

'Men with Brooms'

Town employees learn firefighting the hard way

By DONNA DANIELLI

It may have begun as an ordinary workday, but it quickly turned into something altogether different for a crew of Town of Milton employees. Last week's rash of grass fires, ranging along the railway tracks south of the 401 from Guelph Line to Trafalgar Road, significantly stretched the resources of the Milton Fire Department. Help was drawn from neighbouring fire departments in Puslinch, Halton Hills, Oakville, Burlington, Cambridge and Mississauga, as well as from local Town staff. It is believed that the fires were caused by sparks from an east bound train at 10:30 am on Thursday July 14.

Town employee Alex Frank, along with crew supervisor Todd Robinson and crewmates Adam Guay and Ron Massey had just travelled down Tremaine Road when they received a radio call for help. "They asked us on the radio if we had brooms," recalls Alex, whose crew sped to the fire blazing between Tremaine Road and Kelso Conservation Area. Fellow Town employees Dave Dingman and Dan Breckon met the crew, directing them along an access road, to the thick of the fire. "We were lucky we got there when we did," says Alex of the site, which was witness to one large blaze and numerous smaller ones. "It was as hot as you can possibly imagine. We ran to one of the smaller fires each and we used brooms and shovels. I only had a broom, so I just beat it until it went out."

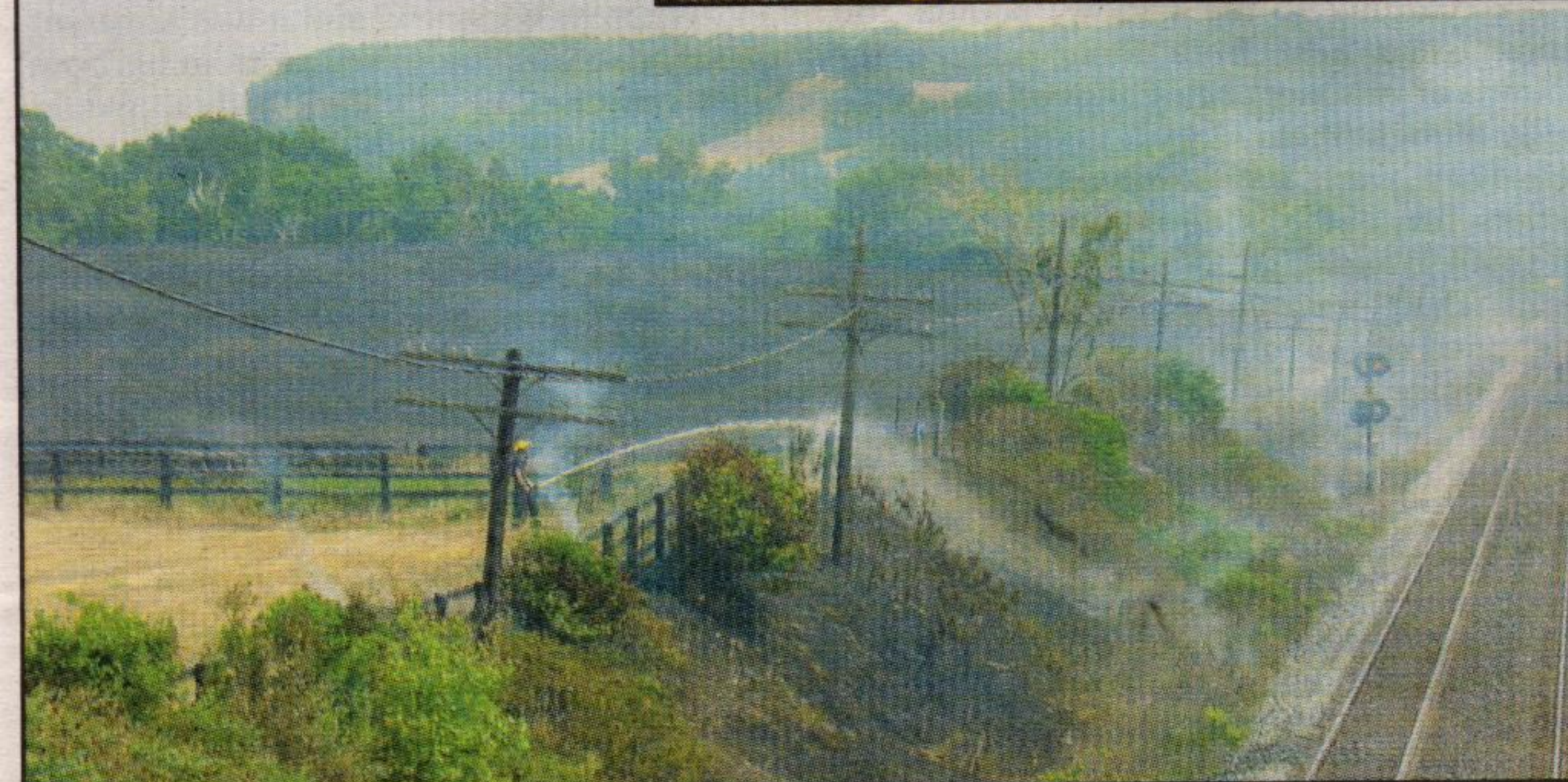
A careful eye had to be kept on the smaller fires as they tended to re-ignite unexpectedly, but it was an unanticipated brush with gravity that nearly played havoc with Alex. Spying a small fire at the bottom of a hill, he grabbed his broom and was headed down, when his feet slipped from underneath him. "I fell and thought 'Oh crap, I'm going to fall into the ashes and the fire' ". A quick acting firefighter lent a helping hand, saving the eighteen year old from the dangerous situation.

Still, Alex looks back on his brief career fighting fires as a positive experience. "It was a huge rush. We had so much energy, and when we were done, we felt so good. It was an amazing experience for all of us." Equally impressive for Alex were the sentiments expressed by one of the firefighters, grateful for the helping hands. "He said the thing about a small town is seeing Town employees and firefighters helping each other."



"Men with Brooms"

Pictured right are firefighters Jacob Evans (left) of Milton, Pumper #21 and Rob Frosch of Puslinch Pumper #31, the pumpers kept firefighters along the railway tracks supplied with water to fight the many fires burning.



Farmers, Ian Reid, Senior and Junior, peer into the 16 Mile Creek as they fill up their water tanker. The Reids of Kilmakee Farm on Walkers Line ferried water back and forth for hours refilling Milton's Pumper #21. The Reids lost a run-in shed to the fires.

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