

Town honors nine fire fighters for 30 years' service

Lavish was the praise Monday night as approximately 200 Bradford residents gathered at the community centre to pay tribute to nine firefighters who have each given more than 30 years of service to the town.

Honored for their contribution to the town were: Fire Chief Ted Gapp, Harold "Butch" Boyd, Ted Bulpit, Jim Church, Gordon Church, Roy Storey, Jim Everitt, Chuck Woodcock and Roy Saint.

Following opening comments by Bradford Mayor Joe Magani and West Gwillimbury Reeve Orville Hughes, Ken Wood, chairman of the event, called on the chief to introduce the entire fire brigade.

Then, presentations were made to each of the nine honored firefighters by George Alexander, representing the Ontario Fire Marshall's office and Art Evans, MPP for Simcoe Centre.

Alexander recalled his work with the Bradford firefighters and noted the men were more than willing to attend practices, no matter what the weather.

Evans, who presented plaques to the province, added his commendations and reminisced about the department's work in quelling a major blaze at his restaurant in 1959.

Deputy Reeve Fred Cook then reviewed the brigade's history:

"Needless to say, any history of the community of Bradford would be incomplete without mention of the firefighters over the years.

"Just to mention a couple of the big fires in Bradford:

"May 25, 1871 - on this date a fire, which started in the Edmanson bakeshop (situated approximately at the corner of Holland and Moore Sts.) travelled easyward until it reached the town hall. It left 130 places of business and homes in

ashes, with an estimated loss of over half a million dollars.

"The year 1923 - in this year the then high school was destroyed by fire and the S. Lukes Mill. These two fires were only a few weeks apart.

"I am not sure about the fire brigade, as to organization in 1871, but, in 1923, we had what might be called an organized volunteer brigade.

"At the turn of this century the equipment consisted of what was known as a hand-pumper, a steam fire engine, with accessories such as hose, ladders, etc. All of the equipment was hand drawn to the fire.

"Just to mention a few of the men who served the community well, and did an excellent job, in days gone by, and I am not attempting a complete list -- Ed Callender, James Webb Sr., B.B. Collings, W.C. Davey, Lorne Church, Dick Waller, Alan Crake, Charlie Campbell. If any of you would like to add names to this list, please let us know. Of these, James Webb Sr. and B.B. Collings (as captain) held office of chief.

"However, tonight we are primarily interested in the present brigade and, in particular, nine members of it.

"The present organization was set up about 1943. It started with 16 members, then became 18 and is now 22.

"On the start Dodger Collings was the chief, following him Edward Gapp became the chief and still is in that position.

"One of the major fires that our present brigade fought, and fought well, was on February 11, 1959 when the Art Evans building on Holland Street was destroyed.

"Our present equipment consists of the following: 1948 tank truck, 1955 pumper, 1958 rescue truck, 1969 pumper and five smoke masks.

The value of these masks would be hard to estimate before these were procured the firemen couldn't get into a building because of smoke.

"Now water is carried with the brigade to a fire; in the old days, they had to get water on arrival.

"In the old days, there was no remuneration, and now there is, and there were no regular meetings, now the men meet regularly.

"There is now an organization in the County of Simcoe, known as Simcoe Fire and Mutual Aid Association (with 28 brigades which can be called on at any time and from any direction). At the same time, there is never a time when Bradford is left without protection.

"Our fire brigade also serves part of the townships of King and West Gwillimbury on a regular basis.

"This, then, is our story. These are men who have played a large part in the moulding and development of the community, once a village now a Town, known as Bradford. All glory to them."

Ken Harmon, fire chief of the Holland Landing brigade, brought greetings to the Bradford brigade and the nine men being honored.

The first fire chief in the modern history of the brigade, Norman Collings, reflected on the re-organization of the firefighters in the 1940's and added his commendation to the men who had served under him and under Ted Gapp since that time.

Finally, Charles Evans, himself a former firefighter, recalled some of the early days in the brigade's history and the type of man-powered equipment used in those days.

After the presentation ceremonies, the evening became a night of dancing and dining, as the 200 celebrants enjoyed the social program.



Ted Gapp



Roy Saint



Roy Storey



Jim Everitt



Chuck Woodcock



Gord Church



Plaques awarded to Harold Boyd, Ted Bulpit, and Jim Church