Acton man part of airport's rescue team

Preparing for disasters—

By MARY-LIZ SHAW Herald Staff

An American humorist has said that every woman since the dawn of time has wanted to marry a firefighter. They are brave, con-siderate, and usually handsome.

It is the dream of almost every child under ten to grow up to be a firefighter. The glamor of saving lives from burning wreckage seems a compelling way to make a living.

Firefighting has its glory, but it is also very hard work. Just ask Acton resident John Frankland.

He is one of over 30 firefighters who work at Pearson International Airport's fire station.

AIRCRAFT AFLAME - Coulds of

black smoke billow over the wreck

of an aircraft at Pearson Internu-

· 'tional Airport. The old plane is part

people per year. A shift of five to and the possibility of a greater seven firefighters respond to about number of fatalities. 730 calls per year within a five mile A large aircraft contains over Mississauga.

"During Christmas or the busy seasons when there are a lot of flights going out, you can feel a lot of municipal fire departments to propressure in the job," said John Frankland. "But sometimes, it is so slow, it can just about drive you fuelblaze. crazy."

per year, about \$9,000 less than their firemen for whom the suits were Mississauga counterparts down the designed, are made of pure wool.

port firefighters. Firefighters use

'foronto's airport handles over although airport firefighters have to

radius, which includes the airport's 40,000 gallons of fuel, which burns at 4,500 acres and surrounding parts of a higher temperature and a faster rate than gasoline.

John Frankland explained that his gear is different from those in tect him from the intense heat and smoke emitting from any aircraft

The pants for his "bunker outfit," Airport firefighters earn \$30,000 named after military aircraft street. Their training is similar Wool is the best fabric for insulation

vehicles to the fire - one to ex-

-at Pearson International and keeping water off, Mr.

Frankland said. "It's hot on a day like this," he said, looking up at the sun. "But not as hot as the lire when you're close to it."

He points to the five vehicles sitting in front of the station, which is located in the west section of the airport beside the main Air Traffic Controllers building.

"Our trucks are much larger than municipal fire trucks," he said. Two all-terrain trucks are capable of holding as much as 2,000 gallons of water and foam.

Such large quantities of ex-tingulshers came in handy during the Mississauga train derailment in November, 1079. Pearson International's firefighters were called to the disaster to help dissolve thousands of pounds of liquid chemicals which had spread across a large section of western Mississauga.

John Frankland has been a firefighter for seven years, having worked in the airport's maintenance department before. He also has military training from a brief stint in the Navy. His unique background is shared by over 70 per cent of the firefighters at Pearson Airport, according to shift Captain John Crowe.

Mr. Crowe himself is a former Army man. He served in the military for ten years. Paul Elcone of Brampton has a different sort of training. He was with the Metropolitan Toronto Police Department for about three years. He arrived at Toronto airport as a carpenter.

"I didn't like the police department," he said. "It was too much paper work."

Common backgrounds and the pressure of working in a confined space - those on the night shift sleep three to a room - have developed into a sense of professional kinship and comraderie. Each one watches out for the other.

One firefighter is on leave at the moment recovering from a triple heart by-pass operation. When his sick days and compensation ran out, the remaining firefighters agreed to take over his hours to keep him on staff.

"It's not that bad," John Frankland said. "We had a meeting about it and we decided to do it. He's had a hard enough time as it is." Would the kinship be the same if they were working with women? The question hits a nerve. The silence is broken only by the buzzing of the overhead fluorenscent lights. "Well, we have openings for

women," said Captain John Crowe. "We only have two in Canada right now. It's difficult -- we had a bit of a problem with a station in Norther Ontario." But, the government is hopeful

more women will become airport firefighters, John Crowe added. During a brief tour of the station, John Frankland pats firefighter



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"Have you slept Paul?" he asks. hasn't been home in 24 hours. He has been working on a video about the station's newest vehicle - Red One. The airport's firelighters designed.

The airport's firefighters designed the \$450,000 truck which is the newest and best equipped vehicle of its kind. The video describes training techniques and will be sent to Ottawa as part of a presentation Frankland said. He smiles. package.

firefighters is one of John pression the battle will be won.

Paul Parker on the shoulder in a Franklands personal hopes. He had gesture of understanding and sym- to train on the job, which is useful, but not very reassuring. Those alrcraft firefighters who work for the Paul Parker has slept but he military are trained at Camp Borden, outside Barrie, but civilian aircraft firefighters are not permitted to train with them. Mr. Frankland attended a conference in Ottawa this year to try to develop a training facility for Canada's over 700 aircraft civilian firefighters.

It is a tough battle trying to convince Ottawa what is needed, John

Somehow, in his own soft-spoken, Improving training for airport good-natured way, he leaves the im-



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DEDICATED STAFF - Pearson

READY FOR WORK - Acton resident John Frankland puts on his firefighting gear at Pearson International Airport. He has been an aircraft firefighter for seven years. (Heruld photo)

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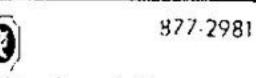
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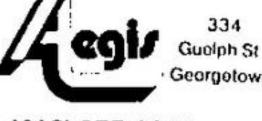
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Sheila and Art Bull moved to Georgetown in June from Porcupine, Ontario, about four miles outside of Timmins. They are seen here with their two children, Hormony, 14, and Mandy, 11. The Bulls are living on McIntyre Crescent. (Photo submitted)

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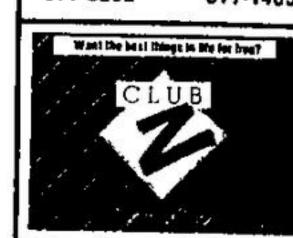
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