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McKEE, BOYD

After 38 years, old hoser McKee through battling blazes

Paul Berg. bk.

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Special to *The Mississauga News*

After 38 years of battling blazes in Mississauga, Deputy Fire Chief Boyd McKee is retiring.

Starting in 1951 as a volunteer in Port Credit, McKee in 1968 became a full-time firefighter in the Mississauga Fire Department. He was named Deputy Fire Chief on July 1, 1981.

In reflecting on his career, McKee, 61, had nothing but praise for his chosen profession. "It's a rewarding career," he said. "Most of the time you're out there helping the public. Every day is something different. It suited me to a tee. You didn't spend all your time at a desk."

He said the high point of his career was the friendships he made. In fact, he enjoyed his career so much he considers the

entire time he spent on the force a high point.

The lows he remembers are the tragedies — the Texaco oil refinery fire in the late 1970s, the train derailment in 1979 and the fire at the Extendicare nursing home, which took 26 lives.

He said fires are difficult, even when there are no injuries or fatalities. "Sometimes it's sad," he said. "People lose pos-

sessions, and they're hard to come by."

He's amazed at how much has changed in firefighting over the years. "In the old days we used to say put the wet stuff on the hot stuff, and the fire would be out," he said. Now the fire department takes care of first aid, problems with hazardous materials such as leaks, and auto extraction

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Deputy chief McKee served long and well

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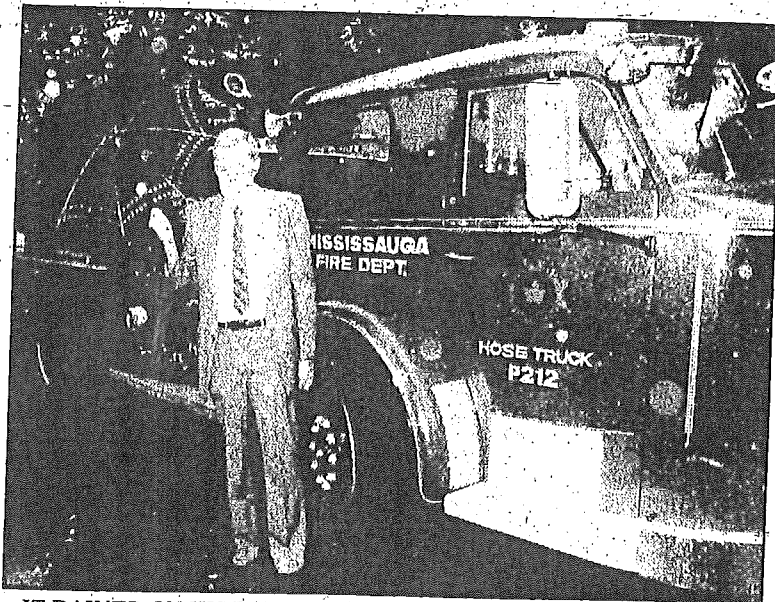
freeing people trapped in cars in accidents.

He's also amazed at the community. "It's unbelievable how the growth of the community has gone," he said. He noted that Mississauga's exceptional growth has led to problems such as traffic congestion for firefighters, but said that was being remedied by special traffic lights that would make passage easier for fire trucks.

"I think it's an exciting commun-

ity," he continued. "The mayor and council have given us great support. That's one of the reasons it's such an exciting job, is because of the growth of the community."

He has no immediate plans for the future, except to take a trip to Portugal and Spain with his wife of 28 years. "We'd like to spend our time together," he said. "You have some reservations about retiring, but it comes to you and you have to make the best of it."



IT RAINED ON HIS PARADE — Even Hurricane Hugo made a quick appearance for Mississauga Deputy Fire Chief Boyd McKee's retirement party Friday night. Armed with broom, McKee walked out of his home to a waiting 1949 fire truck — appropriately named "hose truck" — that used to belong to the old Port Credit fire department. But on Friday night, it was brought out of retirement just to take old hoser McKee to his own retirement party at Port Credit Legion. Firefighters, politicians and other friends gathered to wish McKee the best after 38 years of service.