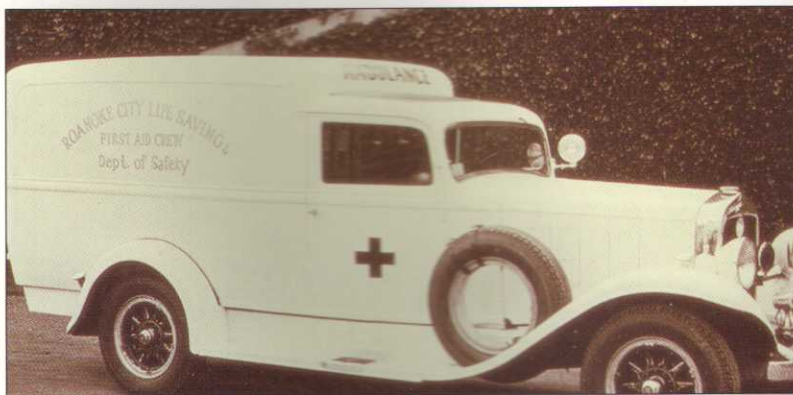
At first, the public resisted calling the rescue squad since most believed the crew existed mainly for body recovery. It wasn't until 1931 when a 16-



year-old boy survived a 23-minute underwater ordeal and was saved by the rescue squad that the public began to call earlier and more often.

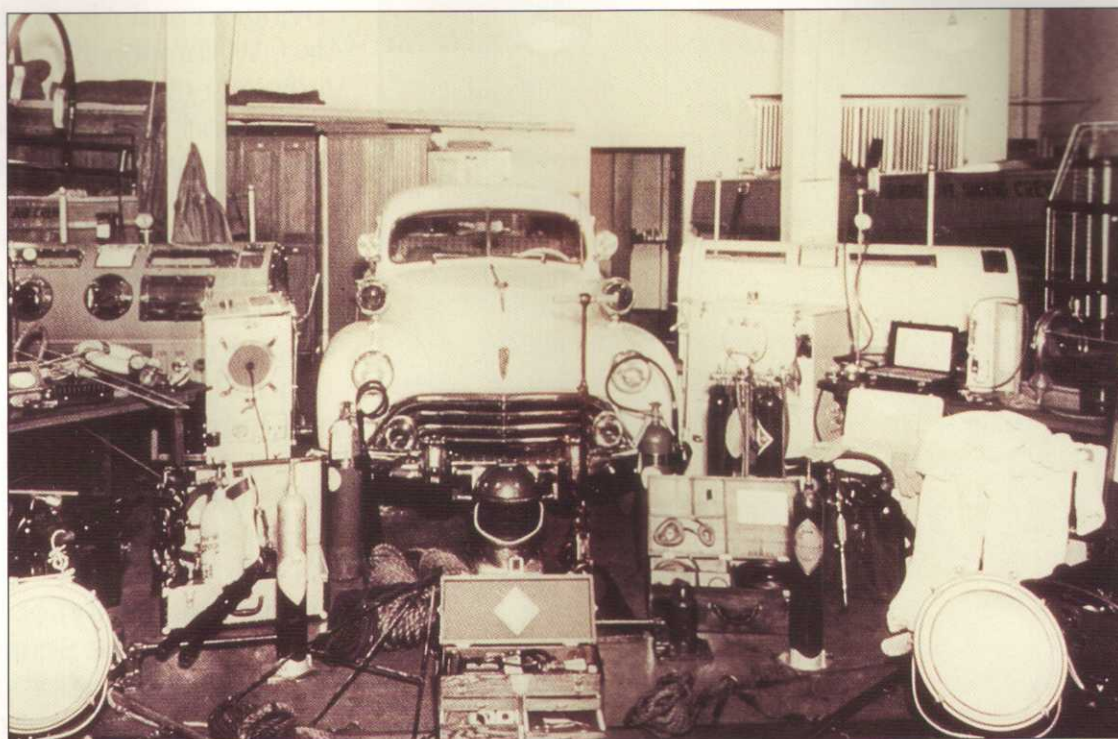


Early equipment included a rubber boat, grappling hooks, a Pulmotor and a Lungmotor; equipment that is now obsolete. All other equipment was handmade and was created to help each time a new rescue situation would arise.



