



## *~ GPS Update*

*~ Richard English*

Please note an important change of date and location for our next member meeting. We will meet at the home of Mike and Alyson Bingham on May 8<sup>th</sup> (one week later than usual) to celebrate the dedication of a state historical marker commemorating a mill once situated on their property. The Bingham's home is located at 5387 Jockey Street in Galway. **A map is included on the last page of this newsletter for any member that needs directions.** This will be a members-only event. Members are asked to arrive at 7:00 pm and to bring folding chairs if possible.

During the business portion of our meeting, we will elect new officers and trustees. The Nominating Committee has proposed the following names for member consideration: Carol Schweizer (president), Pat Sanders (vice president), Richard English (treasurer), Martha Brandow and Mary Lynn Kopper (co-secretaries), and Virginia Sawicki and Ray David (trustees). We need a quorum of 20 members for the vote to be valid, so please plan to attend. Many thanks to the individuals who agreed to serve in these positions for the benefit of all our members.

It has been the custom for GPS to participate in several Memorial Day activities. We decorate the gazebo in Village Park, we march in the morning parade, and we sell GPS publications at the bandstand. Volunteers from our membership are needed for each of these activities. Please contact Virginia Sawicki at 882-1898 if you can help. She has generously coordinated all our Memorial Day activities for several years and would welcome your call.

At our last meeting, Phyllis Sleeper presented contents from the Galway Trunk during a talk entitled "A Treasure Chest of Galway History." The trunk was assembled several years ago to help fourth-grade students at Joseph Henry Elementary School appreciate how everyday activities were accomplished in days gone by. Items in the trunk included a milk bottle, an old telephone, a washing plunger, ice creepers, a hog scraper, a hand-forged hammer head, a candle mold, a butter bowl, and several other items collected in Galway over the years.

We also extend thanks to each member who contributed items for the new display case in Town Hall with the theme "Artists of Galway." Virginia Sawicki, Martha Brandow, and Mary Lynn Kopper volunteered their time to arrange all the donated items in the display case in a way that accents the artistic value of each item.

### Upcoming Dates

#### **May 8 – Next Member Meeting OFFSITE**

7:00 pm Social Gathering  
7:30 pm Business Meeting  
7:45 pm Program

#### **July 12 – Next Board Meeting at Town Hall**

7:00 pm

## *Answering the Call: Galway's Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Celebrates 50 years of Community Service*

~ Mary Cuffe Perez

*The following was taken from personal interviews and from the early history of the Galway Volunteer Ambulance Corps/Emergency Medical Service provided by EMS.*

Galway can be proud of how many of its most important and valued service organizations were formed by the commitment, generosity, foresight and hard work of volunteers. This year, we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Galway Emergency Medical Service (EMS) which provides our community with the most vital of services: saving lives.

From its founding days in 1967, when the local funeral director answered emergency calls in his hearse, to today's fully equipped ambulances and highly skilled personnel, the Ambulance Corps, now EMS, has answered the call for help, coming to the aid of victims of accidents on the roads and at home and farm, providing medical care and life saving interventions for those suffering from fractures, heart attacks, strokes, allergic reactions, breathing obstructions and sometimes just chronic loneliness. If you can think of an emergency situation, the corps has probably answered that call.



*Erik and Julie Roy, long time volunteers for EMS and Jean Jones, standing, one of the organization's founding members*

and launching all-out fundraising drives. The effort was supported by contributions of both time and money from the community, with some help from local tax assistance.

Galway and Providence organized a joint corps, headed in Galway by Everett Scott and supported in Providence by Melvin Hatley and Maxwell Ainsworth. A board of directors was formed with Claude Gilson of Providence, President, George Wheeler, Vice President, Mildred Kalinkewicz, Secretary, Everett Scott, Treasurer. Other board members were Joseph Gemmeti, Richard Hamilton, Jerry Richards, Cecil Anibal and David Gearhart. That first meeting held on December 12, 1966, took on the big issues of funding, personnel, purchasing an equipped ambulance and erecting housing for both

The Galway Ambulance Corps was established when federal legislation required states to ensure that ambulances were properly equipped and manned by trained personnel. The law was in response to the sharp increase in fatalities from automobile accidents due, in part, to the lack of adequate ambulance services. Either states fulfilled this mandate or federal money for construction and maintenance of highways would be reduced by 10%.

