

# Life stories

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## Sam Rippey was a legend among firefighters

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Flags are at half-mast as Newmarket and Aurora mourns former Newmarket Fire Chief Sam Rippey.

The town halls in Newmarket and Aurora as well as the Central York Fire Services stations are honouring the 83-year-old retired Newmarket fire chief who passed away yesterday at Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Many firefighters looked up to the man who has been described as a firm, but reasonable man to work for and, like many, former CYFS fire Chief John Molyneaux saw him as a role model.

"He was one of a kind and a legend among the firefighters," he said. "I was fortunate enough to have him as a mentor. He gave me some wonderful opportunities and helped me to become who I became."

He first met Rippey when he joined the department in 1975 and found there were high expectations of firefighters, but they were fair. He describes Rippey as a man who had a way with words and the talent to balance the needs of taxpayers and firefighters alike.

But not only was he a boss, but also a friend who was a kind and generous man, Molyneaux continued. He was a family man, a father of four and had many friends who



Sam Rippey.

now have great memories.

"It's funny how someone influences your life," he said. "I find myself using phrases in my life and thinking of him after the words have been spoken." Newmarket Councillor Dave Kerwin, who has known the Rippey family for four decades, served alongside Rippey

when he was the chair of the Newmarket Fire Department and admits he was a remarkable man to work with. He recalls Rippey having two questions when he interviewed firefighter hopefuls, the first being if the person lived in Newmarket and the second being if he played hockey. "You

would never get away with it now but if the answer to either was no the person wouldn't get hired," Kerwin laughed. "Sam wanted his staff to live close but more interestingly, he believed that hockey was a team sport and that you had to be a team member to be a firefighter." Donald Bond was hired by

Rippey in 1972 and feels there are three words that sum up the local legend. "I have three 'F' words to describe the (former) chief, firm, fair and fun to work with," he said. "It was an honour to be associated with him for those years."

"Sam had a long history with fire services, serving as the first full-time firefighter hired in Newmarket in 1971," CYFS fire Chief Ian Laing said. "He will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his many friends at CYFS and our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time."

Rippey began as a volunteer firefighter with the Newmarket Fire Department in June 1964. He initiated Newmarket firefighters joining the International Association of Firefighters and became president of Local 2511 in 1976.

He was promoted to Newmarket Fire Chief in 1978 and was the driving force behind the creation of the dispatch system for the Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Georgina fire departments.

Rippey served from 1964 to 1993 and was the first fire chief of a full-time force in Newmarket.

Last fall, CYFS paid tribute to him at the annual open house where he participated in the celebrations.

Donations can be made to the Canadian Cancer Society in memory of Rippey.

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