

# Randall J. Wilson

## Fire Chief ~ Ajax Fire and Emergency Services



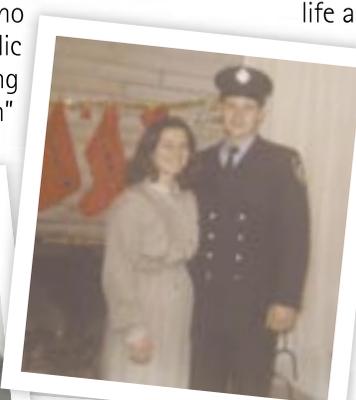
By Cathy Minz

## A long and illustrious career

**W**ith 33 years of active experience in the Fire Service including two years as a Volunteer Firefighter, nine years as a firefighter, two years as a Fire Inspector, seven years as a Fire Captain, one year as a District Chief and 7 years acting as the Durham Region Fire Coordinator together with being the Fire Chief for the last 14 years, Randall (Randy) J. Wilson had to be doing something right. And, the evidence of that is visible everywhere you look. From the impressive new environmentally friendly building that graces the corner of Salem and Rossland Roads and the new state-of-the-art training tower to the focus on safety within the fire service and in the community, Randy Wilson has had a substantial impact on the development of the Town of Ajax.

When Fire Chief Wilson walks out into the community where he lives and has worked for over 33 years, he is often recognized by people who know him only for his public profile in the fire service. Wearing his uniform, he is the "front man" for the entire department and

friends and colleagues to enjoy a balance of work and family life. He has exemplified this balance in his own life and enjoyed being home with his two sons Matthew and Michael when he was working shifts as a firefighter. As he now prepares to leave his office for the last time, he looks back on his career with absolutely no regrets.



it's a career he has invested much of his heart and soul into.

Randy has decided to pass the reins to a new leader and on June 30, he will officially retire from his current post of Fire Chief. Well-liked and respected by his colleagues, Randy is ready to take the next step in his life and join his wife Rhonda in retirement. The two plan to enjoy their cottage and dote on their four (and one on the way) grandchildren. Wilson has encouraged his

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Working in advertising for the T. Eaton Company in Toronto, Randy Wilson was relocated to their Oshawa store. He and his wife Rhonda moved to Pickering Village, part of the Town of Ajax where he thought he would be close enough to commute to the city should he be transferred back to work downtown. Shortly after making the move, he became the assistant manager/promotion director of the Oshawa Shopping Centre. It was during this time, in 1977, that Randy Wilson first heard the loud fire siren go off near his house. When the siren went off, he noticed many of his neighbours jump into their trucks and race off.

Immediately intrigued by the flurry of action, Randy asked what the commotion was all about. The answer to his query was the beginning of his 33-year career with Ajax Fire and Emergency Services.

Realizing that he wanted in on the action, Randy

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## Fire Chief

### Ajax Fire and Emergency Services



became a Volunteer Firefighter from 1977 to 1979 with the Ajax Fire Department. He worked full-time at the Oshawa Centre and raced to fire calls after hours. In 1979 an opportunity to become a full-time firefighter arose and Randy jumped at the chance. He resigned from his Promotion Director job despite his co-workers thinking he was crazy. Even though he took a cut in pay to become a full-time firefighter, it was obviously the right thing to do. He has enjoyed his life of a firefighter and looking back on his drastic career change, he reflects on how good the Fire Service and the Town of Ajax has been to him stating, "Not many people can say they have worked somewhere for 33 year and they're not counting down the days (until retirement)."

Randy Wilson is retiring from his position as Fire Chief of the Town of Ajax and his position of Regional Fire Coordinator, on June 30, 2010. While he raves about how fortunate he has been to make a career out of something he loves, to have worked so close to his home and to have enjoyed working with so many great people, he says he wants to leave while he is healthy and can enjoy his family and his grandchildren.

"I've seen too many dead bodies," says Randy but he remembers many, many good times throughout his

career including the yearly event where individuals are commended for saving the lives of others. Recently at the Deer Creek Golf Club facility, this event was held and both survivors and the people who saved them attended. "There were about 400 people there," he explains. "Emotions were running high in that room." He explains how it's the good times like this recent one that make him proud to be in the Fire Service. He has always enjoyed helping people.

Randy tells of how his job as Fire Chief over the last 14 years has come to a natural point for him to move on. All of the goals on the Town's Master Fire Plan including staffing, the new headquarters and installation of the new training tower as well as many other goals have all been reached. He is using his expertise and experience to help create the next Master Fire Plan but it will be the responsibility of the new Fire Chief to implement.

"Thirty-three years is a long time to carry a pager," Randy explains, and he talks about how big the pagers used to be compared to today. While new technological advancements have certainly helped increase the range he could travel from the station, even as the fire chief, he was on call half of the time, sharing the duties with the Deputy Fire Chief.

