

## Wildwood Living From an Old Timer

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By Delbert Bills

Fire House, Prevention and Response

Building the fire house was a very frustrating experience and many problems ensued. As owner of the building, we had to apply for building permits. We discovered among many other things that we had to get a waiver from the Park county commissioners to build a commercial building on lot 1-216 which was zoned (RVC) recreational vehicle center. We had to get a waiver from the Park County commissioners to locate the building more than 50' from Yellowstone Road. HFPD insisted on a 99year lease and we insisted on a five year lease interval per our attorney's advice. Insurance coverage and payment responsibility became a big issue. Also we had to apply and pay for power to the building from IREA. Then we had to get HFPD to apply for a renters permit to pay the bill. Much of the electrical, as well as plumbing for a propane heater had not been covered in the contract. We had to install new cattle guards that would sustain the weight of fully loaded tankers and reinforce the fire house floor beyond original plans. We had to haul additional gravel in and improve our road as well as arranging for Park County snow removal on a priority basis. So this and numerous other items had to be further negotiated.

Meanwhile I had hand carried a list for a legal agreement of (T&Cs) terms and conditions to our attorney right after Dick Hubbard resigned with an agreement that he would have it ready for our WW Board meeting on 8-10-91. It wasn't ready 10 days prior to the requested date as our attorney had lost the notes. I gave him a new set of T&Cs and our attorney agreed to mail the agreement to the President of the Board of HFPD and I would sign for Wildwood.

The propane heater became a major issue. It cost about \$500 and there was no piping installed to accommodate it. Faye and I personally installed the large overhead propane heater with great difficulty with a step ladder in the back of my pick-up. (It has since been replaced.) We installed the mop boards. Thefts (from filing 4) helped us stain the exterior and paint the interior. We got our occupancy permit and sent completion notices to Joe Lynch, president of HFPD BODs, and Jay Hutchinson, fire chief of the HFPD on November 11, 1991.

A lot of credit is due to all (both from Wildwood and HFPD) who volunteered considerable time and helped in various ways to finally bring this long-drawn-out project to final completion, We finally had a house for a rather antiquated fire truck which was a pick-up truck with a tank in the bed. But this was a good start.

By 1991, we had already had several emergency cases at Wildwood to wit; a heart attack, a serious horse fall accident, a resident punctured a lung, several lightening caused fires, automobile accidents on Elkhorn Road and others. A lightening strike started a fire before the fire house was built and the caretaker's wife drove to San Isabel, 5 miles to the south, to report it. The septic tank contractor for our own home scalded himself badly by uncapping the radiator of his old over-heated generator. A worker helping me roof our house panicked over a yellow jacket bee and it stung him on his tongue. He could not talk within minutes and had to be taken to the hospital in Woodland Park. Another resident almost asphyxiated himself and his wife from a portable generator under his house and had to be airlifted to Colorado Springs. He later had a heart attack and had to be airlifted by Flight for Life. There may have been many more accidents of various types that we are not aware of.

We have the potential for serious accidents and fires, some from carelessness, and others from nature as well as unforeseen situations like heart attacks. Quick response times are imperative. Fortunately, most of us have better communication capability now and can simply dial 911. Many of us have cell phones and a few have radio telephone service. A few residents are in cell phone dead spots but have neighbors who have service of some kind. There was a case early on when a 911 call from Wildwood went to Salida and caused some confusion. Since then, we have cooperated with the HFPD and many of us have now installed a 4"x4" post at the end of our driveway with our Park County address and blue reflectors on them to aid the fire department in locating a distressed caller. I believe this is now a requirement when a culvert permit is applied for. In any event, every Wildwood property owner should install this sign.

I would remind all of our owners that we each have a responsibility to clean up trash, have spark screens on our chimneys and if possible our open fire pits. I have installed a 7'x15" culvert on legs about 18" above my fire ring. It has a screen mesh on top and does a great job of stopping flying sparks, as well as drawing the smoke up and out of the way. Water should always be available. One of our residents was careless this summer and left an open campfire unattended. A fire was started and our caretaker was able to put it out before it got out of control. Acts such as that can endanger others in the sub-division.

A burn permit is required to burn trash, even in a burn barrel. A free permit can be obtained from the HFPD in Hartsel. Burn permits are valid for one calendar year only. Call HFPD on 719-836 3500 as well as Park County Commission Office on 719-836 4121 or e-mail [hartsselfire@hotmail.com](mailto:hartsselfire@hotmail.com) when you intend to burn trash. A campfire in an appropriately attended and installed campfire fire ring does not require a burn permit. We can call 719-836 4160 to check on the fire ban status.

I interviewed the HFPD fire chief, Jay Hutchinson, on October 29, 2008 as a part of my research for these articles on fire prevention and emergency response. He stated that they had put out a five acre "wild land" fire just last Monday in South Park Ranches just south of Wildwood. They also dispatched to a car roll over on Ute Trace within Wildwood just last week. He currently maintains two trucks at Wildwood. One is a 1000 gallon tanker with a 250 gal/min rating. The other truck (72) is equipped for search and rescue and holds 300 gallons with a 250 gal/min pump rate. He informed me that they had installed the dry hydrant last summer at the south end of the fish pond while it was drained. After the strainer is placed they will no longer have to back down close to the water and worry about cutting through the ice to get access to the water in the winter.

I inquired on the current status of the reciprocal agreement (referred to as Mutual Aid) between the HFPD and J-C FPD. Mr. Hutcheson assured me that a call to 911 was all that was necessary. The closest (free) fire unit(s) will be dispatched and we do not have to worry about an invisible boundary line splitting the two fire protection districts.

His 5 year strategic plan calls for upgrading the equipment at Wildwood Station #2 by shuffling better equipment from a larger station #3 and later a much better equipped search and rescue unit. He is also pushing to lower the fire protection rating in the rural areas from a protection class 9 to 8. I verified with our fire chief that most of Wildwood within the HFPD (except some parts of filing 4) are within 5 road miles of the fire house and has an ISO approved classification of 9. Remember that some owners are in the J-C FPD. You may find it financially beneficial to re-verify that your own fire insurance classification is a protection class 9.

The HFPD now has five stations that have been strategically placed in the district for prompt response with a full range of high quality emergency services. The district has grown to now employ a full time chief, one maintenance person and an administrative person. There are 25 volunteers and 10 reserves. Our caretaker, Art Allen and Gary Neil from filing 1, are currently volunteer firemen from Wildwood. We need to field more volunteers. Some training is required but you don't need to live at Wildwood full time to volunteer. Anyone who is interested can call Jay at 719-835 3500 or e-mail: chiefjay\_1@msn.com.

Del Bills is a 28 year Wildwood resident; past Board president; liaison with the state water engineer and district water commissioner; was instrumental in extending power through filings one and two; electrical engineer; long time Boy Scout leader; farming/ranching boyhood heritage with an intense interest in nature. You can contact him at [www.delbertbills127@msn.com](http://www.delbertbills127@msn.com).