

Minerva Rescue Squad History

After the Minerva Volunteer Fire Department was formed in 1950 following a devastating 1948 house fire, it didn't take long for the firemen to understand the need for an ambulance to serve the community. Harold Sylvester, a volunteer fireman and concerned citizen, took on the task of forming the new rescue squad. After meeting with Town Supervisor Francis Donnelly, Harold was instructed to select 20 men from the community that would serve. Harold became the first Captain with John Mullane as Assistant Captain. After a door-to-door fund drive, the fire department was able to purchase a used 1948 Buick ambulance. The volunteer squad became first aid certified through Dr. Rose, the town physician, and responded to the first call for help on Monday, December 17, 1956.

In the late 1950s, Harold Sylvester and Robert Savarie became first aid instructors and all squad members were required to be trained. The team of 20 men housed the ambulance at the Olmstedville Station owned by the Minerva Fire Department.

The two-bay garage was built in the late 1950's by Ross Winch on the property donated by Helen Keenan. The station still serves as the home for the ambulance and one Minerva fire truck.

Minerva Rescue Squad volunteers were not only responsible for treating patients, but they also dispatched their own calls. Helen Sylvester and Florencetta Savarie were the first dispatchers to serve the squad. It was their responsibility to receive the information, record it, and phone multiple volunteers to answer the call. Later on, one number was listed and phones at multiple locations would ring. Ellan Brannon and Florencetta Savarie were serving as dispatchers in the late 1980's when the Fire/Rescue Company switched to 9-1-1 dispatch via the Warren County Sheriff's Office. Florencetta served 32 years as a volunteer dispatcher.

After four years of dedicated service, Harold Sylvester retired and John Mullane became Squad Captain with Robert Savarie as Assistant Captain. John and his wife, Lucy, were first aid instructors and became very involved with the American Red Cross.

During this time, the early 1960's, Lucy led the way for women to serve on the squad. Some of the Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary members were allowed to serve as alternate members. It was a requirement to have a female attendant present during transportation of female patients. Lucy Mallane, Frances Paradis RN, Joanne Carver RN, and Mae West were the first female members. In April 1985 Kathy Halloran was elected Rescue Squad Captain. Not only was Kathy the first female captain of the squad, she was the first female captain in the area. Other women to serve as captain were Frances Paradis, Elizabeth LeMay, Adrienne Landrigan, Debbie Palmatier, and Karen Wright.

The original ambulance was replaced in February 1961 by a new Cadillac. The Ladies Auxiliary was responsible for fundraising for the new ambulance. The women held an open house to show off the new ambulance to the community. The unit served the squad for about ten years and even had a baby birthed in the patient compartment in October 1969 while traveling down Chilson Hill in Ticonderoga. Don Dubay drove as Joanne Carver and Robert Savarie tended to the patients.

Over the next 20 years, the Minerva Rescue Squad had great advancements in training. Advanced First Aid was followed by a local recognized certification, Medical Emergency Technician (MET). Multiple members also trained in wilderness rescue situations. During Bill

Brannon's time as captain in the 1970's, the Rescue Squad was known for its active Search & Rescue Team. Working with local ranger, Gary Roberts, the team spent many hours in the woods. John Paradis is known for his work on the team along with Bill, who was a professional ski patroller also.

A new Cadillac was purchased in 1972. It was known for its smooth ride and being the first Minerva ambulance to have power windows.

Once New York State introduced Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) class, Minerva jumped at the chance to advance. Bill Brannon, Ellen Eager, Frances Paradis and Robert Savarie were among some of the first certified EMTs. Minerva Central School then agreed to become an administrator, and Frances Paradis, the school nurse, stepped in as Instructor Coordinator. The squad became State Certified in 1981. This required the squad to have at least one EMT present during all Patient transports.

For decades, beginning in the 1970's, the biggest community supporters of the squad were Dr. Franz Stewart and Mr. Gordon Bowie. Both men were huge motivators to the squad and Dr. Stewart, a cardiologist from Miami, FL, focused the squad towards cardiac care. Through the Stewart Foundation the squad's first 'Rescue Anne' CPR manikin was purchased. The Stewart Foundation also played a key role in the purchase of the 1983 ambulance. Dr. Stewart matched each donation up to \$10,000. Because of his strong involvement, the ambulance was in service within a year of starting the fund drive.

In the early 1980's, Minerva volunteers, along with Dr. Stewart, a summer resident of the area, expressed interest in an Advanced Life Support program to improve patient care in the area. This program, which was being considered through Glens Falls Hospital, would bring emergency medication and cardiac monitoring along with other important skills to the streets.

In late 1981, Dr Hirschman, a friend of Dr. Stewart's from Florida, surveyed the need for ALS in the area. Dr. Hirschman and others met with officials from Glens Falls Hospital to discuss the need. Soon after these meetings, Mountain Lakes Regional EMS Council formed protocols and regulations for ALS Ambulance Squads in Essex, Clinton, Franklin, Warren, and Washington counties. Robert Saverie was the Essex County representative for 13 years. The squad was finally offered the opportunity to participate in the local ALS Pilot Program. Seven Minerva EMTs, along with a handful from Lake George and West Glens Falls, advanced to the Critical Care Level. In June 1988, Minerva was the first ALS squad within the Mountain Lakes Region. In the early 90's, Minerva ALS Techs were called to intercept with numerous local ambulance squads transporting at the Basic Life Support Level.

In the summer of 2012, a new ambulance was purchased to replace the 2001 Ford/Road Rescue. 2012 was also the first time the squad responded to 150 ambulance calls, setting a record.

Today, the Minerva ambulance and crew responds to approximately 150 ambulance calls annually. In 2017, the Minerva team welcomed a new Medical Director. The squad and its ALS providers now work under the license and guidance of Dr. Al Jagoda. A majority of the patient care our EMTs provide is reviewed by Dr. Jagoda during a quality insurance process. Dr. Jagoda reads reports written by the paramedics and EMTs and reviews them with the caregivers.

One of the most memorable calls in the 60 year history was answered in April 2016, when a bus carrying over 30 college students rolled over on State Route 28N between Minerva

and Newcomb. Multiple ambulances were called to the scene and a triage center was established at Minerva Central School. A total of 16 were transported by ambulance to Glens Falls Hospital, in the middle of a snow storm that was blamed for the accident. Ambulance crews from as far as Lake George responded to assist Minerva firefighters extricate one passenger, who was wedged in an overhead compartment on the bus.

Squad Captain

Harold Sylvester 1956-1960

John Mullane 1961-1970

Robert Savarie 1971-1974; 1980-1984

William Brannon 1975-1979

Katherine Hallroan 1985-1988

Malcom Persons 1989-1990; 1995-1997

John Swertner 1991-1993

Frances Paradis 1994

Elizabeth LeMay 1998-2000

Adrienne Landrigen 2001

Travis Howe 2002-2004

Deborah Palmatier 2005-2008

Michael Corey 2009-2011

Cameron Dubay 2012; 2016-2017

Karen Wright 2013-2015

Simon Gardener 2018