

## Best home insurance? Join the Fire Department

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*Chuck Henry has lived in East St. Paul for 46 years. He paid \$1,900 for a lot on Spatuck Road when it was being developed by the Sharpes in 1973 and built the home he still lives in today.*

*Chuck was a member of the East St. Paul Fire Department for 33 years.*

**As told by East St. Paul resident  
author Chuck Henry**



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When Chuck Henry described why he moved to East St. Paul from East Kildonan, it is as common a theme 46 years ago as it is today, he wanted to "get out of the city".

Newly married, he purchased a lot in The Sharpe Development which included Hillview Avenue, Elliot Road and Spatuck Road. He chose a lot on Spatuck Road for \$1,900 and built the home he still resides in today.

Chuck's greatest challenge was not actually building his home, but in obtaining an insured mortgage. When he applied through a bank to get a Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) mortgage, he was shocked to learn that the CMHC did not grant insured mortgages outside the Perimeter Highway.

Sometime after his original application, Chuck had a friend who came to work at CMHC. Working with him, the CMHC was convinced to change their policy and Chuck was the first person to receive a CMHC insured mortgage outside the Perimeter Highway - two years after he first applied.

After building his home, Chuck's next challenge was the cost of home and content insurance.

"I wanted to make sure my family and home were safe so I did the most logical thing I could think of and joined the Fire Department," Chuck shared with a grin.

"I lived right across the street from the fire hall so if there was a fire I had quick access to the equipment," he chuckled.

He joined the East St. Paul Fire Department in 1973 with no experience - which was not uncommon at that time.

"Our training consisted of evening sessions with speakers twice a month and a correspondence course by the Office of the Fire Commissioner and Assiniboine College," Chuck said.

"On the job training was how we learned to actually fight fires. The experienced fire fighters showed the new guys the ropes."

When Chuck started with the Fire Department, they were contacted via pagers and paid \$2 a call. They were paid only twice a year and his first cheque was for \$156. He remembers fondly how every member of the Fire Department was given a bonus at Christmas - a turkey. In those days, this meant a lot to his family. They picked up their frozen turkey from an unattended car parked on the street outside the old municipal office on Birds Hill Road just north of Roseneath Avenue.

In the 1970s and 1980s members of the Fire Department were involved in many volunteer community initiatives. Chuck fondly remembers how one of their members, Mr. Herman Sulkers, organized jam pail curling for the East St. Paul Winter Carnival and other members pitched in to help. Every winter, members flooded local skating rinks and at Christmas, they donated some of their earnings to purchase food hampers for those residents in need.

Chuck recalls three significant contributions made by elected officials regarding fire services in East St. Paul.

Several years after Chuck joined the Fire Department, members began attending vehicle collisions. Councillor Michael Lapka was responsible for initiating payments from MPI to the RM for the cost of our fire department attending these calls.

In the 1980s, the Assiniboine Fire College was implementing new provincial fire standards and three East St. Paul Councillors personally attended the workshops in Brandon in support of these changes. Attending Councillors included Phil Rebeck (Reeve) Andy Koshelanyk and Carol Miller.

These new fire standards had been developed under the leadership of MLA Mary Beth Dolin. In her role as MLA she worked to improve fire standards in Manitoba and after her death, the Mary Beth Dolin Meritorious Fire Service Medal was established in her honour in 1988.

Chuck has many fond memories of his 46 years in East St. Paul and his 33 years of service with the Fire Department account for many of those memories. He is a proud recipient of two fire service medals, Exemplary Service and the Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs Dedicated Service.