

When the fire siren sounds...

These modern volunteers show professional courage

STOUFFVILLE—Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire Department has a proud history documented back to 1903. Apparently the department goes back further but there are no records.

The original records book was in use from 1903 until 1972 and recorded payment of firemen and minutes of meetings. Members of the volunteer fire department are obviously not particularly long winded because after using the book for 69 years it is only half full. It was retired because of its age.

The department has come a long way since the days of the hand reels and now boasts two pumper trucks, a tanker and the newest acquisition, a utility truck which carries air packs and rescucitators.

The department has an enviable safety record, no-one has ever been killed or seriously injured. The worst injuries were sustained by one member who happened to be working at the top of a ladder when the siren rang and twisted his ankle in his haste to get

down and by one other fellow, who will remain nameless, who was late arriving at the station and dislocated his shoulder as a result of a flying leap onto the back of the truck.

The tradition of low pay for the men has continued since the original volunteers received 25 cents an hour. The department is paid \$96 per hour with a minimum one hour charge for any fire call. The fee remains the same regardless of how many men and trucks are called out.

The firemen put the money into an account and divide it evenly at the end of the year. Last year each fireman received the princely sum of \$1,000 for a total of 107 calls.

No remuneration is received for the twice monthly training and cleanup sessions which are held at the station. In addition they donate their time for free to train Girl Guides and Cubs for fire badges.

They hold two dances a year at the Legion and a Barbarian Festival in the summer, the

proceeds of which go to charities such as muscular dystrophy.

The department does not charge for calls to accidents, heart attacks or drownings. The utility truck is outfitted for rescue work and now responds to those calls.

The number of calls "is gradually creeping up," according to Chief Walt Smith.

A four man standby crew is delegated to stay in town within phone or siren distance of the station on all long weekends in the summer. For hanging around on the long weekend the men each receive \$10.

"You've got four men definitely and you've got to hope for eight," commented the chief who noted that so far it has "worked satisfactorily."

The volunteers have to be ready to drop everything, at any time and run when the alarm goes. During the day about 10 to 12 men usually respond to a call and at night just about the whole 16 man crew goes.

The first six men to the station take out a truck and as the others arrive they wait for the first truck to radio back whether additional aid is needed.

Each man in the department has to be trained to do every job and handle all equipment so any six can form a complete crew.

