

# Mississauga Fire Chief Joe Miller

## can look with pride on 38 years experience

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MISSISSAUGA — Chief Joe Miller — a 38 year veteran of fire fighting in areas diverse as South Porcupine, Ontario, and the fire ravaged British south coast cities during World War II blitzes.

Now he heads a 144-man force that has grown 28 times since 1956. Seven stations dot Mississauga with pumper and aerial trucks always at the ready.

The little told story of Miller's background and his personal attitudes that have helped mold the Mississauga Fire Department into what it is today is one of immense experience and training far beyond that expected of the average fire chief.

Miller can be summed up in one word — practical. He boasts that he'd not a genius but can meet any problems head on with the application of a little common sense.

That common sense derives partly from his northern "God's Country" upbringing—but also from the large number of training courses taken since the early 1940's.

Born in 1914 Joe Miller became a volunteer fire fighter with the South Porcupine Fire Department in 1932 while working with his father, a timber contractor. During this time he fought fires, maintained fire alarms and supervised pumping station and fire line construction.

By 1942 the Corporation of Canadian Fire Fighters had taken in Miller. Their duties included blitz fire fighting and work with mobile fire columns travelling fully equipped to areas under attack from German bombers.

While in England he was trained in pumper construction, sprinklers and alarms, aerial operations and breathing apparatus. After the war Miller returned to his father's business but the lure of fire fighting couldn't be resisted for long. Early in 1946 he joined the Ontario Fire Marshal's office.

### NAVY TRAINING

Literally dozens of courses and special training exercises followed in everything from Arson Investigation in Detroit to the complete U.S. Navy Training Schedule. He then graduated from the senior



Chief Joe Miller

officers course at the New York Fire College.

As if that wasn't enough, Miller went on to supervise the hose coupling standardization program in Ontario — a program that covered every municipality and industry as well as railway and port facilities in the province.

Finally Joe Miller came to the old Township of Toronto Fire Department as Deputy Chief in 1956. There were 80 volunteers and five full time paid staff in those days.

Since that time the honors and accomplishments have kept rolling in. Miller has been instrumental in the standardization of fire services in Canada, especially in the areas of job specifications, promotional procedures, salaries, and a new constitution for the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs. In addition the Canadian Standards Association has honored Miller with a full membership on the Fire Safety Council for Canada.

As Miller says "somewhere along the line the Centennial Medal for Fire Service activity was received."

"The law is simply the application of common sense," he says about fire safety regulations. As a result Miller believes in enforcing the law in a sensible manner.

inspector, and then four District Chiefs.

The District Chiefs are the fire fighting divisions battle line leaders — there is one on duty during each of a week's four 42 hour shifts.

With a 1970 budget of close to \$1½ million and with salaries gobbling up a full 90 per cent of that the chief has found it difficult to replace aging equipment. In fact, despite original plans, in the last four years no truck replacements have taken place — stations try to get the best service from a combination of one new and one old pumper.

"It's hard enough to just keep up with the population," Miller says of the 1 to 1,000 ratio of firefighters to population. Recent pay raises boosting a first class firefighter's wages to \$9,300 a year, "and that's one hell of a good salary." Unfortunately the availability of town funds for more men becomes harder to come by with continued raises.

With salaries so high "a good chief must get his money's worth for the community." Miller sees three men effectively doing the work of five through better training and more specialization.

It is under this philosophy of getting your money's worth that the chief is sending his officers to 22 week management courses at the Ontario Fire College.

### POWER SPREAD

Under Miller the power is spread through a system insuring round the clock fire protection. The chain of command one deputy chief, a chief

"We're driving a hard show now — in fact it's too darn rough," but with Chief Joe Miller at the helm we'll probably make it.