Transportation was especially difficult as early crew members used Wise's own vehicle to go on calls. The first "official" vehicle was a cadillac donated by John M. Oakey. It wasn't until 1932 that the crew purchased their first vehicle, a 1932 Ford panel body truck.

In those days crew meetings were held twice monthly at Oakey's Chapel. Later a room was provided over the Oakey garage and regular meetings were held there for more than ten years. Training meetings were held at the Motive Power Building of the N & W Railway where American Red Cross First aid was taught; crew members made various pieces of homemade equipment; and they practiced their lifesaving skills.





# Grover Austin REMEMBERS



*I joined the Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew, Inc. when it was located upstairs over John M. Oakey's garage.*

*The crew members would go to the patient's home or hospital and set up oxygen tents when the doctors requested it to be used. That was before*

*oxygen was installed in each hospital room.*

*When the polio epidemic hit Roanoke in the 50s doctors asked for single men or men without children to help in the hospitals working with people in iron lungs. I was one of the first five men to receive a polio shot because I helped in this capacity. We would place an iron lung on Campbell Avenue and crew members would stand there soliciting money for this cause.*

*I made some calls with Julian Wise and also traveled with him when he spoke at various meetings. I do not remember the date I joined the crew. My certificate of Life Membership is dated February 17, 1964, signed by Julian Wise, President and Leon Briggs, Captain.*

*That is the one bad thing about getting old and having bad health, I cannot participate in crew activities.*

*Grover Austin  
Life Member  
Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew*

In 1930 the crew was given the approval of the Roanoke Academy of Medicine and was chartered by the American Red Cross. When calls increased from three in 1928 to 56 in 1930, interest in the public also increased and membership more than doubled to 19 men.

As the years passed, the organization took on many different tasks. In the 30s the crew began providing portable oxygen tents for use in both the home and hospitals. Members were called upon at all times to set up oxygen tents in hospitals and in private homes.

The members of the Roanoke Life Saving Crew, especially Julian Wise, were active in the founding of many other life saving crews. These included crews in Salem, Radford, Covington and Alexandria. Also, Williamson Road, Virginia Tech, Westvaco, Marion and the Roanoke Viscose plant. Other states, including Wisconsin, Michigan, and Alabama, also formed rescue squads after the Roanoke Life Saving Crew model.

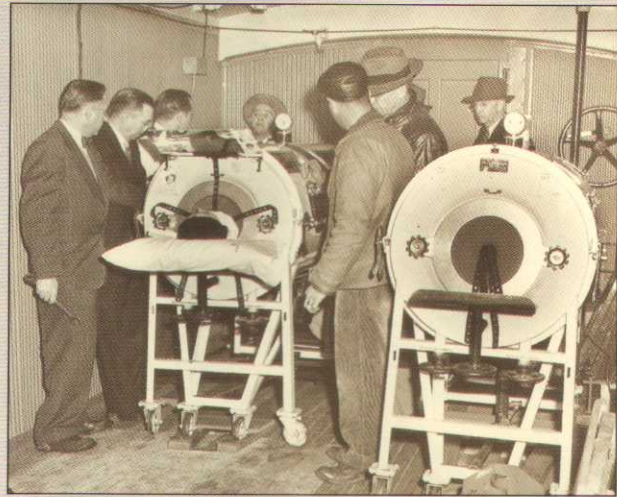
In 1935 Julian helped form the State Association of First Aid and Life Saving Units. Today there are 325 rescue squads and over 15,000 members in the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads. The association helps promote and assist member rescue squads to improve pre-hospital emergency care in Virginia.





uring the mid-40s,  
war depleted the  
ranks of the  
Roanoke Life

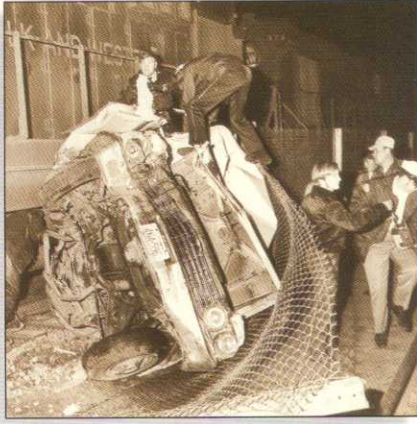
Saving and First Aid Crew as nine crew members were called to serve in the various branches of the armed forces. In fact, in 1943 the War Department asked the Roanoke Crew to make itself available for service in case of plane accidents within a 100-mile radius of Roanoke. The crew gladly took on this service. They immediately assembled a crash trailer which would carry such equipment as heavy jacks, chain hoists, a large tripod, portable cutting torch, asbestos suits, stretcher splints, fire extinguishers and many other pieces of equipment. This trailer was also used in the event of train and bus wrecks and other large accidents.



