

91-year Aurora tradition quietly comes to a close



By Brock Weir

Saturday was a day like any other for the Central York Fire Service. There were a few calls here and there between Aurora and Newmarket, but nothing particularly extraordinary ? at least on the surface.

With little fanfare, however, Saturday marked the end of 91-year Aurora tradition as Brian Patrick responded to his last call.

The long-time firefighter with the CYFS learned the ins and outs of fighting a fire from a very young age. As a lad, he was often loaded into the car by his grandfather or father to watch as the big boys did battle with the majestic flames. Young Brian was never one to ooh and ahh at what was before him, but viewed the firefighters almost like a professional sports team. Observing their moves, he was able to anticipate what was coming next in battling the blaze, but what came next for Brian was inescapably in the blood.

Brian's grandfather joined what was then the Aurora Fire Department in 1924. Retiring in 1973, his service on the department overlapped with his son's, as his son's did with Brian. Thus, the community is without a member of the Patrick family just an emergency call away for the first time in nearly a century.

?I had to feel like I was making a difference,? says Brian on his decision to retire. ?It felt like the right time. I think the bottom line was when my father died on December 9, 2013 and about seven months after he passed away, I made the decision.

?It has been over 37 years, but it is just time to start enjoying other things in life.?

By the time Brian was old enough to really be cognisant of the work his father and grandfather were doing with the Aurora Fire Department, his grandfather was serving as Deputy Chief while his dad was a captain.

?I started believing at a very young age that this is what I want to do,? he says. ?I didn't give thought to anything else other than being a fire fighter.?

He started as a volunteer with the department in 1977. At the time, Brian was cutting grass for the Town of Aurora at the then-home of the Aurora Public Library on Victoria Street. Next door was the Aurora Fire Station. The Fire Chief of the day pulled him in on September 12 of that year, he was a volunteer by 7 p.m. that evening, and by July 5, 1982, he was a career firefighter.

Those early days watching fires being fought from the front seat of the car stood him in good stead for his new line of work. While

he might have been a rookie on paper and in first-hand experience, his knowledge of the department, their procedures, and what to do was practically intimate.

But, since those early days as a volunteer, the force has changed dramatically. Not only is the fire service merged with Newmarket to form the CYFS, but the community's expectations for their fire department has changed as well.

Now, we're doing more advanced intervention, have a better understanding of the medical physiology of the body and understanding more of what we're doing with oxygen administration. There is a lot more education now as opposed to just training.

Out in the community, their focus has been expanded to education programs, fire prevention, ensuring buildings are in compliance with modern day codes, and they also grapple with ever-evolving technology.

As his own son focuses on a career in sports media, Brian says he's now just starting to give conscious thought to the 91-year-old Aurora legacy which ended with him on Saturday afternoon. This point may have been driven home as he was feted by a handful of other members of the CYFS that day as he inspected the historic fire engine which now rests at the Edward Street Fire Station.

His grandfather was aboard when this particular vehicle responded to its first fire in 1926. His father was on board for its very last call. And, there he was, with the same engine on his very last day with the service.

When I look back and think we managed to put in 91 years of service in three generations I am proud, he says. I am pretty sure my grandfather would be ecstatic because on the day I got on he was one very happy man. For me, personally, I look back at their involvement and mine and think, three generations and we have all been spoken pretty highly about when it comes to our ability to deal with the aspects of our own profession and as volunteers.

I am very proud of them and I know they would be very proud of me.