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## Sisters do 'double duty' for Ambulance Corps

By PAUL POST, The Saratogian  
10/31/2008

MALTA - Jean and Joan Crawford always give people a double dose of kindness, concern and skilled care in their work for Malta Ambulance Corps.

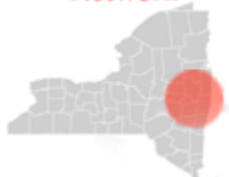
The 64-year-old twin sisters have responded to more than 7,000 calls

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combined during their 40 years of volunteer service with the squad.

Recently, they were honored at the organization's annual dinner where they were presented with a handsome plaque and citations from Gov. David Paterson and numerous state and local officials.

Sometimes, their unique service produces humorous situations such as a patient who said, "I have a head injury. Oh no! I'm seeing double!"



Twin sisters Jean, right, and Joan Cramer, have been volunteering for the Malta Ambulance for the past 40 years.

On another occasion, Jean spent several daytime shifts with a new squad member. Later that week, Joan joined the person for a night-time run.

"Who are you?" Joan asked, unfamiliar with the new face. "What do you mean, who am I? You've been riding with me all week," the person said.

"No I haven't," Joan replied.

They are the squad's longest-tenured members and were introduced to emergency response work by a neighbor, Lillian Freiberger, who convinced them to take a first aid course. The interest

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grew from there.

Actually, the Cramers are triplets, but their sister, Anne, lives in Las Vegas and was never involved with Malta Ambulance Corps.

Jean, a retired school bus driver, primarily worked day shifts while Joan, a state worker, came on duty at night. When they first started out, there was no county dispatch system. People on duty had to sit by the phone. They couldn't even go outside and do yard work because they didn't even have radios yet.

In 1970, the Cramers became Emergency Medical Technicians when there were fewer than 800 EMTs in the state. Today, more than 100,000 people have obtained such training.

"No one in our organization has given as much time as Jean and Joan," fellow squad member Dawn Hughes said. "It's impossible to put a value on this type of service. Joan still actively rides on my crew on Thursday nights while Jean became a social member several years ago. However, she is still a trustee and attends all the meetings."

Joan, a past president, is also the squad's current secretary, a post she's held for 21 years.

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"Jean and Joan are like the backbone of the organization," squad President Mike Smith said.

"They're like the welcome wagon to all of our new members. They befriend everyone.

Between the two of them, they've held every office we have."

The squad itself has changed dramatically, advancing from old Cadillac station wagon-style ambulances to today's modern rigs, fully outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment. Malta has four of them in addition to two quick-response vehicles.

There are about 40 active members including 15 paramedics, four full-timers. The squad covers the entire town of Malta that has changed dramatically during the past 40 years, with more growth expected if a computer chip plant comes to Luther Forest Technology Campus.

"It used to be when there was a call, you knew who lived at that address," Jean said. "Not any more."

The squad also covers the Village of Round Lake and the Northway from Exit 11 to Exit 13. Depending on the severity of a case, patients may be taken to hospitals anywhere from Albany, Schenectady and Troy to Glens Falls. The Cramers have also done transports as far away as Boston.

They are so well known that long-time residents ask for them wherever the squad goes. In one funny incident, a patient asked Jean if she remembered helping her.

"Let me see," Jean told the woman, jokingly. "Lay on the floor and let me see what you look like."

Always smiling, they've learned how to keep positive attitudes while dealing with difficult, dangerous and tragic situations. When responding to emergencies they never know what might be in store. On more than one occasion, Jean has helped deliver a baby.

"It's a thrill," she said. "It's something else to see somebody come into the world instead of going out."

Regardless of the situation, they've always answered the call.

"It's just helping our community," Joan said. "That's always been the way we looked at it. We've made great friends over the years."

"Like family," Jean said.

#### **Jean Cramer**

- Captain: 1974
- Trustee: 1982, 1990, 1991, 1992, 2006, 2007, 2008
- Assistant Captain: 1984, 1985, 1988, 1989
- Assistant Treasurer: 1987, 1988, 1989

#### **Joan Cramer**

- Secretary: 1972-74, 77-78, 84-85, 94-98, 2000-2008 (21 years total)
- Assistant Secretary: 1975, 1976, 1979
- Trustee: 1983, 1993
- President: 1991
- Treasurer: 1990


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