Gladhill 1919 Ahrens-Fox at Frederick Museum

By Clarence “Chip” Jewell

The beautiful, fully restored 1919 Ahrens-Fox owned by the Gladhill family is now “in service” at the Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum, 300B South Seton Avenue in Emmitsburg. The engine was originally purchased by the city of Frederick for the United Steam Fire Engine Co. No. 3 and remained in service until the 1950’s. According the Maurice Gladhill, son of Bernard “Buck” Gladhill, his father purchased the engine around 1954 for $501. Mr. Gladhill advised his dad outbid Gastley Junk Company by $1 to get the engine. “Gastley bid $500 for the engine and dad but $501, $1 saved the Fox from the junk yard.” According to Mr. Gladhill, two other “Foxes”, the 1927 ladder truck and a Juniors engine met their fate at Gastley’s.

Almost since the opening of the museum, the United Steam Fire Engine Co. NO. 3 has graciously allowed the “big brother” 1939 Ahrens-Fox that is still owned by the Uniteds to be displayed at the museum. The 1939 Fox recently had some serious mechanical issues and was towed from the museum and most likely will not return for the museum season. Mr. Maurice Gladhill was contacted to see if he would possibly be willing to display the 1919 Ahrens-Fox during the absence of the 1939. After visiting the museum, Mr. Gladhill graciously agreed to allow “Gladhill No. 1” to be displayed in place of the United “Fox”.

Mr. Bernard “Buck” Gladhill was a charter member of the Damascus Volunteer Fire Department and very active with the Maryland State Firemen’s Association. The Gladhill Trophy, now the Gladhill-Thompson Trophy to also honor his great friend and fellow Damascus member Less Thompson, was instituted to recognize individuals for dedication to the Maryland State Firemen’s Association. “Buck” also donated one of his bells to be used by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to be mounted and ring at the annual memorial service to honor our nation’s fallen firefighters.

The 1919 Ahrens-Fox was purchased by the city of Frederick for the United Fire Company and was the second motorized piece of equipment for the Uniteds and the third automobile type apparatus in Frederick. When this unit was received, the steamer Lily of the Swamp was placed in reserve service. The steamer was placed into service in the early 1920’s to help pump water to maintain the city reservoir during significant drought conditions.

The Frederick County Fire and Rescue Museum is very appreciative to Mr. Maurice Gladhill and the Gladhill family for allowing this magnificent piece of fire service history to be displayed at the museum. The museum is open Saturday and Sunday from 12noon – 4PM. The museum will be closed on August 19 during the muster at Rose Hill Manor and closed on Labor Day Weekend.