*In the 1940s polio was taking on epidemic proportions in the Roanoke Valley. In fact, in 1944, Virginia had one of the worst poliomyelitis outbreaks the state had ever seen; a reported 752 cases. Because patients with severe cases of polio required an Iron Lung to breath, the Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew decided to begin a campaign to raise money and purchase Iron Lungs for needy patients. The campaign to raise \$1,500.00 was such a huge success that the crew was able to purchase three iron lungs and one hand-operated infant machine. Many hours were spent taking these iron lungs to patients and needy families in the Roanoke area and beyond.*

*There are many stories to be told regarding the crew's help with the polio epidemic but one instance particularly stands out. A call was received one rainy Sunday afternoon for an iron lung to be taken to a patient's home. Within three minutes the iron lung was on its way. The men had to carry the iron lung across a creek and up a muddy bank to the house. They found an 11-year-old boy struggling to breathe. Fifteen minutes later the child was breathing easier inside the iron lung. The machine stayed in this home for six months, the child did recover and returned to school.*





By 1945 the crew had gained international recognition through an article, "Roanoke's Volunteer Life Savers," that appeared in *Reader's Digest*. This article summarized the 16-year history of Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew. A year later, Heroic Comics did a comic strip that recounted the successful delivery of an iron lung to a young Melvin Fisher in 1940.

Records show that through the first 20 years, 2,847 calls were received, 18,254 people received minor first aid, and 453 lives were saved by crew members.

The polio epidemic continued into the early 50s and the crew continued to supply oxygen tents to homes.

## Garland Parry REMEMBERS

*My most vivid memory is of a call to a wooded lot, at the corner of Williamson Road and Orange Avenue, now the site of the Holiday Inn. The police had found three*

*street people living there. Their shelter was made of an old metal bed with a high foot and headboard and a cardboard roof.*



*As we arrived we noticed a horrible odor. The smell of skunk and human waste. I remember there were two men*

*and one woman in the shelter. One of them had already died and the other two were very near death. After putting on a mask and gloves we checked them. We decided the only way to get them to the hospital was in body bags. We placed them in the body bags and left the zipper partially open for them to breath. We transported them to Lewis Gale Hospital on Luck Avenue. After this call we were not very welcome at Lewis Gale for some time. The police investigation revealed that they had eaten a raw skunk that had been poisoned by the city.*

*I joined the life saving crew in 1959 and took my life membership in 1972. I held several offices including chairman of the finance committee.*

*Garland G. Parry  
Life Member  
Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew*



**B**y the mid 1950s the crew was looking for a place to build their new headquarters. Land was purchased and offices were moved into the new Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew headquarters on Day Avenue. In those early days not only were calls run from the crew hall but the dispatcher worked in the rescue station as well. Calls were received and dispatched from the office downstairs.



*In the early 50s the members decided they needed a home of their own. They began looking for property close to town and purchased a vacant lot at 374 Day Avenue. Construction began in late 1954 and they moved into their new home in 1956. Hubert C. Hamlin and Bernard Cook were two very active people in the construction of the new building. They were responsible for getting the materials donated. The local brick layers union donated all the brick work and American Iron and Bridge works furnished all the metal work. The building was dedicated in 1957. In the early 60s the lot next to the station became available and was purchased and paved to make a parking lot.*







Up until 1960 or '61 the crew responded to rescue calls but did not provide transportation. If a patient needed to be transported to the hospital the crew had to call Oakey's, Lotz, or American ambulance service. These companies were called on because the crew had no ambulance equipped with a cot. By the end of the 60s the crew owned three Cadillac ambulances and a 4-wheel drive, all equipped for transportation.



