

# FIRE: Do you really think it can't happen to you?

The Canadian Champion, Wed., October 9, 1974 B7

## "Babe" Clement heads town fire department

Although he admits to being close to retirement age, Milton Fire Chief Albert E. Clement doesn't mind if you call him "Babe".

He's gone by that nickname for over 40 years now and he acquired the nickname in the 1930's for his youthful prowess in baseball and hockey.

Babe Clement realized a lifelong dream when he was allowed to join the Milton Fire Department as a volunteer, part time firefighter in 1934. He started at the bottom and worked his way to the top, becoming chief on a part time basis in 1951. In 1963 the council named him chief on a full time basis and for 10 years he was the brigade's only full time worker. Last year Lt. Jim Coulson was added to the staff on a full time basis, after 13 years as a volunteer firefighter.

**Second baseman**  
You might call Babe Clement a "firebrand turned firefighter". For over 20 years he starred on local ball and hockey teams representing Milton. He played a solid second base on Milton ball teams and in 1930 was a member of the Ontario championship club. He

retired from active sports in 1948 but still enjoys watching ball and hockey games and has coached minor baseball teams.

And every once in a while the firefighters get involved in a broomball game at the arena and you'll see Babe displaying some of that prowess for which he was once well known—usually tending goal for the firefighters team.

He said he quit school at 14 to go to work in the Dominion Woolen Mill in Milton, then spent five years as a bread truck driver for Frank Bowen and Son. Then he spent 20 years at Model Knitting Mills, once located on Commercial St., where he was general foreman when the plant closed in 1955.

His next job was at the town's sewage disposal plant where he was chief operator. He remained there eight years until the town ap-

pointed him full time fire chief in 1963.

**Administration grows**  
Chief Clement splits his duties between administration, firefighting and

brother prevention. In recent years, he says, the paperwork and desk work has grown by leaps and bounds. But he still goes out inspecting new buildings, checks over plans for proposed developments,

administers the fire department business, goes to fires, helps train new recruits, gives lectures and demonstrations.

It's a 9 to 5 job in the office but his days don't always end at 5 o'clock. When the fire siren sounds, he's on the road in his own radio-equipped car. His wife and family are used to seeing him dash off in the middle of supper or breakfast to respond to an alarm, and there have been many nights when a fire call has interrupted his sleep and forced him to dress quickly and rush out. And there have been many nights when he didn't come home at all.

The addition of one full time firefighter last year helped the fire chief cope with the daily workload, but he still claims more men are needed as the work is growing daily. This year he asked for four additional full time firefighters but council decided the town could not afford the additional expenditure, and the chief was very disappointed when the request was denied.

**Inspections**  
Milton's recent development has meant a great deal more work for the fire department. Plans for all new buildings have to be checked by the firefighters and they have to inspect buildings as they are being constructed, to make sure all the fire safety standards are being met. And then of course once the buildings are completed and opened, there is more property and more people to be protected and a greater chance of fires happening.

Although his hobby is carpentry, Babe Clement doesn't get much time to work at it lately. He's a member of several firefighting associations and attends a lot of his spare time attending meetings and conferences.

He's one of the founders of Halton Fire Prevention Bureau and served as its first president in 1957. Last year he was named provincial vice-president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. He is poster contest chairman and a former president of the Ontario Fire Chiefs Association. And he is active in Halton Mutual Aid as deputy co-ordinator and a member of the Humber Credit District Firefighters Association.

Each year he attends the annual conferences of the Ontario and Canadian Fire Chiefs Associations—usually combining the Canadian convention with a holiday trip. "I'm too busy to take time off work for conventions, so I usually work them into my holidays," he said.



REGULAR PRACTICES with the pumper, hose and other firefighting equipment keep Milton Firefighters up to date on firefighting methods.

Here's a recent hose practice in a field near the fire hall.

### Firefighting is a family affair

Firefighting is a family affair in Milton. There are two sets of brothers and three sets of fathers and sons working in Milton Fire Department today.

Deputy Chief George Bundy and his son Keith are one father-son combination. Harold and Jim Coulson are the second; Dean and John Johnston the third. Brother combinations are Barney and Irish Coulson; Ron and Doug Gervais.

### More than squirting water

## Firefighters fully trained

Spectators see the fire pumps rushing to a fire, but they don't realize the years of training and experience needed by today's firefighters. Nobody is born a firefighter and the days of choosing firefighters because they appeared to have more free time or a job that was easily left, are long over.

Today the firefighter is fully trained in all facets of fire prevention and fire fighting and the Milton Fire Department has an extensive program which ensures the men they send on a fire call are equipped to handle any emergency.

