

'HE WAS A NATURAL'

VETERAN FIREFIGHTER FONDLY REMEMBERED

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Bruce Lewis was in his brother's driveway when his phone rang. The call was a request for Lewis to teach a firefighting training session.

"I really want to do that one," he told his brother Bryan after the call.

Lewis had been diagnosed with multiple myeloma, yet he still felt strongly about passing on the knowledge he had learned over 35 years with the Georgetown and Halton Hills fire departments.

"There were days where I thought he should have

been in bed, but I would drive him to Fort Erie to do his teaching," Bryan said. "He really enjoyed teaching. For him, it was wife, family, fire."

Lewis died earlier this month (July 2), leaving behind Sandy, his wife of 48 years, and his daughter Shalon. Edwin Lewis served 32 years with the Georgetown Fire Department, including four as chief. But his son Bruce wasn't immediately drawn to the profession. His love for the outdoors saw him become a greenskeeper at Georgetown Golf Club and run his own lawn care business.

He joined the department on a part-time basis in 1975 when he was 24. He became district chief, the highest rank for a volunteer, and later captain after

"He had an overriding desire to help people."
- brother Bryan Lewis

joining the department full time.

He taught at the Ontario Fire College and trained Indigenous people to become firefighters in their communities.

But his impact went beyond those he trained. Lewis and three fellow firefighters saved a young girl from a burning house. Years later she invited them to her wedding.

"He had an overriding desire to help people," said his brother, whose family benefitted from Bruce's fix-



Bruce Lewis photo
Bruce Lewis, a member of the Georgetown and Halton Hills fire departments for more than 35 years, died July 2.

it skills while Bryan travelled extensively as an NHL referee.

Lewis remained humble about his contributions, though. It wasn't until this week that Bryan learned of another of his brother's heroic efforts.

Lewis was in Ottawa for a flashover training seminar when he and another firefighter came across an accident scene. They freed a man from one of the cars and helped revive him.

Lewis, who was honoured for his efforts, simply said it was a case of being in the right place at the right time with the right training.

"It was news to me," Bryan said. "He'd never mentioned it. I had no idea until I read it in the paper."

Larry Brassard joined the Georgetown department as an 18-year-old volunteer at a time when many experienced firefighters were retiring. "Bruce was quick to step up and show me the ropes."

Brassard, who went on to become fire chief in both Milton and Gravenhurst, said Lewis was a no-nonsense kind of guy and everyone knew where they stood with him.

"He could take control of a situation and stay calm in the midst of chaos," Bras-

sard said. "Some people are placed in roles or promoted. He was a natural."

When Lewis could no longer ride the trucks, his contributions did not end. As the department's coordinator of fire planning programs, he created plans and scenarios for fires at the hospital, high-rise buildings, civic buildings and schools. Those plans are still in use by the department. His plan for rail crossings was so thorough that CN Rail requested a copy.

Lewis received the federal medal for exemplary service and a provincial long-service medal.

Cyndy Hammond, who works as the director of protective services in the Arctic, tweeted:

"A legend in the Ontario Fire Service who left a legacy, training thousands of firefighters. Bruce had the mouth of a sailor and the heart of a saint. I learned so much from him. Rest easy my friend, I hope I've made you proud."

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