## Leighton Rogers REMEMBERS

*I joined the crew in 1971 as a member of the Junior Crew. I remember the most important part of being a junior member was being a teenager and being able to help in life threatening emergencies. I held all the offices except captain in the junior crew.*



*Some of the things that are important to me are having one of the last life memberships signed by Julian Wise and being a life member of Roanoke Emergency Medical Services.*

*My most memorable events would be bringing someone back using advanced life support equipment and techniques. I believe myself and Marty Martin ran the last rescue call Julian Wise ran. We were both junior members and he drove us to a call on the market. I know of no other call that he ran after that. This was in the early 1970s.*

*Leighton Rogers  
Life Member  
Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew  
Roanoke Emergency Medical Services*





*The Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Junior Crew was established in the late 1960s. Bill Hoops, the Junior crew captain in the early 1970s, remembers that the junior members were once a very important "tool" for the senior crew. Although the junior members could not drive, they very often were the attendants in charge of the patient while the senior members drove. They also raised money for the junior crew by washing the ambulances and cleaning the crew hall. Many of the junior crew members went on to become senior members and officers, and helped oversee the junior crew as new recruits were brought in. The junior crew stayed active until the early 1990s, when the junior crew was absorbed along with the senior badged members from Roanoke Life Saving and Williamson Road Life Saving crews into the Roanoke Emergency Medical Services.*

The 60s also brought changes in training standards. In 1966 the National Highway Safety Act began to set standards that helped train rescuers as physician-extenders. Medical programs began to be coordinated under law by state health or Emergency Medical Service departments with federal guidance from the Department of Transportation and Health and Human services and the U.S. Fire Administration. In 1968 the U.S. Federal Communications Commission asked AT&T to recommend a number for use in emergencies, and 9-1-1 was adopted. During the 60s the junior crew was also established and remained active until the early 1990s. On May 15, 1969, Governor Miles E. Godwin Jr. designated May 18 - 24 rescue squad week.





**T**he 70s brought about numerous changes. The state became more involved in regulating ambulance equipment as well as directing the Emergency Medical Technician course requirements. By the mid-70s, the state required at least one EMT on each ambulance in order to transport a patient.



Also during the 70s, dispatchers were moved out of the station and into the main city dispatch office downtown. Unfortunately, the move downtown discouraged members from hanging around the crew hall and with fewer members available, calls became somewhat more difficult to cover. However, things began to pick up when the crew started holding bingo at the station around 1971. This fund raiser helped pay for much-needed crew equipment. Bingo went strong in the crew hall for almost 15 years.

In October 1972 women really began to become involved with the Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew with the development of the Ladies Auxiliary. Also that same year, Julian Wise received recognition from President Nixon in a letter congratulating him as the organizer of the first volunteer life saving and rescue squad in the world.



*In the early 1970s the wives and girlfriends of the members became more interested in rescue. The Roanoke Life Saving Women's Auxiliary was formed in October of 1972.*

*The purpose of the auxiliary was to assist the crew with fund raising and special events. Money raised by the auxiliary was used to purchase small pieces of equipment. They also donated money from time to time to the crew, so the crew could purchase other needed items. They were also very involved with community service events, such as Adopt-A-Park. They adopted Rivers Edge Sports Complex and helped to keep it clean.*

*The auxiliary was very active in the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads Auxiliary also. They participated at the district and state functions.*

*The Roanoke Life Saving Women's Auxiliary folded due to low membership in early 1998 after a long decline in women's interest in joining the auxiliary and an increase in the number of women joining the crew.*



The 80s brought even more changes in training. For the first time, if a qualified rescue squad member chose not to take paramedic courses, he or she could take the "challenge course" to become certified. Since this was not a popular choice, paramedic classes soon began locally.

By 1984 the College of Health Science began teaching paramedic courses. This was good for recruiting, as it allowed students to gain experience with the crew while going to school.

During the mid- to late 80s the state began restricting the age of EMT's that could be considered attendant-in-charge. Previously the state recognized 16-year-olds as attendants-in-charge but soon changed the requirement to 18 years of age.

## Christopher Dean REMEMBERS

*I was first introduced to emergency medical services when I was very young. My father had joined the Roanoke Life Saving Crew in the early 60s and my mother was part of the ladies auxiliary crew, so I was dragged down in my diapers.*

*By always being around the station and its members it felt like an extension of my family. They baby-sat me during meetings and included me in all aspects of their lives. Everyone was there for one another, just like a family should be.*

*The more I grew and was exposed to emergency medical services the more I felt a great interest in learning how to care for people. I took my first CPR class and Basic First Aid at the age of 13. I would go everywhere with my father. When school was on summer break I would come down on call nights and work in the station cleaning trucks, changing lights and making coffee for the people on call.*

