

Retired RV fire chief still responds to calls

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RURAL VALLEY — After 35 years as chief of the Rural Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Chuck Moore has decided to cut back on his involvement — sort of.

For while the Cowanshannock

Township native will no longer issue the orders, he remains ready as ever to respond to the alarms, no matter what time they sound.

“I’m just going on as I was before,” said the 70-year-old Moore. “I haven’t retired from the fire department. I still answer alarms. I guess you’ve done

it all these years and you still continue to do it. I’ll continue until I can no longer.”

Old habits are hard to break. When he returned from the service in 1946, and took over the reins from Chief Ralph Reed, Moore saw his election as a short-term thing and a chance to get involved. Prior to his Army hitch, he’d served as the department’s president and assistant fire chief.

“I just wanted to become involved in community activities,” he said. “I expected it to be a short term, of course, and I knew I had a lot to learn. And I have learned in the meantime.”

The “meantime” lasted for 35 years, the longest continuous term as chief in this area. Among the lessons Chuck Moore learned was fire-fighting. When Moore first became chief, the company had acquired its first new pumper truck, an American LaFrance pumping 500 gallons of water per minute. A county fire school was only a fond dream and Rural Valley put its men through their own training.

By this year, the department had added four other trucks, along with a utility and rescue vehicle. All firefighters are expected to attend one year of fire school, in addition to their local training — and to work.

“These men are dedicated to the cause,” he points out. “I’m speaking of men, if they want no more than to wear a firemen’s hat, we don’t want any part of them. They’re here to do a job and we expect that of them.”

The years have also taught personal lessons regarding life and death, men and women. A fire in March 1960 at the NuMine home

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CHUCK MOORE....35 years as chief

Ex-RV chief remains active

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of Harold Doms comes to mind. Ignited by a french fryer, the blaze destroyed the home and killed four of the Doms' five children.

"It's not a pleasant thing when you have to probe ruins and recover bodies," recalls Moore. "When you have four, it's that much worse."

Or the four times Moore was called to Keystone Lake, to Dam No. Four, to recover the bodies of those unable to face life.

Or of the time in NuMine when the waters rose and Moore rescued a little girl who clung to his neck for dear life until the firemen deposited her safely on dry land. "You don't forget that kind of thing," he said.

A testimonial for the long-time chief is planned for May 22 in the community. Speeches will be made and testimonials given. But Chuck Moore still has plenty to do. He presently serves as chairman of the Armstrong County Industrial Development Council, is a charter member of the Rural Valley Lions Club, a life member of the Indiana VFW and past commander of American Legion Cosgrove Post No. 523. — and then, of course, there is still the fire department.

"Let's put it this way. They are a dedicated group and one of which any community should be proud," said Moore. "Whatever you write, the credit is not mine. The credit is due to all of them."

With all of this, why then is Chuck Moore quitting as chief. "Age," he said, "and the fact I think new leadership probably helps the organization. I used to tell my men that I wouldn't ask them to do anything I wouldn't do myself. Of course, when you get to be 70 years of age, you get past that sort of thing."

Maybe. After all, there was that time in February, when the alarm sounded and one driver couldn't be found. All the trucks left the station house, one driven by a 70-year-old who'd answered 715 alarms in his day.

"You don't find any nicer group of people than you find in a volunteer fire department," Moore concluded.

Those old habits, it seems, are the hardest to break.