

ALLISON LADDER 2

On January 15, 1957, City Councils authorized the purchase of a new ladder truck to be assigned to the Allison Hook & Ladder Company No. 2 on S. Fourteenth Street. The 1935 Mack BQ model 75' wooden aerial assigned to the company had seen hard usage and the Bureau of Fire wanted to upgrade its aerial protection. The last new ladder purchased was in 1940 when Ladder 1 received a new 85' wooden aerial trailer.

Ladder 2 was delivered to the City on December 19, 1957. It is a B85 Model Mack open cab tractor coupled to a Maxim built trailer having an 85' four section steel aerial. This was the first steel aerial in the city and also the first ladder truck where the tillerman sat behind the aerial instead of on top of it. It was also the first truck to have all metal ground ladders. This rig was truly a drastic change from all previous ladder trucks, but very typical of what the manufacturers were offering at the time. This rig was also one of the last to be delivered with the company name ALLISON lettered on the hood. After the crews became familiar with the rig it went into service January 7, 1958.

Cost of the rig was \$39,347. It weighed in at 15 tons and has manufacturer's number B-85F-1258. The rig was only 33'-8" long making it the shortest aerial truck the city ever owned. The truck was well liked by the men who worked on it for two reasons. The first was it could go anywhere in the tight confines of the Hill district and second, with the Maxim patented manual outrigger system it was by far the fastest truck to ever go in service at a fire. All the driver and tillerman had to do was pull two pins while swinging out the outriggers and the jack pads were secured to the ground.

First run for the new rig was on January 12, 1958, when Box 34 was pulled at 3:50 p.m. for a mattress fire set by children playing with matches at 246 Crescent St.

Another notable first for the rig was that it was the first rig in the city to be installed with a two way radio. This was accomplished in early August, 1958. The call numbers for the rig were D-12.

Ladder 2's district ran from the Pennsylvania Railroad east to the City line and from Herr St. and the Northern edge of the Hill District to the southern City limits. Generally speaking this was nearly half of the square mileage of the city and always known as "The Hill". The Hill was one of the busiest districts in the city. The truck covered downtown on second alarm.

Over the years the truck was in service at hundreds of working fires. During the late 60's and early 70's Harrisburg was in a heavy decline like a lot of Northeast industrial cities and the closely spaced two and three story brick and frame row homes saw many a general alarm fire.

During the summer of 1969, after the City had experienced civil disorder and rioting conditions in June, the open cab tractor and tillerman's seat were enclosed with 5/8" Plexiglas enclosures. Within two years however the tillerman's cage was severely damaged by a low hanging branch and never replaced.

On June 23, 1975, Harrisburg went back to three truck companies when Ladder 2 was placed out of service. Tower 1-a 1971 Mack 75' Aerialscope was transferred to the Allison

station and assumed Ladder 2's district. Truck 2 was sent to the Paxton No. 6 station at 336 S. Second Street and placed in active reserve status. It was used for a number of years in reserve filling in for Tower's 1 and 2 or Ladders 1 when they were shopped for maintenance. By 1980, the truck had fallen into disrepair and in January 1982, Ladder 1 was placed out of service and the reserve chores fell to the '67 American LaFrance. Ladder 2 was stored dead at the new Number 2 fire station on N. Sixteenth Street.

Sometime during this period, some of the metal ground ladders were exchanged for some of the wooden ones on Ladder 1 and this mixture of wood and metal stayed with the truck from then on.

On at least one occasion the truck was loaned out to Progress, one of the busy suburban volunteer companies to use in place of their Mack Aerialscope when that rig was down for a couple of months for repairs.

On March 8, 1985, Ladder 2 was sold to the Friendship Fire Company of Mt. Joy, Pa. in exchange for the net worth of two MSA 30 minute Ultralight air packs (\$2896.00).

After some minor motor work, the rig was placed in service and ran as Lancaster County Truck 7-5 until taken out of service in the spring of 1993. The truck was subsequently sold to fire buff Bill Rausch of Clarkston, MI where it was driven home with no major problems.

In March of 2009, Jason Lloyd, a Harrisburg City Firefighter, purchased the Truck from Bill Rausch with plans on fully restoring it to its original condition.

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