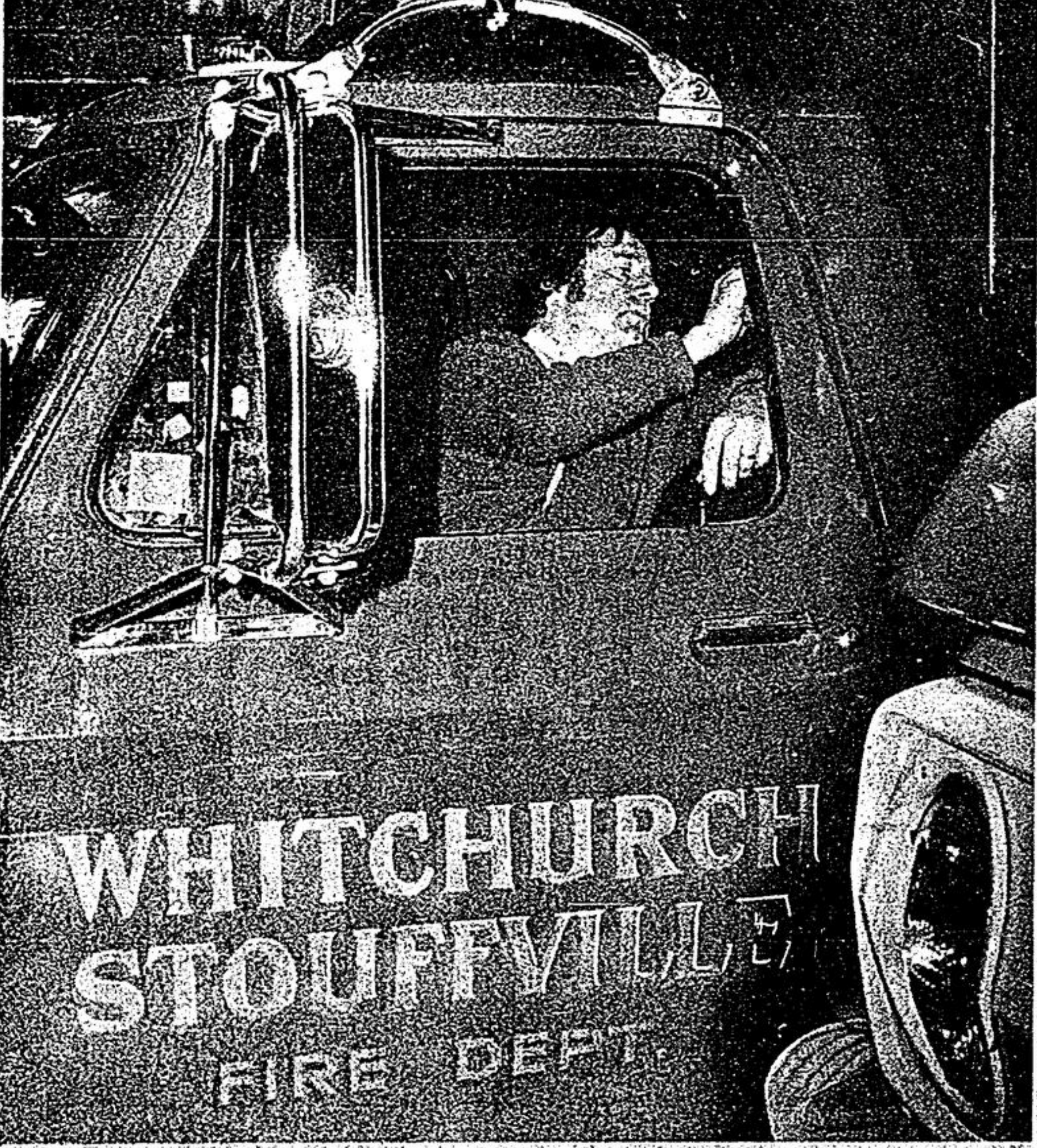
According to Mr. Smith the average service of the present firemen is 15 years and the average age is 42. In spite of the low pay and chancy hours, only two men have quit the department in the past five years.

The chief has been a member since 1946 and he has no intention of retiring in the near future. There is no mandatory retirement age. "You go as far as you feel you can go," said Mr. Smith.

The only requirements for a fireman are good health and a willingness to do the job which can sometimes be quite taxing as when the Ratcliff Block on Main St. burned out in 1971 and the fire lasted for 34 hours.

Members of the fire department are: Fire Chief Walt Smith, Deputy Chief Fred Castle, Captain George Wilson, Lieutenant Grant Turner, Secretary-treasurer Charlie Jackson, Jim Rennie, Don Doner, Marv Betz, Ken Roberts, Don Lewis, Bill Brown, Keith Malcolm, Bob MacAloney, Ed Sanders, Ken Wagg and Lloyd Jennings.

The volunteers feel the day is inevitable when Stouffville will become so large a full time fire department will be a necessity.



Fire department vehicles are kept spotless. Once a month as clean up time when all the gear gets checked over and all the trucks get washed, waxed and polished. Lloyd

Jennings, son of former Fire Chief Del Jennings, is shown here using a little old-fashioned elbow grease on the departments new utility truck.

Story and Photos
By
John Montgomery



The worst fire in Stouffville's history destroyed the Ratcliff block on Nov. 11, 1971. The blaze was discovered around 8 a.m. in the morning. It took 60 volunteers from five fire brigades, 34 hours to extinguish the fire. When they were through, an entire business block, including eight second and third storey apartments, were destroyed.

