

Claremont resident and former fire chief Jack Ward continue living in his Wixson St. house with his wife Bernice. Ward has sold the building that housed his business of 40 years, Ward Machine and Welding. He plans to

Welder douses torch after 40-year career

BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

Jack Ward is hanging up his welding torch.

The Claremont resident and former fire chief has sold the building that housed his business of 40 years, Ward Machine and Welding. He plans to continue living in his Wixson St. house with his wife Bernice.

A mechanic in the Canadian air force during the Second World War, Ward worked for Barkey Brothers (now Stouffville Machine and Tool) before setting up shop in his father's double garage in Claremont, where he was born and raised.

A self-taught machinist and welder, he built the first half of his own shop in 1950, then completed it in 1960.

Initially he was kept busy looking after the equipment and machinery of area farmers and gravel-truck operators. He never wanted for business.

"I'd be in there working seven days a week at times," he recalls. "If I didn't have the job done by the end of the week and

they needed it Monday, then I'd be in there Saturday and Sunday."

In later days, Ward would spend the greater part of his time building special equipment for Dominion Mushroom of Brougham. "I did a lot of custom machinery for them. They'd come to me with their ideas, I'd tell them mine, and we'd come up with something."

Ward claims to have watched a variety of changes through the years in Claremont and feels that things were a lot busier in the past.

"Claremont was more industrious 40 years ago when I started in business. Charlie Cooper ran a big hardware, farm implement and car sales operation north of where the Bank of Commerce is. He sold farm equipment all over Canada."

Ward remembers doing work for Cooper on a regular basis, as well as for Sarco of Canada, a steam-heating operation, now located in Scarborough.

He maintained a staff of two most times, although of late he

had been alone in the shop. "I've had some pretty good people. But towards the end I slowed down a bit and looked after it all on my own."

While Ward closed the shop door March 30, he's still busy cleaning out the building for the new owner, who takes possession May 15. A recent auction sale helped him dispose of some of his equipment.

As for the future, Ward says he'll take it a day at a time. "I don't know exactly what I'll do. But there seems to be a lot to keep me busy."


He has an interest in wood-working and makes clocks and furniture out of cherry and oak. The Wards also enjoy travelling out of Canada and sometimes go to Milwaukee to visit their daughter.

But for the most part, Jack Ward will simply do the things he hasn't had time to do in the past 40 years, which will include spending more time with his wife.

"I didn't feel like working any more," he says. "I think Bernice was pleased with my decision."

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