Twenty Years of Saving Lives

It was twenty years ago, in 1971, that strict federal guidelines governing ambulance operations were passed. These guidelines made it financially impossible for funeral homes, the traditional providers of ambulance service, to continue offering what was essentially a public service. When the funeral homes exited the ambulance service field, it created a massive and frightening need for emergency medical service.

In Lafayette Parish, three businesses joined forces to fill that need. Roland Dugas, an assistant administrator of a local hospital, Richard Zuchling, a communications engineer assigned to the area by Westinghouse, and Richard Surokes, a rancher and agribusinessman operating in Louisiana’s deep coastal marshes, accomplished their goal with a unique concept: a subscription plan in which residents would pay a one-year membership fee which, in turn, would entitle the entire family to ambulance service as often as needed.

The 20-year dedication to excellence at Acadian Ambulance has been attended to by the people it serves, including many who credit the company with saving their lives or the lives of their loved ones. Experts from across the nation have cited Acadian Ambulance as a leader in the field of Emergency Medical Service.

Today, twenty years after its humble beginning, Acadian Ambulance has evolved into the largest private ambulance service in the nation. The company serves 1.6 million South Louisiana residents in 23 parishes. The operation employs 417 employees. The 160 ambulances in the Acadian fleet answer over 128,000 calls each year. These ground units are housed at 40 strategically located stations throughout the Acadian Ambulance service area.

Innovations came as early as 1973 when Acadian Ambulance made the first mobile radio contact with the hospital emergency room, passing vital patient information while on route. By 1981 the technical advances of Acadian Ambulance had taken to the sky with the introduction of Air Med, a medically configured helicopter ambulance.

Through the years Acadian has established a communications center that has become one of the most sophisticated in the country. In 1977 a million-dollar communications center was put into service. That same year saw the introduction of computer technology which linked vital emergency patient information from the communications center to mobile computer terminals in the ambulance.

1979 was also the year which Acadian implemented the use of cellular telephones, allowing for medics to speed dial emergency room physicians and conference call two or more physicians for consultation on patient care.

For all the technology, a member of Acadian Ambulance pays only $40.