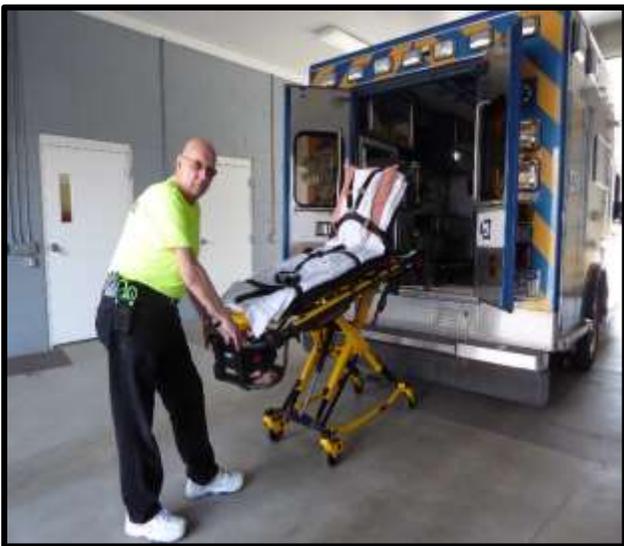
For rural communities, such as Galway, this mandate landed hard. It meant that Cecil Anibal in Galway, and other funeral directors in small towns across the state, were out of the ambulance business, and many communities were left without a means to transport the sick and injured to the nearest hospitals.

That's when the Galway community rose to meet the challenge, and, with the quick action of volunteers, an ambulance corps was founded by soliciting volunteers

ambulance and corps. The formal framework of the Galway Volunteer Ambulance Corp was official in January 12, 1970 with the adoption of a constitution and bylaws.

A great deal was accomplished in a short period of time. Between 1966, when the state mandate was adopted, and 1970, the Galway Ambulance Corps joined forces with the Providence Corps, recruited volunteer responders, purchased an ambulance, erected a building, trained personnel, and adopted a constitution.

The training of personnel began in December of 1966 with 32 volunteers. First aid training was required, followed by a more intensive Medical Emergency Technician course. Active crew members at that time in Galway were Jerry Richards, Everett Scott, John Scheiber, David Gearhart, Bruce Monroe, Lois Monroe, Fay Scheiber and Eleanor Scott. Everett Scott was captain. In Providence a second crew was formed with Melvin Hatley, captain. Training was also held during regular corps meetings. Contracts were drawn up and signed for the towns served – Charlton, Providence and Galway – to support the corps with a contribution of \$1,000 each.



*EMS Captain Mike Jazwinski demonstrates the lift on the newest ambulance*

Annual fundraising drives continued to generate the largest share of revenue through raffles, bake sales, Tupperware parties, fruitcake sales, suppers and garage sales. Also, letters were sent to those who received ambulance services, eliciting contributions. The budget for 1972 was \$7,000, with hopes of raising \$5,000 in community contributions and \$2,000 from the town. In 1983, the budget had risen to \$21,800. In 2017 the Galway Emergency Medical Services has an operating budget of \$370,500.96.

Reviewing the early history of the organization and talking with Captain Mike Jazwinski, who has been with EMS for 47 years, and past members, Julie and Erik Roy, and founding member Jean Jones, reveals how much has changed since the early days, and how much is asked of personnel, both then and now.

Jean Jones, who still takes blood pressure readings at the Galway Seniors meetings, is a founding member of the corps and a Registered Nurse. Erik Roy has served as President of the Board, Treasurer, Captain and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for the organization in his 36 years of volunteerism, and Julie, who served as an EMT for 20 years, also did CPR and First Aid training for the fire company and others.

