

Richard Pound, Live Oak's first fire chief, dies

SANTA CRUZ — Richard H. Pound, the well-known former chief of the Live Oak Fire District died Thursday while traveling in New Orleans. He was 64.

Mr. Pound is remembered both for his long career in firefighting and for his overseeing the growth of the Live Oak fire department from a small volunteer force to a modern fire department. The Live Oak department was later absorbed into the Central Fire District.

Mr. Pound joined the department in 1943 as a volunteer. In a 1981 Sentinel article he recalled running across his father's chicken ranch on Chanticleer Avenue to catch the fire engine as it went by.

"Of course the old truck (a 1935) didn't go very fast back then," Pound said in the article.

If he missed the truck he would ride his bicycle to the scene, as he was only 15 at the time.

The Live Oak Fire District was formed during World War II when people were afraid of incendiary bombs. In those days Live Oak was a semi-rural area of chicken farms and about 1,800 homes. Over the years the area changed as the chicken coops gave way to condominiums and housing projects.

The fire department also changed, growing with the times.

Pound worked his way up the ranks of the volunteer department to chief and later became the first chief and paid employee of the Live Oak Fire District in 1962.

He oversaw the modernization of the department from the days when firefighters were called "smoke eaters," as they would take a few

gulps of air, put a handkerchief over their faces and run in to fight the flames. Firefighters now use self-contained breathing tanks for firefighting.

Pound stood an imposing 6 feet 6 inches tall and was known for his no-nonsense approach to running the department.

"He was never one to pull punches; you always knew just where he was coming from," Richard Travis, a Central District firefighter said. "He was a real good boss to work for. We respected him."

Firefighting was a family affair in the Pound household. In the early days after his marriage to Dolores in 1947, the fire phone rang in the Pound home and was usually answered by Mrs. Pound. She often

took charge of activating the giant siren to summon the volunteers.

His son, Rick Pound, grew up as a volunteer fireman and is a captain with the state Department of Forestry.

His daughter, Kathryn, married Live Oak fireman Jim Pini and worked as a secretary for the Live Oak and Soquel fire departments before becoming an administrative assistant for the Central Fire District.

His youngest daughter Sharon, also worked summers as a firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service.

Mr. Pound was a lifelong resident of Santa Cruz. He attended local schools, including Santa Cruz High School, and served in the Merchant



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Marine during World War II.

He was a member of many civic and professional organizations including the California Fire Chiefs Association, the California Special Fire Districts Association, California State Firefighters Association, and the Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association.

He was also active in scouting and was a member of the Monterey Bay Area Chapter of the Boy Scouts of America. He also enjoyed traveling and fishing and spent

much of his time traveling after his retirement.

He is survived by his wife, Dolores K. Pound of Santa Cruz; his son, Richard Pound of Red Bluff; two daughters, Kathryn Pini of Watsonville and Sharon Pound of Santa Cruz; his brother, John Pound of Aurora, Colo.; and two grandchildren.

Services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at Norman's Family Chapel, 3620 Soquel Drive, Soquel. A cremation will be held with his ashes to be scattered at sea.

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