

# SUN-TRIBUNE PEOPLE

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Former captain Eric Blundon retired from Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire and Emergency Services earlier this year. A part-time firefighter since 1983, he became the town's first full-timer eight years later. Responding to emergency calls where family or friends may be involved was difficult, he said.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

## First full-timer has fought his last fire

DEER PARK INN BLAZE STANDS OUT FOR RETIREE

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
Staff Writer

Whitchurch-Stouffville's first-ever full-time firefighter has doused his last fire.

After 26 years in the department, Captain Eric Blundon has retired.

"I had a goal to retire at a certain age and I'm that age now," the 55-year-old said. "I'm sad to leave the department, but I'm looking forward to being with my family and being retired."

"Firefighters' families put forth a huge commitment; there's a lot of missed events, birthday parties," Whitchurch-Stouffville fire Captain Tom Brillinger said. "He's really going to be missed."

When Mr. Blundon joined the Whitchurch-Stouffville fire department as a volunteer in 1983, he worked out of the newly created Ballantrae station, which was housed

in Ted's Towing at Ninth Line and Aurora Road. The building had no heat or indoor toilet.

"There were many-a-time we'd jump off the back of the tanker and your gloves were still attached to the tanker," Mr. Blundon said of how cold the building would get in the winter.

Not only was the newest brigade in Whitchurch-Stouffville a rather low-tech operation, so too was the gear worn by all firefighters back in the day.

"You'd feel the top of your head get warm or if your crotch area got too warm you knew you needed to leave (the fire)," Mr. Blundon said. "In the intense heat (the gloves) would melt on your hands."

Today, the equipment is much more sophisticated and the Ballantrae fire hall has its own building, complete with indoor plumbing.

"Isn't that nice," Mr. Blundon said.

After eight years as a volunteer, or part-timer, the Whitchurch-

Stouffville fire department hired its first full-time firefighter - Mr. Blundon, who had to give up his job at Northern Telecom to take the position.

"I had a good job, but nothing compared to the fire service," he said, noting being a full-time firefighter was never his intention when he joined.

"The community needed to help and you were there to help," he said.

While fighting fires, attending to motor vehicle accidents and medical calls remained at the core of Mr. Blundon's full-time duties, he also had to delve into the world of administration.

"It was a little bit of a challenge in those days because you're breaking the ground for all the guys today," Mr. Blundon said.

Until recently, Mr. Blundon and his family lived in Stouffville, which meant every call he answered potentially involved someone he knew.

"You're always looking for the colour of the car - is it my wife's or my

daughter's car?" he said. Mr. Blundon luckily never answered a call that involved his family.

Throughout his 26 years as a firefighter, Mr. Blundon has battled a lot of blazes, but the one that stands out most in his mind all these years later is the Deer Park Inn fire, which took place in the early 1990s.

"The fire was so intense and such a big building; a stubborn fire to put out," Mr. Blundon said, noting that despite the fire's magnitude, there were no injuries.

The building, just north of the Stouffville Country Market, was rebuilt and is now home to Choko Authentic Apparel and Deer Park Childcare.

Now that Mr. Blundon is no longer battling blazes, he is hoping to make new memories in his Bobcaygen retirement home.

"(I plan to) spend a whole lot of time in my boat fishing," he said. "I've (also) got a big honey-do list for the home that is going to keep me busy for a while."

## Whitchurch-Stouffville News Digest

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### Seniors going bowling on video games

The Stouffville Bowling Centre may be closed, but that doesn't mean people can't bowl in town.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will be hosting Wii Games for Seniors tomorrow from 10 a.m. to noon and the game of the day is bowling.

"The emphasis is on fun," said Catherine Sword, co-ordinator of public services for the library. "People should not feel worried if they've not tried it out. This is their opportunity to try it out."

The Wii, which is a video game, approximates the motion of the games seniors once enjoyed because it requires players to swing a motion-detecting controller like a golf club, bowling ball, tennis racquet, or other piece of athletic equipment.

The video game also offers a reprieve from a sedentary lifestyle and boosts hand-eye co-ordination among the over-60 set in a way that bingo and Sudoku can't.

The one-time event, which is for seniors only, will take place on Friday, March 20 from 10 a.m. to noon in the large room across from the pool.

For more information, call 905-642-READ.

## CORRECTION

### Chili contest March 28

The charity chili cook-off at EastRidge church takes place March 28. An incorrect date was printed in Saturday's paper.

The Sun-Tribune regrets the error.

## SOUND OFF

Have something to say about these or other stories?

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