By Jim Thomas



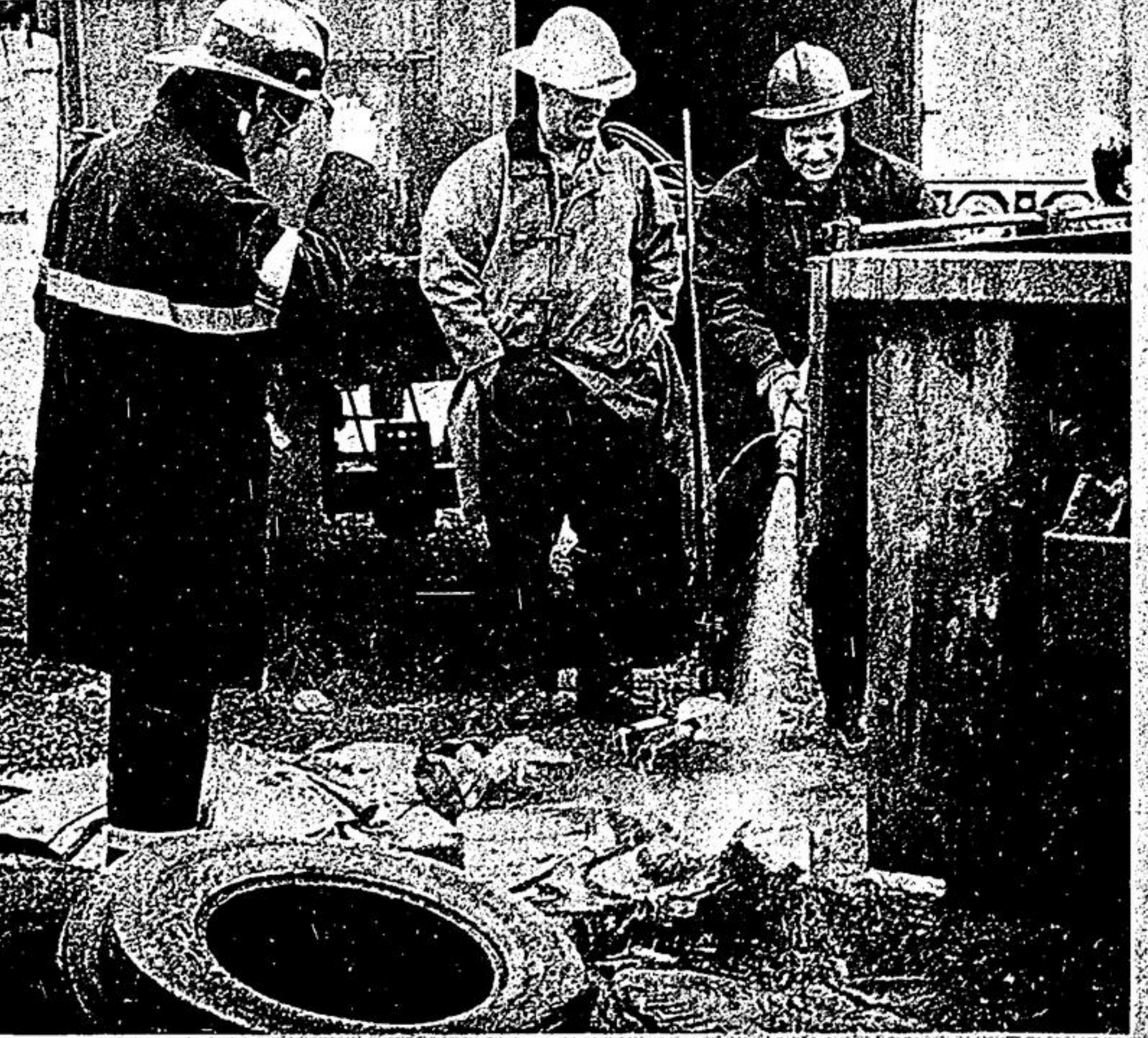
Firemen have always held a special fascination for children as can be seen from the crowds of them that congregate whenever the fire trucks show up. Casually dressed Fire Chief Walt Smith looks on while fireman Ken Wagg puts the hose away.



The Air pack has become an indispensable piece of equipment for modern firefighters, smoke is one of the greatest hazards for firemen. Here (at left) Deputy Chief Fred Castle demonstrates the proper way to



use an air pack during a training session at the Stouffville Fire hall. Stouffville's newest fireman, Bill Brown tries it on for size.



Many of the fire calls are minor matters with little possibility of property damage or danger to life but when the alarm goes the fireman never know what they may be faced with. From left to right; Bill Brown, Grant Turner, and Ken Wagg mans the fire hose.