Mike Jazwinski has dedicated 47 years, joining the corps in 1971 as a First Aid and CPR technician, then took the more advanced training to become an EMT, followed by more training to become the first Paramedic in Galway. In 1990, he took on the responsibility of Captain, a position he has held ever since. When Mike started, there were 20 – 30 volunteers, most providing basic life support services. The ambulance was not as well equipped as today's, and many of the life-saving measures were done manually. For instance, Julie Roy recalls providing CPR to a patient all the way to the hospital.

Jean Jones adds that when on call, responders were tied to the red phones installed in their homes. “I had a three-year-old at the time,” Jean recalls, “and I was fortunate to have a neighbor come over to babysit if a call came in.”

In later years, scanners and pagers replaced the red phones, and today calls are no longer dispatched to private homes, but come in directly to the EMS building, constructed in 2003 to replace the organization’s first home. Personnel are now on call at designated shifts (one 12-hour period per week and one weekend day a month) and must remain overnight at the EMS building during their shifts.

Overnight stays were not possible in the early days, says Erik Roy. The first building, constructed by George Wheeler, which now houses the Lions Club and Food Pantry, was one-third the size it is today and housed the ambulance. It was necessary to remove the ambulance for meetings and training sessions.

Just as today, the early crew answered a large variety of calls – from life-serving to lifesaving. Many babies were born with the help of EMS. Erik recalls calling in to the dispatcher that they were on their way to a call to assist one person, and on the way to the hospital with two.

Automobile accidents remain the most frequent calls. “Route 29 in East Galway,” Jean Jones recalls, “was always bad, as was the Galway Road intersection with Jockey Street, and on Route 147 where the wind blows snow across the road in deep drifts.” Erik adds, “You could always count on a few calls involving the young people who had come up from Virginia in the fall to train at the Milton Site. Once the first snow came, we would often find them in a snow bank.” Before the crackdown on drunk driving, a lot more calls came in for alcohol-related automobile accidents. “Mostly driving off the road and landing in a ditch, or ...” Erik chuckles, “into a swamp.”

In those days, the Ambulance Corps answered around 100 calls a year; in 2016 there were 430.

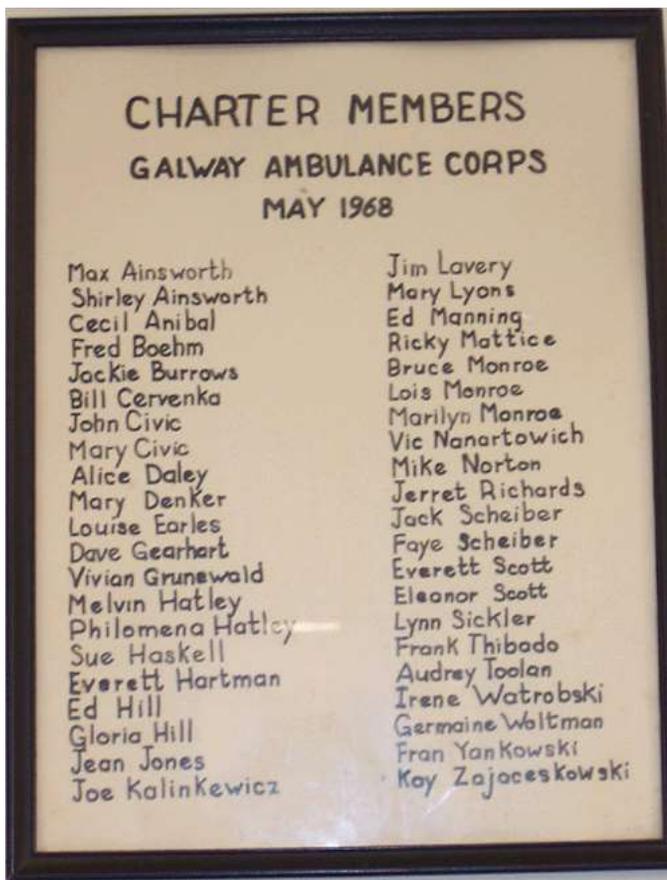
In 2003, EMS began paying Paramedics and in 2004, the organization received its Advanced Life Support status, capable of providing critical lifesaving interventions. EMS now has two ambulances, equipped with the same kind of life support equipment found in emergency rooms. Every call is answered with a driver trained in basic life support, a Paramedic and an EMT. There are four volunteers, one trained as an EMT, and Mike and his daughter Heather, both Paramedics, who also volunteer part-time. But the equipment, the ambulance, the medical personnel do not come cheap. Mike showed me a defibrillator inside the ambulance costing \$35,000 that EMS was able to obtain through a grant from the Dockstader Foundation. They are still trying to find state funding for another defibrillator for their second ambulance. An ambulance which cost \$3,000 in 1966, costs over \$150,000 today. Personnel costs are \$245,000.

