

Fighting Davenport Fire Chief Resigns

By PAUL BEATTY
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The frightened young men were hurriedly pulled from the tide-flooded cave through an air shaft that reached to the cliff's surface along the rugged Davenport coast.

The first sight they saw on reaching safety was the angry face of the man who led their rescue.

"You are lucky, lucky boys — go home and stay on the other side of the hill and don't you ever dare come back here with that small rubber raft," the angered rescue chief told them last July.

The angry man was Elio Orlando, a unique man who has spent a lifetime warning ignorant visitors of the dangers of the beautiful and treacherous Santa Cruz north coast while leading the Davenport Rescue Squad.

He has warned them and warned them, and then had to take his men out to risk their



Elio Orlando

lives in rescuing the trapped, the drowning and the injured from the beaches and highway up and down the coastline.

Around 200 persons have

been rescued, pulled from the waves and lifted from the asphalt, and Orlando feels that about 40 of them would have died without help from the Davenport Fire Department and Rescue Squad.

A number of times in its nearly 30 years of service, the squad has been summoned too late to save the victim, but the squad has always responded.

Now, Orlando will no longer lead the men of Davenport.

He resigned as chief of the department last week.

His successor is Assistant Chief Gary Scofield, a man who has been with the department for at last six years. Commissioner Alvin Greory pointed out, and a man trained in scuba diving.

Orlando has always been a fighting chief for his department, seaching for money and equipment for the under-equipped and under-financed unit.

He built the firehouse

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himself years back with material donated by local businessmen.

He sought out help constantly from local governments and has fought to get state aid.

"This is not our problem up here; it is a state-wide problem; these people come from all over the state and nation, and then we are the ones who have to carry the burden of rescuing them," Orlando said this week.

"There are at least 40 human beings who are alive today because we were willing to go out at all hours of the day and night to go down the cliffs to pull them out," Orlando said.

He added that he will remain as a fireman in the department and "continue to go down the cliffs," but that the job of chief has become too demanding and too frustrating.

Neither he nor his men have ever collected wages for their rescue work.

The former chief is scathing of state representatives for not getting his squad state monies to operate the service he feels is most beneficial to out-of-county visitors to the north coast.

On the other hand, he is filled with praise for the help from local businessmen and other citizens and the Santa Cruz and Stanford fire departments for providing used equipment for

the Davenport department, too poor to afford new equipment.

He said that today, insurance costs alone threaten to eat up the department's \$5,000 budget.

"It's hard keeping up all the records, all the paper work the chief has to do today.

"And another thing, it seems no matter how carefully I type the letters, they seem to come out with an Italian accent," Orlando said.

He has been named Elk of the year in Santa Cruz in 1971 and Man of the Year by the Sons of Italy in 1974.

His full department was named Men of the Year by the Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce in 1970.

Last year, the performed 36 rescues.

Orlando was a charter member of the department when it was formed shortly after World War II.

He fought to have the department formed into a special district so that taxes could be levied and this was accomplished in October of 1959.

He was named chief in 1969, after years of service as a fire captain.

Orlando has not only resigned as chief, but he also gave up another hat in the department, that of commissioner.

New commissioner is Bruce McDougal.

Homer McCrary, lifetime resident of the north coast and half owner of Big Creek Lumber Company, said today, "Elio has done a tremendous job for the Davenport fire and rescue squad year after year."

Chief Orlando's commission commended him for his years of labor, and Elio said, "It's time for a younger man — not that I'm that old."

REFERENCE

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ARTS, CRAFTS, AND
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