*I still had a need to learn more. I would ask people to teach me how to work the jaws of life and get on our crash truck. Each night I was at the station I learned something new or how a piece of equipment would work. Later on people would start sending new members to me to teach them how things worked.*

*When I was 13 the junior crew voted me an honorary member. They gave me a shirt and badge. I was as proud then as I am today to be a part of this crew. When I was 16 I was voted into the junior crew. During my spell as a junior member I held office -- two years as captain. During the summer break I would spend up to five nights a week running calls. The junior crew had an average of 20 members, aged 16-20, and the junior crew elected its own officers and held fundraisers and membership drives at local high schools. During the merger of Roanoke Lifesaving Crew and Williamson Road Life Saving Crew the junior crew was disbanded and all members were drawn up into the senior crew. I chose to move up to shock trauma in the 90s and now am a Cardiac Technician.*



Christopher Dean  
Cardiac Tech/Firefighter/Life Member  
Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew  
Roanoke Emergency Medical Services



Three major changes took place in the 80s at Roanoke Life Saving Crew. In 1984 the crew began having problems covering calls during the daylight hours, so crew management went to the city officials for help. The crew asked for assistance with recruitment, and staffing to assist with covering calls. So in January of 1985 the city hired 18 paramedics, 12 full time and 6 part time. They worked 8 hour shifts around the clock.

As the 80s moved on it became harder and harder to find volunteers to staff three volunteer stations in the city including the Roanoke Life Saving Crew, the Williamson Road Life Saving Crew and the Hunton Life Saving Crew. Through the early 80s talks of merging the three crews began and in 1989 the Roanoke Emergency Medical Services was formed.

Along with the merger discussion, the City of Roanoke funded a grant position for a Business Administrator to help with the increasingly complex work of completing the merger of the two crews, and to work with the Board of Directors in managing the business aspect of the organization. Mary Hylton was hired October 16, 1989. In addition to coordination of all related activities, she is responsible for seeking grants, maintaining records, bookkeeping, and corporate responsibilities. She also assists the City of Roanoke's Fire-EMS Department in various aspects that concern both the volunteers and career EMS system.

*The merger of the Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew and the Williamson Road Life Saving Crew into Roanoke Emergency Medical Services was officially completed on December 8, 1989, after many years of discussion and development.*

*The Roanoke Life Saving, Williamson Road Life Saving and Hunton Life Saving Crew began serious merger discussions in the early 80's and the first official draft of merger was produced in May 1984. Unfortunately, the Hunton Life Saving Crew was not able to continue in these discussions, as the crew disbanded before the merger was completed. During the next five years, board members and elected officers from each crew met continuously, trying to develop workable plans and procedures that would help unify both crews.*

*Doug Hyre, then Captain of the Roanoke Life Saving Crew, and the first Operations Officer appointed to Roanoke Emergency Medical Services, remembers that the single most important issue the crews struggled with was preservation. No one really wanted to give up their established rescue squad name and the history and traditions associated with each. In the end, the board and crew representatives realized that a truly merged organization would have to have a central starting point.*

*Sidney Robertson, President of the Williamson Road Life Saving Crew, and the current President of Roanoke Emergency Medical Services, remembers that it was an extremely difficult decision to reach. Eventually, both crews realized that a new name was the best starting point for all crew members concerned, and the most beneficial for the citizens of Roanoke City.*





# Marvin Huddleston REMEMBERS

**I** arrived at the Roanoke Life Saving Crew as a 20-year-old with long hair and no direction in my life. I was playing softball with the Lotz Funeral Home fast pitch team and one of the players invited me to come and run a shift. Our team lost all but one game and I tried to forget that season, but I did remember the invitation and went to run a shift one night. My life was never the same after that. On my first night as an observer we ran two shootings and three major heart attacks before midnight. I left as wide-eyed as Bambi in the headlights, but I was hooked.



The crew gave me a direction in life. It gave me something to work for. It made me part of a team. I was helping someone and I liked it. I have many calls that stand out in my mind. It would be hard to pick one so I briefly mention the ones that surface in my mind on a regular basis.

We received a call for a possible drowning at a local hotel. As I looked at the four-year-old girl and started CPR, I felt a hand on my shoulder and heard a voice tell me "Marvin, you have got to save her." This was a friend of mine and the girl was his daughter. She was pronounced dead shortly after we arrived at the hospital. From that experience I learned that if you are going to stay in this business then you have to learn to deal with strong, often painful, emotions.

