

MILLER, JOE

# Former fire chief Joe Miller dies at 77

Peel  
Big  
April

"Big Joe" Miller is gone.

The former Mississauga Fire Chief died Thursday after a brief illness at the age of 77.

"He was a hard man but a good man," remarked retired firefighter John Gwilt, himself a veteran of more than 28 years with the local department. "he was strict," recalled Gwilt, "but at the same time he was kind of lenient too. And he was a very good firefighter."



MILLER

Gwilt recalled one incident, shortly after Miller joined the local department in 1956 which typified his aggressive approach to fighting fires. "There was a fire at a lampshade factory on Stanfield Rd.," recalled Gwilt. "We really couldn't get at it because it was right in the middle of the building. Joe went in with a rope on and I stood by the door. Another guy on the truck had the rope and he kept hauling me back. Joe kept yelling back at me and complaining about being held back. 'Let's get going' he said. That was quite an exciting night."

Assistant Deputy Chief Wayne Cunningham, who was hired by Miller, said he was "a very flamboyant and boisterous-type person who had a real ability to speak to people. He was known as Big Joe by all his friends and acquaintances."

A proud native of South Porcupine in northern Ontario, Miller was a fire volunteer for a decade before enlisting during the Second World War. He was a member of the Corps of Canadian Firefighters stationed in Britain. After the war he worked for the Ontario Fire Marshal's office for 10 years before coming to the Township of Toronto fire department as deputy chief in 1956.

Miller became chief in 1967 and was the first chief when both the Town of Mississauga and City of Mississauga were formed. The department consisted of five firefighters and 80 volunteers when he joined it. A full-time contingent of 288 were on staff when he retired. The department's training centre was named in Miller's honor at that time.

He served with several provincial and national firefighting associations and was the Canadian director of the International Fire Chiefs' Association when he retired in June 1979.

Miller is survived by his wife Dorothy, his daughter Ann and his son Bob as well as several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. A funeral service will be held tomorrow at 11 a.m. at Cooksville United Church. Final internment will be in South Porcupine at a later date.

Peel Biography Book  
April 5th, 1992  
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