Today, EMS no longer has the burden of continuous fundraising activities, organizing only the popular annual soup sale. They rely for funding on their annual community fund drive, billing insurance companies (begun in 1998) for their services, and from town contributions. “We are really hurting,” says Captain Jazwinski. “A large part of the insurance coverage is through Medicare, and with the cuts in Medicare, we receive only half of what a call costs our organization.” While the Galway town budget for the Volunteer Fire Company is \$255,550 in 2017, it is \$68,680 for EMS.

“One problem we have,” Jazwinski says, “is that during our fund drive, people often tell us they already support the fire company, assuming we are part of that organization. We are not, though EMS and the fire company often respond jointly to an emergency, depending on the nature of the call.

EMS is actively seeking volunteers. In the early days, the days that Julie and Erik and Jean recall, there were over 20 - 30 volunteers. Now, there are four. Being a volunteer comes with the rewards of helping to save lives in the community and includes free training, from basic First Aid all the way to Paramedic training. EMS regularly offers the community Red Cross training, CPR and baby-sitting classes.

Being a member of EMS is both one of the most rewarding experiences you can have, and at times, the most challenging. While the old motto of “neighbor helping neighbor” is still central to the service, it can be hard on the crew for the same reason. Asked how they handled the critical cases, especially when many of these people are friends and neighbors, Jean, Erik and Julie agreed: “You do the best you can. If you can’t handle it, you shouldn’t be in the corp.”



A familiar face is a reassuring presence for those in need of emergency care. “Some of the calls were just for TLC,” Erik says. When asked what he meant by that, he explained that many people who lived alone, the elderly or those who suffered from mental decline, would call thinking they had a seizure or some other life-threatening illness. “What they really needed was just someone to talk to. And we did that.”

Galway congratulates the Emergency Medical Services for 50 years of serving the community – and to all those volunteers who cared enough to sacrifice their time and dedicate themselves to the greater good of their community.

Want to volunteer? Call 882-1234 or visit the website to learn about volunteering, its benefits and requirements, and more about EMS: [www.galwayems.org](http://www.galwayems.org).

Follow the *Galway Get Together* to learn about the EMS upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

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**Celebrate the start of the Erie Canal Bicentennial at Schoharie Crossing’s Canal Days July 8 and 9, 2017 at the Schoharie Cross State Historic Site, Fort Hunter, NY.** There will be music, old engines, wagon rides, games, food, vendors and more. Also features the Views and Vistas Art Exhibit in the newly renovated Visitor Center. For more information, visit: [www.nysparks.com](http://www.nysparks.com) or call 518-829-7516.

**The Galway Public Library sends its appreciation to the Galway Preservation Society** for its gift to the library of the book, *War on the Middleline: The Founding of a Community in the Kayaderosseras Patent in the Midst of the American Revolution* by James E. Richmond. The book was donated to the library in memory of Linda Carpenter.