

HISTORY OF FIRE DEPARTMENT NEW YORK RETIREES

MARTIN / ST. LUCIE DIVISION - FLORIDA

Richard Kirrstetter, Retired Ladder 33, who was Vice President of the Fire Department New York Retirees, Broward Division – Florida in 1991 through 1993, moved to Hobe Sound, Martin County, Florida in 1994. At that time, Richard found that the closest Retired Divisions were in Palm Beach County to the south, and Vero Beach to the north. So he decided to try to form a group for Martin and St. Lucie Counties. Speaking with two other retirees that he knew in the area, Jack Creeden, Retired Engine 73, and Dick McCormack, Retired Ladder 33, he found that they were also interested and thought that it would be a good idea to form a group. That led Richard to run an ad in a local newspaper asking if there were any Retired New York City Firefighters that would be interested in starting a Retirees Group for Martin and St. Lucie Counties. The response was encouraging with 8 brothers responding to the ad.

The first meeting was held in October of 1995 at the home of Richard and Gail Kirrstetter in Hobe Sound, with 8 brothers attending that meeting. They were: Richard Kirrstetter, John Carino, Dick McCormack, Jack Creeden, Joe Pecoraro, Jack Flanagan, Bill Walsh, and Bill Kelly. Business that was discussed, was how to set up the new organization and what subjects to concentrate on, such as health benefits, social activities, etc. These members are now considered the founding members of the Fire Department New York, Retirees, Martin/St. Lucie Division – Florida.

The next meeting was held in November of 1995 at the home of Joe Pecoraro. The group had now grown, with 10 brothers attending that meeting. Business discussed was the furthering of the organization, Newsletter to be printed, and a Christmas Party planned for December.

The next meeting was held in December of 1995 with 14 brothers in attendance at the home of Jack Flanagan. We could see that the organization was growing. The Christmas party was discussed and quickly put together. The Christmas party was held at the Jolly Sailor Restaurant in downtown Stuart, and was a success. It brought in other members and their wives.

Jack Flanagan was instrumental in obtaining a meeting hall for our future meetings. He made arrangements with the V.F.W. in Jensen Beach and from January 1996 to the present time, the group has met there for its monthly Board Meetings and monthly General Meetings.

The January 1996 General Meeting was held for the first time at the V.F.W. hall and Officers were elected. They were:

Richard Kirrstetter, L33 - President

Kenneth Sunshine, BN31 - First Vice President

Jack Flanagan, E41 - Second Vice President

Bill Kelly, L26 - Recording Secretary

Dick McCormack, L33 - Sunshine Chairman

Joe Pecoraro, E69 - Breakfast Chairman

At that point, our membership had grown to 24. Our first annual picnic was held April 5th, 1996 at the Jensen Beach Causeway. It was a great success, with over 35 brothers attending with their better halves and fun was had by all.

By this time we were well on our way and growing. We were beginning to attend functions as a group, such as walking a picket line in uniform with our banner, showing our New York City Fire Department affiliation with the IAFF, in Estero, Florida. We did this in support of 11 firefighters who were laid off in Estero and replaced by a private Wackenhut company. I believe our presence was instrumental in these firefighters being rehired.

The organization is alive and well and still growing, with monthly meetings and many other activities planned throughout the year. It is an informational as well as social organization. The organization has set-up a website at www.fdneyfloridaretirees.com. This was done through the outstanding efforts of Lewis McDonald, the son of our former President. He has donated a great amount of time and knowledge in setting up this site. A Tip "O" the Helmet to you, Lewis. We invite retirees and active brother firefighters to visit our website.

Richard Kirrstetter

President Emeritus and Historian