I was a brand new paramedic when I responded to an 85-year-old woman who had all the classic signs of a heart attack. I did all the things that I was taught and was on my way to the unit with her when a little old man stopped me and said "Son, she is all I got in this world. You take care of her, you hear?" She rapidly deteriorated on the way to the hospital and died during the night. I had done everything I was taught to do but this man still lost everything that he had in the world.

The crew received a call for a child through the ice at Lakewood pond. We raced to the pond and found a little girl dry but crying. We looked out in the pond and saw a beautiful golden retriever that had fallen through the ice and was struggling to stay above the water. At the same time we arrived and found the dog the crew received another call for an emergency a short distance away. The rest of the members went to help on the other call and I waded through the ice and got the little girl's dog. The little girl wrote me a nice letter which I still have in my scrap book and the Roanoke Times did a story on my "rescue".

In closing, I will say that the crew has given me much more than I have ever given it. One day, this pretty nurse from the emergency room did not like the way we were bringing in patients and thought she could do it better. She was put on our shift. Three years later she became my wife and has given me two beautiful children.

Marvin Huddleston  
Life Member  
Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew

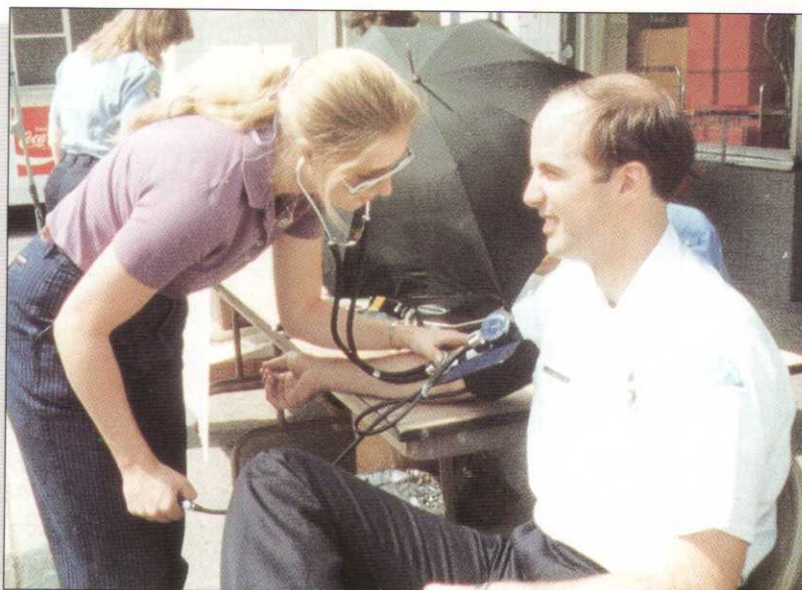


During the early 90s membership started declining and the city had to staff the Williamson Road Station 24-hours-a-day. At this point the city also began staffing the Roanoke Life Saving building with two staff members during the day and one paramedic at night to run with the volunteers. It was in the mid 90s that the volunteer membership increased enough to be able to staff the Roanoke Emergency Medical Services building again. Today the volunteers staff 7 pm to 7 am Monday through Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday.

The crew station at 374 Day Avenue has gone through many changes over the years. The latest changes were completed earlier this year. A board room and offices for each officer of the organization have been added. The meeting room is still used for training. Each month the crew has a training meeting and there are numerous classes, such as Emergency Medical Technician and CPR.

Over the years equipment has changed tremendously. Crew members stay on the cutting edge as new products become available. The latest piece of equipment is the Propac portable vital signs monitor which was made possible through a grant from Carilion Health System.

It has been an exciting and rewarding 70 years for the members of the Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew and Roanoke Emergency Medical Services. Though



the equipment, the transportation, and the medical techniques have changed, one thing has remained the same: the hard working members of the world's first life saving organization have remained committed to providing the best possible care to the citizens of the Roanoke Valley.



