



Halton Hills firefighters work to put out a blaze at an Eighth Line home Saturday night. It is believed longtime local doctor Alex Ashenhurst perished in the blaze.

Photo courtesy Halton Hills Fire Department

## Doctor remembered as a 'dedicated professional'

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shooting from the top of the home they and some other neighbours ran across the street to bang on the door.

"By the time we got across the street, you could see how the fire was just going across the ridge of the roof, melting the asphalt shingles," the 45-year-old said.

Barb said they opened the front door. "There was so much smoke we couldn't get in," she said.

The back door was locked so they tried to break into the home, but couldn't.

Halton Hills Deputy Fire Chief John Martin said when fire crews arrived the fire had already vented through the roof.

"The most difficult part was that the fire progressed so far before anyone noticed it," said Martin.

In an attempt to rescue the homeowner, Martin said fire crews got into the home through the front door but part of the hallway had given way from the blaze so they couldn't get further into the house. They came across the same issue at the back of the home.

It took six trucks and about 30 firefighters to put out the fire at about 10:45 p.m.

The bungalow is among a cluster of homes and neighbours told firefighters a man lived alone in the house.

Police, the coroner and the office of the Ontario Fire Marshal are all investigating.

Martin said before the investigation could begin a contractor had to be brought in to shore up part of the floor.

There is no damage estimate yet but Martin said about two thirds of the roof is gone and there is heavy fire damage to the north end of the house. The cause of the fire or where it started haven't been determined but Martin said initial observation was that it started in the rear of the home.

Troy Laroche said Ashenhurst's health was waning and home care had been coming regularly to his house. The retired doctor was living alone, he said.

Barb said Ashenhurst was 'very private.'

She said she would see him out on his lawn tractor at times, but hadn't seen him since the summer.

Ashenhurst was a family doctor for 41 years in Georgetown before retiring. He divorced several years ago and is the father of two adult sons.

His former colleague and friend retired Georgetown physician Dr. Alan Thompson said up until last fall Ashenhurst was working part-time assisting surgeons in the operating room in Brampton and Georgetown hospitals.

Thompson said Ashenhurst, who he believes was in his early 70s, had lived in the Eighth Line home since about the mid-80s. He said Ashenhurst hadn't been well for about the past year.

"He was a very quiet person, very energetic and worked hard," said Thompson. "He was very loyal with his patients and was a good family practitioner."

Long-time patient and friend Jim Kennedy, was saddened to hear of Ashenhurst's death.

"He was a very dedicated professional who knew his stuff," said Kennedy. "He was a great person as well as a great doctor."

Kennedy said Ashenhurst would come out "fairly often" to the Georgetown Seniors' Centre to play pool.

In a February 2007 interview, Ashenhurst told *The Independent & Free Press* that, before making the move to Georgetown in July 1966 he worked for a year for a doctor in Port Credit but says he didn't care for the "snotty clientele" there, so when the opportunity arose to practice in Georgetown, he jumped at the chance.

—With files from Metroland West Media Group

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