

# Sweet Valley couple is ready, willing and able to help

Bob and Alice Walsh, both 77 years old, have been answering calls for years.

By EILEEN GODIN  
Dallas Post Correspondent

At 77 years old, Bob and Alice Walsh, Sweet Valley EMTs, stand ready at a moment's notice to answer a 911 distress call.

Bob Walsh has been a volunteer firefighter for about 53 years and is one of the founding members of the Sweet Valley Ambulance Association.

His wife, Alice, has assisted as a dispatcher for 30 years and earned her Emergency Medical Technician license in the late 1970s.

Today, the couple is eager to jump into one of two large ambulances and rush to the aid of those in need. The Sweet Valley Ambulance Association answered almost 500 calls last year.

"We went on most of them," Bob said.

With seven active members, the association depends on the Walshes, who are usually available during typical workday hours when most other members are working.

"We don't usually answer calls after 9 p.m.," Bob said, "unless the other members cannot respond."

"It is easier for us because we are here, close and retired," Alice added.

Years of experience and working as a team help the couple deal with the stress of responding to emergency situations. Walsh said that his 17 months serving with the Army in the Korean War taught him tactics in handling serious emergencies such as vehicle accidents, suicide or shootings.

"It is a stressful job," he said.

Alice said over the years

she has learned to block out a lot of the unpleasant images of the job. Emergencies involving children are still tough to bear.

"We can talk about it to each other," she said.

But seeing people in the community well again is very rewarding for the two. Bob said in the past, the hospitals used to send an update on patients taken there by ambulance. Due to stronger privacy laws, however, such notification has stopped so the couple sometimes visits patients they've transported to see how they are healing.

There are some joyful moments, too, as Alice has helped with the delivery of a babies.

Although the deliveries were not easy, she smiled at the thought.

"I like to help people," she said. "It is very rewarding."

The couple's knowledge of the community, which has several dirt roads that wind through green fields and into wooded areas which could pose a challenge to EMTs and first responders unfamiliar with the area, is helpful in their work. Bob said 911 dispatchers often seek him out due to his knowledge of the area's roads.

"I grew up here," he said of the Sweet Valley area. "I even named many of the private roads for the 911 address change."

Walsh served for two terms as a supervisor, 31 years as the Sweet Valley fire chief, helped with the development of the ambulance association in 1968 and served as ambulance association chief for 25 years.

"The ambulance association started by a donation of an ambulance from Bonson's Funeral Service in 1968," he said. "The funeral home is no longer in business."

The couple agreed that technology and medical ad-

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Alice Walsh  
Sweet Valley ambulance volunteer

vancements have improved over the years and Bob admitted that, in the early days, the ambulance was not as well equipped as it is today.

He recalled a situation where two men were injured at Rickett's Glen State Park. The leg bone of one of the men was protruding through the skin and a Boy Scout troop in the area made a splint from branches to brace the man's leg. Another time, he recalled ripping up sheets to make bandages.

Today, the couple keeps up with various training seminars held by hospitals and continuing education units at local colleges. Alice said they are required to earn 24 credits within three years to stay on top of new advancements.

"You are always learning," Alice said.

New technology allows EMTs to perform their jobs better and the larger ambulance purchased by the Sweet Valley Ambulance Association offers extra room for a medic to work on a patient.

"It is 20 miles to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital from here, 23 miles to Geisinger," Bob said. "Sometimes, a medic will be giving treatment on the way."

The ambulances are inspected every three years to verify that equipment inside and the vehicles are in optimal working condition, Bob said.

Looking forward to celebrating their 78 birthdays in December, the couple says their desire to help people keeps them going.

"You have to keep moving," Alice said.



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Alice and Robert Walsh, both in their late 70s, continue to serve as ambulance drivers and responders with the Sweet Valley Fire and Ambulance Department.

## Rotary Club planning Fall Golf Classic

The 27th Annual Dallas Rotary Club Fall Golf Classic to support Dallas Rotary Charities will be held at the Irem Country Club, Dallas on Monday, Sept. 20, with a shotgun start at 12:30.

Returning chairman Kevin Smith and co-chair Kerry Freeman have indicated that the club is looking for hole sponsors and players.

The sponsorship donation is \$100 and the players' entry fee is \$110. Each advertiser will receive a sign prominently displayed near a green or tee.

The format is a captain and crew. Individuals are invited and will be teamed up with others in a group. Returning players and new players are welcome.

Proceeds help the Rotary Club of Dallas sponsor and contribute to the annual Christmas Shopping Spree for 45 Back Mountain children, the Dallas/Lake-Lehman/Northwest School Book Scholarships, the Back Mountain Library, dictionaries for third-graders, graduation lock-in programs, the Luzerne County Fall Fair, the Back Mountain Food Pantry and much more.

Call Kevin Smith at 696-5420 for more information and an entry form. Sponsors must respond by September 10 to allow enough time for proper sign printing. Players are urged to respond by September 10 to determine how many will be in attendance at a seafood and steak dinner following the tournament.

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