Putting out fires may look like simply squirting water on flames, but there's more to it than that. The modern firefighter learns all about climbing ladders, operating pumps, making forcible entries, layout of hoses, first aid and the various classes of fires. He also learns about hydraulics, ventilation and how to protect himself when fighting a fire.

**Prepare wife too**  
Before a new recruit joins the brigade, he is interviewed extensively and must undergo a stiff medical examination to make sure he is fit to do the work. Prospective firefighters' wives are always interviewed too—the wife must often sit home, miss social outings and sacrifice a portion of her life because her husband is a firefighter and the brigade wants her to be prepared for a lonely life.

The brigade holds three Friday night meetings each month—one is a business meeting and the other two are practices and lectures. The men are paid one hour's pay (\$6) for each meeting. At fires, they receive \$6 per hour.

Deputy Chief George Bundy is in charge of the men serving as caretakers for the trucks and last year they spent an extra 196 hours on these duties.

Last year was not a typical year for the fire department as there were several larger than usual fires and the fire loss was quite high. But some statistics from the year will show how busy the brigade is, and the type of work it is doing in the community.

**Alarms up**  
In 1973 there were 167 fire alarms, an increase of 31 over the previous year. Largest fire loss was the Milton Inn Hotel, which was destroyed in October with a loss of \$258,000. Other large fires included a barn at \$50,000 and a house at \$48,000.

There was a total loss in 1973 of \$578,182—the hotel fire accounted for half of this figure. The previous year's loss was only \$157,725.

**Alarms included**  
13 dwellings, four apartment buildings, 39 vehicles, 53 grass and bush fires, five barns, three industrial, one store, one hotel and 48 miscellaneous (chimneys,

motors, rubbish, false alarms, etc.)

Inspections  
That year 45 buildings were inspected by firefighters—nine homes, 12 apartments, five stores, nine schools, two storage buildings, two public halls and six miscellaneous. An additional 39 investigations (space heaters, electric motors, gas odors, smoke in buildings, ac-

cidents, etc.) were carried out by the chief and department officers.

Six firefighters were injured during fire duties last year—including three overcome by smoke at the hotel fire in October. Two others suffered eye and face injuries at the same fire. Chief Clement injured his neck at a fire last January.

### Prevention work is challenging

Lt. Jim Coulson, who joined the Milton Fire Department as a full time firefighter in June of 1973 after 13 years of service as a volunteer (part time) firefighter, finds his new work challenging and rewarding. But he sure wishes there were either more hours in the day or more days in the week—he's having trouble getting all his work done in the allotted time.

With a good background in fire prevention work at both the community and industrial level, Lt. Coulson concentrates on fire prevention duties, with assistance from Chief A. E. "Babe" Clement who administers the office and the fire department. But he's still a firefighter too and often shows up in his dress uniform to fight a stubborn fire, if the fire alarm rings between 9 and 5 on weekdays.

**Many jobs**  
Lt. Coulson conducts fire hall tours and gives lectures on demonstrations at schools, hospitals, institutions and industries. He inspects buildings, pores over plans for new construction and does 1,001 other chores around the fire hall on a regular basis.

He was safety supervisor at Gulf Oil Refinery in Mississauga prior to joining the fire department on a full time basis. He worked at Gulf 14 years, starting as a lab technician but eventually going into the safety work fulltime there. He headed up the refinery's two-truck fire department and co-ordinated the entire plant's safety campaign.

His interest in the firefighting service in natural—his father Harold Coulson is a captain with the local brigade and has 36 years of service.

**Courses**  
Through the fire department and his former employer, Lt. Coulson has taken extensive courses in firefighting and fire prevention work, plus night courses in management and supervision at McMaster University and Sheridan College.

He has been active in Halton-Peel Industrial Accident Prevention Assoc., has attended several National Fire Protection Assoc. conferences in the U.S., and has graduated from regional fire schools and courses at Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst.

He was secretary-treasurer two years and active for several years in the Halton Mutual Aid Fire Service Assoc. which co-ordinates firefighting techniques across Halton, and also chairman for three years of Halton Fire Prevention Bureau (recently renamed Halton Region Fire Prevention Committee), a fire prevention group that sponsors programs in Halton.

—A group of ratepayers have called a meeting for Friday evening at Spesside School to discuss the possibility of a large quarry operation on Highway 25.



PORING OVER PLANS for new construction in Milton, Lt. Jim Coulson and Chief A. E. Clement check to make sure there aren't any fire hazards and that all safety precautions are being considered. They have had a lot of this kind of work to do in the past few years as Milton mushrooms.

MILTON PARKS AND RECREATION  
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## The Dorset Park Recreation Advisory Committee

to attend a meeting at

### ROBERT BALDWIN SCHOOL

ON

## Tuesday, October 15th, 1974

at 8:00 p.m.

For further information please contact Milton Parks and Recreation

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