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EST. 1972

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GARLAND LANDMARK SOCIETY

PO BOX 462232, GARLAND, TX 75046



Calendars are on sale NOW!!

Get yours from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
on Thurs., Fri., and Sat.
at the Landmark Museum.

Calendars are also available at
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TRACK

VOLUME 18 NO. 1

GARLAND LANDMARK SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JAN FEB MAR 2021

Garland Emergency Corps

Unsung Heroes and Helpers of Garland Citizens



Garland Emergency Corps workers helped evacuate a family from Duck Creek flood waters near Hwy 67 during heavy rains on April 26, 1957. Rising water had trapped this family in their farm home. Volunteer rescue workers pictured with GEC's boat include Elmer Grisham, Haskell McCallum, George Rosenbaum and Walter Robbins. *Garland Landmark Society Archives*

The Garland Emergency Corps (GEC) has almost disappeared, but for several decades it made heroic contributions to the Garland community.

GEC began in 1955 with a group of men who liked to play dominoes at the Central Fire Station. When a Garland firefighter heard on the radio that the McKinney Fire Department was rerouted to a drowning accident at Lavon Lake, he expressed his wish that the department had someone they could send, but nobody could be spared. One of the domino players suggested forming a volunteer group to assist with such emergencies, and the Garland Emergency Squad was born. One month later the group's name was changed the Garland Emergency Corps.

The Garland Emergency Corps was formed to assist Garland and Dallas County citizens during emergencies and disasters. Historically their presence was called up upon by the police and fire departments, and they often rode out with officers to assist during search, rescue, recovery efforts, and during special events such as parades and Fourth of July festivities. In addition, they provided certified first aid at local events, self-deployed during flooding to check for needed road closures, provided traffic control in addition to or in place of police officers during extended calls for service and provided equipment such as power generators when needed. Equipped with compatible portable radios, for use in case of emergencies, they provided services not only to Garland but also to neighboring communities.

The GEC was a volunteer organization with extensive professional training. In 1955 *The Garland Daily News* reported, "The training program with the police and fire departments was continuous for Corps members. They are prepared to assist in fires, traffic and crowd control. All Corps members are trained in rescue work, emergency care, and transportation of the sick and injured. Each member is required to possess a Red Cross first aid card and some are qualified as emergency medical technicians. They are dispatched by local officers

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in times of severe weather, to stand watch until the threat is past, or perhaps to fight a fire or search a swollen stream for a missing body.”

When a million-dollar fire destroyed the Varo Mfg. Co. plant on Easter Sunday in 1956, the Garland Emergency Corp turned out in full force to fight the blaze. They flooded the area with light from their portable power supply as the fire raged into the night.

In 1988, *The Garland Daily News* reported “Corps members estimate that they have helped assist in finding at least 20 drowning victims in the past ten years. Nobody enjoys the monotonous and grim task of snagging a body with small grappling hooks, which are drug along the water’s bottom for hours on end. Their memories include retrieving the body of a woman from a log pile in Rowlett Creek. The woman had wandered away from Castle Manor and had been swept into the creek by heavy rain.”



Seven Emergency Corp members run drills as a part of their continued training.
Garland Landmark Society Archives

In 1958, the GEC retrieved the floating body of a 31-year-old man in the East Fork channel of the Trinity River below Lake Lavon dam. That same year, the Corps dragged the Hickory Creek branch of the Garza-Little Elm reservoir and retrieved the sunken body of A.C. Terry who had drowned while boating. Joanne Evans, mother of a drowning victim, wrote a letter of gratitude to the Corps:

Dear Mr. Green, (then GEC President) My husband and I wanted to formally thank you and comment the fine efforts than of the men of your organization in the efforts to rescue our son Danny Evans on April 17th. When we realized that all of you were volunteers, it made us even more appreciative of you, giving up your time to help us. We won't forget your fine efforts and hope your payment is great in some other way than money.

*Thank you very much one and all,
---Don and Joanne Evans (parents of Danny Green)*



Current Emergency Corp volunteers at their headquarters located behind the GP&L Field Operations Complex on Forest Lane.
Garland Landmark Society Archives

Money was always a challenge for the Corps. Since its inception, the group remained in fund raising mode constantly to keep its operation going. Receiving no funds from state or local governments, the group depended solely on private donations. In April 1955, newly elected president Elmer Grisham wrote, “At present we are trying to raise money for equipment such a rescue motor, small power plants for flood lights, and other equipment needed for rescue work.” Throughout its existence, it used fund drives and chili dinners to raise money.

The Corps remains in its old headquarters on Forest east of Shiloh adjacent to the Garland Water Department offices. While still struggling with money, the Garland Fire Department has assumed many of its former duties.

Garland’s firefighting efforts began as an all-volunteer organization, eventually becoming a small municipal department. Because of its initial small size, volunteers still cared for Garland citizens. Now, the Fire Department has expanded into a large public safety organization and has assumed most of the services formerly provided by the Corps. However, the Corps is still remembered

for vital community contribution. In 1958, the Collin County Sherriff said that the GEC “gets there first and leaves last” when there is an emergency. These are unsung heroes and helpers of the citizens of Garland.

- Joanna Evans

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A new exhibit at the
Garland Landmark Museum

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