

# Training at Center of Controversy

Fifth of Series

*(One of the major problems in improving ambulance service in Tippecanoe County has been training of the attendants. Today's story looks into this and also some accusations against Shipley's Ambulance Service.)*

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Having ambulances available is only part of supplying the service. The other parts are having proper equipment in those ambulances and having trained men to operate them.

The training of Shipley's Ambulance Service employees has been the subject of considerable debate.

When the service first came to Tippecanoe County the training was handled by the ambulance company.

But in January of 1973, a special course began at the Lafayette Indiana Technical Vocational College. Many people involved in various aspects of emergency service, including physicians, nurses and Fred Shipley, owner of the ambulance service, took part in organizing that 81-hour emergency medical technician course.

There were two goals of the class: To better train ambulance attendants and police and firemen (who often are at the scene of an accident or injury before the ambulances) and to establish rapport between the departments in the area of emergency care.

For a while, everything was fine.

*Is the service profitable?  
Only Shipley knows. See A-5*

But this year Fred Shipley refused to enroll his men in any more courses at Ivy Tech and pulled two men out of a paramedic course.

The reason for this was a conflict between Shipley and David Flynn, who came here in the fall of 1973 as director of the emergency medical technician courses.

Because Flynn used to operate an ambulance service in Michigan, Shipley was worried that Flynn planned to compete for the Tippecanoe County contract in 1975. Shipley has few kind words for Flynn. And Flynn has few kind words for Shipley's Ambulance Service.

It all came to a head during the classes taught by Flynn and attended by ambulance attendants who said they were ridiculed.

"There was a problem between the Shipley people and Flynn," said a patrolman who was in that course. "Some of his (Shipley's) guys were kind of squirrely and he (Flynn) made comments about it."

And so, the ambulance service pulled out of the Ivy Tech program and the attendants received their training in a class taught within the service — mostly by Shipley and his manager, William Reoch.

Some people say this training is inadequate. Some people say the material is excellent. By pulling out of the Ivy Tech program — a pilot



program for the state — Shipley angered a lot of people who had spent much time organizing it. At the same time, he left everyone in the dark about what kind of training the ambulance attendants were receiving.

Disagreements came to head this summer over whether Shipley should be forced to send his men to Ivy Tech or some other formal institution or whether he should be assisted in training the attendants wherever he wanted.

The problem finally solved itself. All along, Shipley said he would send his men back to Ivy Tech if Flynn left. And Flynn has taken a position with the Indiana Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Commission as state assistant administrator for training.

When Shipley learned of this he said he would send his men back to Ivy Tech provided there was an es-

tablished board for him to take any future complaints to.

The biggest complaint against Shipley's right now is that the men are not trained.

At the end of July, three of the attendants had completed an emergency medical technician course and three others were taking it. Their abilities vary according to the amount of training and experience they've had. Generally, a new person with the service who has had little experience and little training is sent out with someone more experienced.

There have been people employed by the service who could be called inept. They quit or were fired.

Emergency room physicians say the attendants sometimes make mistakes, but they are not major. While nothing very serious is being done wrong, physicians in the emergency rooms say the men could use more

training.

According to some attendants, there was one individual who used to drink while on duty. He resigned. A charge that one attendant used marijuana while on duty also is true, according to some attendants. He's been fired.

Another accusation frequently heard is that the ambulances are slow to arrive when they're called. Sometimes this is true. The attendants don't know every street and address in the county, and sometimes they get lost.

Often the attendants stop to look at a map before leaving on a run. But the Lafayette Fire Department, for instance, has made a card catalog of all the streets in the county. The cards tell where the street is and give other pertinent information. Fred Shipley says the service once started a system like this but never finished.

Usually, the ambulance dispatcher gets information on how to get to a home or location from the person who calls.

Other things which can cause delays are equipment breakdowns, trains (when one ambulance gets stopped by a train, it has to radio back and another ambulance on the other side of the tracks is dispatched) and when the two ambulances on duty are out on a run and the men on stand-by have to be called in to take a call (the men on stand-by are supposed to be within 10 minutes of the ambulance station at Five-Points).

Two other factors also determine how long it takes for an ambulance to arrive. For known non-emergency situations, the ambulance should not tear down the street at high speeds — and Shipley's doesn't in these cases. Also, when you're waiting for an ambulance, it always seems like a long time.

West Lafayette police sometimes charge there is no ambulance on duty in the West Side. There is one in WL, but it sometimes makes a run in Lafayette or in the county. Also, the attendants on the this ambulance often stop at the Lafayette station for no important reason. This is risky because it is possible to get stopped by up to three trains on the way back.

Finally, there have been accusations that the ambulances are poorly equipped. Shipley says some important pieces of equipment were missing and some other important equipment was inoperative prior to a Lafayette Health Department inspection. He says this has been corrected.

While these are not all the accusations leveled against the company, they are the most frequently heard.

"I'm human," Shipley says, "my people are human. We're not always as attentive to things as we should be. We make mistakes. But I don't think they affect total service."

Most of the ambulance runs are handled well, but sometimes things do go wrong and these are the ones you hear about.

Next: A proposal