

Remarks by:

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I know a man. He has been my friend for many years. He has never made much money, nor has he enjoyed the easier modes of living. In fact, he has always had to work hard--but he never bemoaned it--he just did the best he could from day to day.

In the town where he lives there was a time when the cry of "fire— fire" sent chills up and down one's back, for there was no defense to fire - it was disaster. There was no relief in simply learning it was not your house, because with no defense a conflagration was always possible.

When a fire occurred, every able-bodied man threw himself into the frenzied job of carrying water in a bucket, or using a wet sack to try to prevent spread of fire, or anything else to help contain the blaze--but always one house had to be sacrificed to the flaming jaws of the fire-god. No one was trained and really few knew what to do--they just tried to find some way in the face of possible disaster to turn aside its fury.

Then some progress came along. The town bought a booster-type fire truck with a 300-gallon tank, and a little later a shuttle truck with a tank of several hundred gallon capacity to rim back and forth from a well or pond to re-supply the fire truck.

My friend and a number of other men organized a volunteer fire department. There were no heroics--no "hard sell", just a job to be done and they got together and organized to do it.

Then there seemed to be almost a miracle. One of the older homes caught fire and everyone thought it was gone - -but no! The fire boys went into that battle with a will to win and did. The home was damaged, but the precious, irreplaceable things that made it home were saved, as was the main structure of the house.

Fire lost something of its grim destructiveness. No longer must the fire-god be appeased. But, it took courage and devotion on the part of the men of the department to translate the little they then had into some measure of security. Through the years it has required that virtually every other activity of life had to take second place to the never-absent fear of fire and their need to be ready to rush in to fight it.

I remember once that as the fire truck was going down one of our rougher streets to reach a fire, my friend was thrown off and seriously injured. Family, buddies, and friends stood by and the doctor was doing his best. He pulled through and all rejoiced. Money was made up to care for the expense--but only he bore the price only his family bore the nagging worry. No one could do that for him or them. He recovered and was riding the truck again in a short time.

Better equipment was bought, a water system was installed, the firemen trained weekly and occasionally one would go to A. & M. College for the short course. Area conventions were held and everyone became better trained and prepared for his work. Fire ceased to threaten - seldom was a property completely lost--usually not too seriously damaged.

Many is the time, however, on a cold, dark night, when ice covered the bushes and trees and one's breath froze into fog, the wailing cry of the siren has told of a fire, potentially a home being destroyed, and in a moment I would hear my friend's car start as he began his race with danger all

about him to pit his knowledge and the equipment he had against fire - that element which makes men's blood run cold. I would slip down a little further into the warm, cozy blankets of my bed and rest content, there will be no home lost tonight.

We rest much easier now because of the valiant service of a few men devoted to the ideal of service.

It is true, a good deal of money has been spent in securing reasonably modern equipment and in providing training. It is worthwhile though only because men give deeply out of their own lives of courage, resourcefulness, and unselfish service.

Yes, I know a man.

He has qualities of mind and heart that make him worthy of the name. He is in every sense of the word a useful citizen and a meritorious member of society.

He is a volunteer fireman.

I am proud to call him "friend".