



# LYNBROOK JUNIORS: FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

By Honorary Chief Steve Grogan

The year 2019 marks the 40th Anniversary of the forming of the Lynbrook Junior Fire Department, part of the Lynbrook Fire Department on Long Island. For these past 40 years, young men and women residents from 12 to 17 years of age have gone on to become firefighters, officers and Chiefs in the department.

But, that was not the first time that the Lynbrook Fire Department had Juniors. Although the present 40-year program is a department-run program, back almost 100 years ago, in the 1920s, the Juniors were then just part of the individual fire companies. They were referred to as “Juniors” while others called them their “Mascots.”

Back in those early '20s, the Junior membership was only open to the children and other family members of firefighters

from that particular company, and age didn't matter. And they all wore uniforms.

Available photos and newspaper articles reflect that three Lynbrook fire companies, Rescue Hook, Ladder and Bucket Co. 1, Hose Co. 1 and Tally-Ho Engine Co. 3 had Juniors. And, even back then, they were called “Fire Eaters of Tomorrow.”

A saved newspaper story, dated September 8, 1927, from an unknown paper, wrote about the Juniors from Rescue Hook and Ladder winning a parade and “loving cups.” The article stated that those Juniors “have brought honor to their hometown on five occasions by parading in such manly fashion as to win the award of five loving cups. The little fellows are proud of their accomplishments and are entitled to all the praise given them.”





These individual company juniors existed until around the late 1930s.

In 1943, after many of Lynbrook's firefighters were off fighting overseas in World War II, the department sought the help of Lynbrook High School students to fill the shortage of manpower. The department now called them "Fire Aids." Most were sophomores and juniors, and they ran out of school when the fire horns went off. They rode Lynbrook's rigs and occasionally were inside helping to fight the fire. Each of Lynbrook's four engine companies and Rescue Hook and Ladder had Fire Aids.

One of those original Fire Aids was Karl Thuge. Thuge was then a 15-year-old sophomore at Lynbrook High when the program began. He said that the then-Long Island Press newspaper wrote a story about Lynbrook's Fire Aids in the Summer of 1943. The article contained photos of the students practicing at the Firefighter's Arch in Greis Park. Thuge regularly rode with Engine Company 1 whose firehouse is behind the high school. He would later join that company at age 18 and in later years became Chief of Department.

The Fire Aids program ended in 1946 after the war ended and the firefighters returned.

Thirty-three years after World War II ended, in July 1979, a new department-run Junior program, the Lynbrook Junior Fire Department, was officially formed after the department identified a serious problem in filling the ranks of its firefighters.

At the time, Lynbrook's program was believed to be one of the first department-run Junior programs in Nassau County. Most Junior programs at the time were run by Explorer Scout

posts. Lynbrook had hoped that an official Junior department, that's part of the regular department, would be better run, controlled and only deal with firematic training.

The program was so successful and recognized that the firefighter advisors helped neighboring departments start their own Junior departments. The success of the Lynbrook program was recognized by CNBC, which filmed a TV special on the program in 1992.

On one occasion about 12 years ago, the Chief and his three Assistant Chiefs were all Juniors together and most of our present-day officers and Chiefs had all come through the program, including the department's present chief.

Lynbrook juniors were Nassau County's best in the 2018 parade season. And in recent years, that's the sixth time they have won that award and honors. In the past five years alone, the Juniors have won the battalion parade four times.

Today, Lynbrook has 54 Juniors. From the past to the present, the Juniors, in one form or another, have been part of the Lynbrook Fire Department and hopefully will continue to be the "Fire Eaters of Tomorrow" for us. They have already shown how they have helped this department for nearly 100 years.



*Steve Grogan is a 51-year member of Tally-Ho Engine 3 of the Lynbrook Fire Department. He is an Ex-Captain and Honorary Chief. Grogan has been the department's PIO and writer for the past 40 years. He co-founded the Lynbrook Junior Fire Department, the Nassau County Firefighters Emerald Society and is a Vice Chairman of Nassau County Firefighters Operation Wounded Warrior. He is a Vietnam-era veteran who served five years with U.S. Army Intelligence, a retired federal agent and a former Lynbrook Village Trustee.*

