

Acton firefighters are right at home on Churchill Road

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Acton Tanner

Two years after moving across town, Acton's 35 volunteer firefighters, District Chief and four captains are still marveling over its benefits.

Gone is a facility on the corner of Bower Avenue and Willow Street that would be obsolete by today's standards. One that was tucked away in a cozy sector of town, but always saw its men battling the congestion of downtown traffic to get to emergencies.

"A lot of the guys had been waiting a long time for a facility that suits our operational needs," District Chief of eight years, Brent Marshall, commented on Friday at the still new Churchill Road fire hall. The hall celebrated its second birthday last Monday.

"The old fire hall was cramped, inefficient and didn't provide the training space. This station is much easier for us — we're able to get on the highway and go. Response time has improved and the pride is there to maintain the facility."

Also gone with the change in locale is the siren, that when sounded, would alert the entire town to clear the streets for an emergency.

"It was significant in some ways," Marshall conceded, "because when people heard it they knew to watch someone running to the station."

"When it was lost, a lot of people thought the firefighters' efficiency would suffer. I'm not so sure that isn't the case, but we changed with the times... the newer people in town who didn't like the siren didn't know the value it added to our response."

Local firefighters gather at the station the first Monday of each month for their general meeting. The remainder of the Mondays in the month are for training. Additional training sessions — like pump training — routinely occur on weekends, said Marshall, 44.

Marshall said Acton firefighters answer approximately 200 calls a year, about 70 to 75 fewer since they stopped taking medical assist calls after St. John's Ambulance came to town.

While none of Acton's firefighters are female, Marshall — a father of three — says interest is starting to show.

"It's inevitable it will occur," he said. "The mind-set is that we're after good people, regardless of sex, colour or creed... we're after competent people."

Marshall is a past-president of the Acton Fall Fair Board, coaches



'PART OF MY LIFE'

Acton District Chief Brent Marshall stands beside an old model portable extinguisher. (Doug Harrison photo)

minor hockey and is on the Board of Directors for the Acton Figure Skating Club. He says it's volunteering in the community, not the childhood dream of battle fires, that sees him in the District Chief's seat today.

"It's been a big part of my life and my family's. We've been part of the community for many years, so our roots are deep. I just grew into it when I became part of the Public Works staff at Halton Region in the '70s," said Marshall, who is now director of maintenance at the Region.

Marshall has enjoyed 18 of his 23 years with the fire department as an officer — eight as District Chief, three as the Deputy District Chief and seven before that as a captain.

"It's a spice of life that not everyone can enjoy," Marshall said. "I'm someone who likes to bring the firefighters along and make sure they stay and grow with us. I encourage that. I want to do what I can for the community."

This Saturday, 13 of Acton's finest will be honoured at a retirement dinner at the fire hall.

Blaze on Cook Street causes \$2G damage

Acton fire fighters responded to a blaze outside the co-op housing complex on Cook Street at 11:30 pm on Friday night.

The fire apparently began when some newspapers ignited inside a Halton Region three-wheeled Blue Box. The fire then spread to a wooden-side refuse compound fence.

By the time fire fighters had extinguished the blaze, approximately \$2,000 damage had occurred.



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