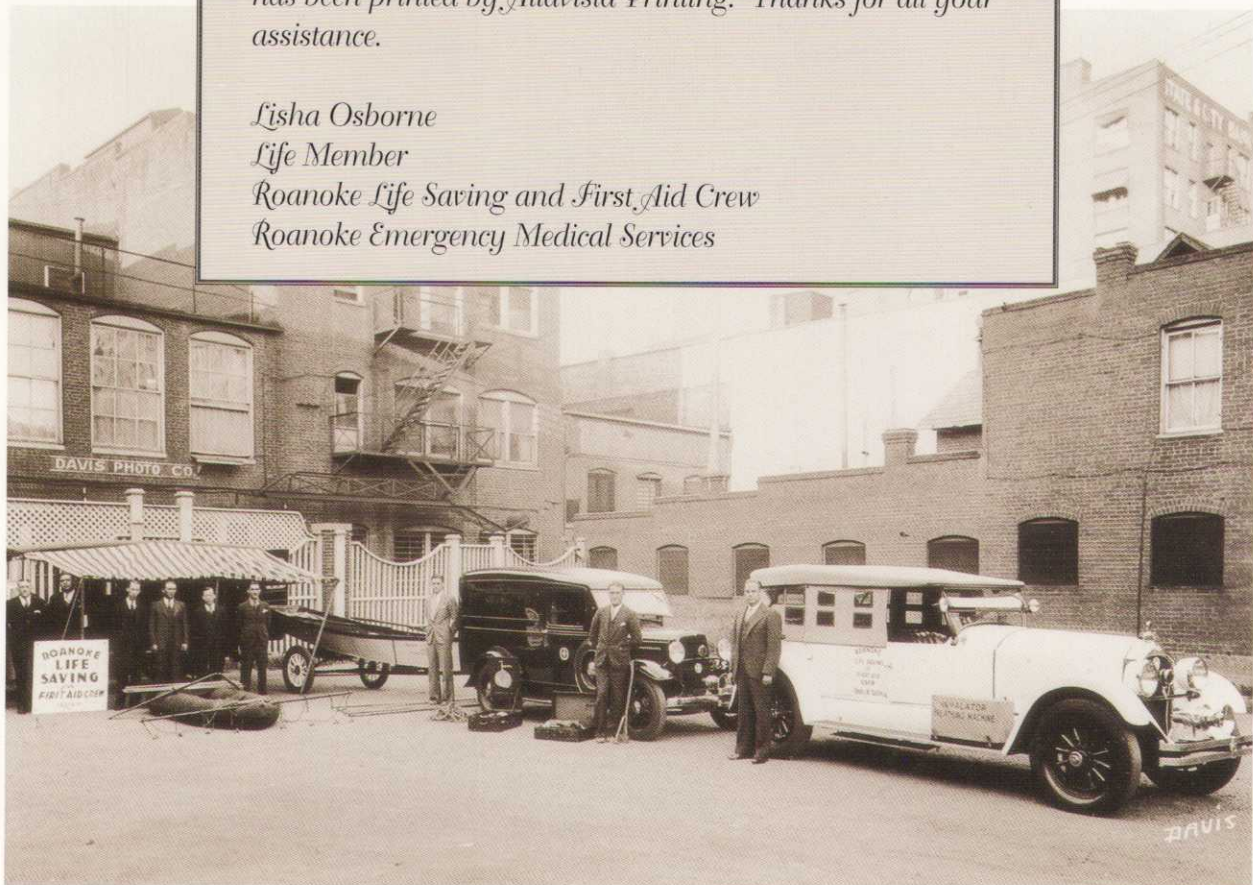
# THANK YOU

From Lisha Osborne



This has been an educational experience for me. I have learned a lot about our organization and have heard some very interesting stories. I would like to thank everyone that helped with this publication. Thanks goes out to: Mary Hylton, Regena Gillispie, Sidney Robertson, Kenny Harper, Doug Hyre, Bud Cromer, Rip Bishop, Garland Parry, Marvin Huddleston, Claudia Huddleston, Leighton Rogers, Bill Hoopes, Eddie Whiteside, Chris Dean, Jimmy Dean, Carolyn Dean, Lois Huddleston, Guy Zimmerman, and Billy Martin, all current or life members with Roanoke Life Saving Crew, Roanoke Emergency Medical Services, or Roanoke Life Saving Auxiliary. I would also like to thank employees of the Advance Auto Parts Advertising Department -- Mike Paris for taking our picture, Betsy Parkins and Carolyn Hornick for their many hours of editing and layout. This publication has been printed by Altavista Printing. Thanks for all your assistance.

Lisha Osborne  
Life Member  
Roanoke Life Saving and First Aid Crew  
Roanoke Emergency Medical Services







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