

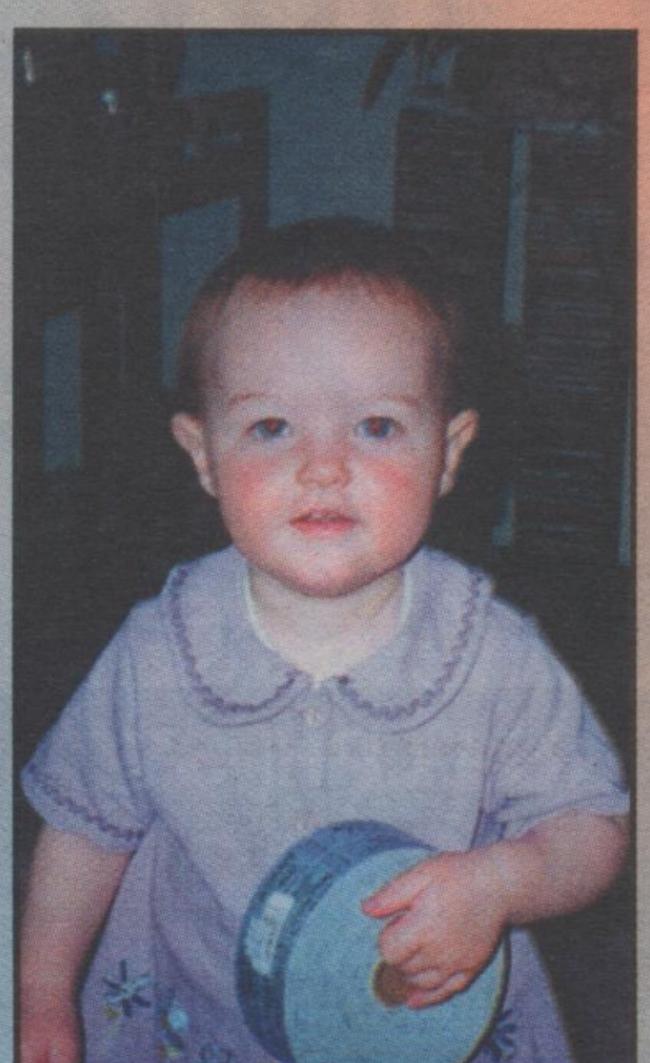
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## Bob Meads

## NO SWEAT! Town hires new fire chief

The town's new fire chief has many years of experience with the fire department and is looking forward to the challenges of the job.

Bob Meads, who has been the department's assistant deputy chief for the past five years, was appointed to the position by council Monday night and officially took over the job Tuesday.

Meads, 51, has been with the fire department for 23 years—20 of those full-time.

"I'm excited about it," said Meads. "I spent 20 years of my life working to be in a position to qualify for this."

The fire chief's post was vacated earlier this year when Bill Cunningham retired.

Meads said he has ideas about changes he would like to make, and areas he would like to become involved in, and admits he is just a little apprehensive he won't be able to achieve those goals in the time lines he's set for himself. He didn't want to provide details of his plans yet.

"He's got a lot of integrity," said Town CAO Steve Andrews, who added Meads has many innovative ideas.

"We have been extremely well served by him in his previous role," said Andrews. He said the town had several strong internal candidates for the fire chief's job and Meads appointment was unanimously supported by council at the meeting

Mayor Kathy Gastle said she and council are confident that under Meads strong leadership the department will move forward on the leading edge of innovation.

Before he became a firefighter Meads worked as a physical education and health teacher in Grey County, then went back to school to get his mechanic's licence so he could teach auto shop. He didn't return to teaching because he said at the time he could make more money as a mechanic.

He joined the fire department as a volunteer in 1978.

"Once I got involved in this I thought it was the future for me and I never looked back."

He started with the department full-time in 1981 as a fire prevention officer. He eventually became a training officer, a position he held for about seven years, before becoming assistant deputy chief.

Meads said one of his top priorities as fire chief will be to hire a new deputy chief, as current deputy chief Bob Hyde announced



Bob Meads packs up his assistant deputy chief's helmet yesterday after taking over as Halton Hills Fire Department's chief Tuesday.

Photo by Ted Brown

his retirement early last month. Hyde is to retire next week.

Meads said he'd like to fill that position internally as he believes there is a wealth of qualified people within the department.

He said in his new role he would like to enhance the department and provide a better level of service. As the town grows, additional full-time staff will need to be hired, but he is a supporter of a composite (full and parttime) department.

"You can't get better value for your dollar than part-time staff," said Meads.

Meads, who lives in Georgetown, is married to Sue. Their son lives in town, and their other son died in a boating accident five years ago.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



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