



ALL FIREMEN PRESENT at Saturday's ball (above) joined Fire Chief Bill Cathcart in a moment of silence for fallen firefighters everywhere. Decatur County has lost one fireman, Carol Ferguson, in 1967. Later that evening (below), John and Dianne Bremer enjoyed some country slow dancing.

Firemen's Ball proves both fun, successful

Saturday's Firemen's Ball was a huge success by all accounts, selling out all 500 tickets, running like a well-oiled machine and getting everyone on the dance floor, young and old alike. Oh, and did we mention, it raised about \$9,000 for the firemen?

The evening began with a silent auction and social hour, as people piled in line for drinks and to find their tables. Organizer Teresa Diederich estimated that about 400 people showed up for the event.

The total money that the event raised, she said, from the silent auction, trip to Las Vegas raffle, prime rib auction and drink cup sales was about \$9,000, which is more than anybody remembers having raised in a long time. A dinner for eight, donated by Dr. Gary and Sarah Fredrickson, brought the highest bid at the auction at \$501, and 12 prime ribs, cooked by Aaron Ploussard and his firefighter helpers, brought as much as \$225 a piece.

Before the dinner, a parade of county firemen marched into the hall, lead by bagpiper Paul Hawkins of Norcatour, who later apologized for not being his usual well-practiced self. All the same, the men, dressed in white or blue uniform shirt, filed in looking

serious. A moment of silence was had for all firefighters lost in the line of duty, particularly the one Decatur County has lost, Carol Ferguson, who died in 1967.

After an amazing dinner of prime rib, potatoes, green beans and salad, prepared by Aaron Ploussard and Jerry Stein, people filed through the desert line and finished their plates as the casino crew set up.

That part of the evening was probably the second most popular after the dinner and dessert, which was beautifully displayed. Kristen Stragey, Jeanette Diederich and Shari Haag were responsible for the cakes and cremes, which many visited and re-visited throughout the night.

The games began at 7 p.m., and by 8:15 all 180 seats at the tables were full, Mrs. Diederich said. Something about playing with fake money brought out the fun and competition in everyone, with Pit Boss and Emcee Bill Riedel and his wife Connie, along with a few firefighters, making the rounds, filling up cups for guests and slipping more of the funny money to those low on chips.

After the games came the drawings, with everyone turning in their chips for raffle tickets to stuff a golden raffle cylinder. Fire

Chief Bill Cathcart pulled out the winning tickets. A big-screen television was won by Jennings firefighter Rick Foster, and a trip for two to Las Vegas by Marge Hartzog, mayor of Jennings. After that, the floor was opened up for dancing lead by the firefighters themselves, and deejay Stan McEvoy spun records through to midnight.

"I was once again reminded of what a great community we live in," Mrs. Diederich said later. "People just pitched in and helped, just because they saw the need There is no end to the things that we can accomplish if we unite!"

"A comment was made to me that they were so amazed to see so many young people supporting the firefighters, young to us being relative of course, since we're middle aged!"

I said that it's truly these young adults and families that are the future of Decatur County, and we need to do everything we can to keep these young families here These are the things that the community is and has been working on together to accomplish. I am so blessed to be living in Oberlin, Kansas."



BY THE TIME THE LIGHTS went down and the dancing really kicked in, Kelsey Peters (above), wife of firefighter Caleb Peters, was ready to get down during a special "firemen's mix." This was after all 180 seats at the casino tables filled up, as roulette players (left photo, from left) Nick Wahlmeier, Nolan Peters, C.J. Peters and Brenda Fought gambled for raffle tickets for a big-screen television.