Randy and his wife plan to spend time at the cottage with their family and to walk the trails in and around town. He intends to take the time to do the things he hasn't had time for with his family. "We'll see how it goes," he says.

## BROTHERHOOD

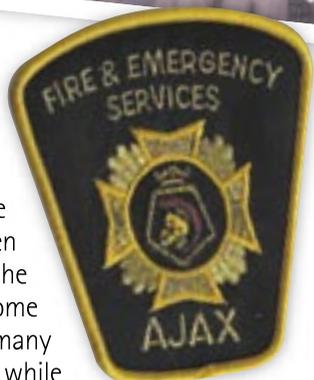
Ted Morrison, Chief Training Officer, Ajax Fire and Emergency Services has known Randy Wilson for 26 years and has worked with him "on the floor" as a firefighter in the field. He describes Randy as laid back and mild mannered. "He's always been good to me," says Ted.

The two have shared good times and stressful ones over the almost three decades they have been working together. Usually finding laughs in everyday things, Ted recalls one time when Randy was trying on his dress uniform and the sleeves only came to his elbows so the two of them were having a great laugh about how silly he looked in his ill-fitted uniform.

Many people in the Fire Service including Randy Wilson know how fussy Ted is with his bunker gear. He keeps it spotless. One day when they were both out on a call at Dominion Colour, Randy took some of the yellow pigment and put it all over Ted's gear when he wasn't looking. It was meant as a prank and when Ted saw his filthy gear, Randy started laughing. The joke was up!

"He's not much of a jokester!" explains Ted. "He's a nice person, not miserable or mean. He's good to all of us. He's mild mannered and (he) thinks a lot before makes decisions," says Ted.

With fond memories of Randy in the "hot tub with the guys from Kentucky" on one of their



The Members of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 322 Ajax Salute Fire Chief **Randy Wilson** for his efforts on behalf of our community



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The Members of the Rotary Club of Ajax Salute Fire Chief **Randy Wilson** on His Retirement. On Behalf of Everyone in Ajax, Thanks for Your Dedication to Keeping Our Community Safe.

The Rotary Club of Ajax meets Thursdays at Noon in the Rotary Room of the Ajax Main Library, 55 Harwood Avenue South. You are welcome to attend. Visit [www.ajaxrotary.org](http://www.ajaxrotary.org) for more information.

*Thanks Chief Wilson for your years of dedication and commitment to the Town. We'll appreciate your efforts for years to come. Enjoy your retirement!*

*Mayor Steve Parish, Members of Council & Staff.*

The staff, management & customers of Tom's No Frills **Salute Fire Chief Randy Wilson** for his years of hard work & dedication to our community.

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# Randy Wilson's motto: "Stay out of the ditch."



yearly FDIC meetings in the U.S. Ted says, "He's fair, good, and he likes hot friggin' food." When the two of them worked shifts, Ted remembers Randy making "hot pepper soup (with)...jalapenos...it was so hot no one could eat it. But Randy liked it."

Ted attributes Randy's successful career to his personality. "He has a knack of talking to people (and) council....he's very good politically."

"We are the most progressive (Fire Service) in the province – and that's the absolute truth!" stresses Ted. And, he continues to say that their standing is largely because of the great impact Randy Wilson has had on Fire Service. Ted raves that building the new environmentally friendly (LEED certified) station at Rossland and Salem, getting the fourth fire truck into service, and the recent hiring of 24 new recruits was largely a result of Randy's diligence and determination.

"He made certain that things were done right ... like the flooring was upgraded to big tiles. It may have been more expensive but it will last longer. He always takes the high road," stresses Ted.

Randy Wilson has had quite an impact on his colleagues. "(I'll miss) talking to him every day. We talk about our cottages, the downfalls and expense. I can always make him laugh. I'll miss that."



over from Pickering Fire to the Ajax Fire Department. While he has known Randy Wilson for many years, he has only worked closely with him for about four years. In that time, Mark has felt the

rewards of having such a kind and caring employer. "My father had sustained a bad domestic injury. He (Randy) was nothing short of phenomenal. He recognized the stress in my personal life."

Mark articulates that Randy was very supportive of his family in their time of need and he is very thankful for the flexibility he was given to take care of his family needs during the crisis. "He has

always been supportive...understanding (that there is) a work/life balance. He has always preached that."

In Mark's opinion, the one thing that makes Randy stand out is his philosophy – 'stay out of the ditch.' "He always takes the high road when he looks at things. Even when faced with adversity, he doesn't make assumptions. He finds out the facts and makes the right decisions..."

"He has never wavered from that philosophy." (Randy is an) "enjoyable person with a great family, very intelligent, witty. He has had an impact on my family."



*"He has always been the consummate professional... a wonderful leader...well-respected...consistent, reliable, conscientious - all the things one wants in a leader. (I have) absolute mixed feelings but I'm happy for him. I feel very fortunate for those years."*

*- Brian Skinner  
C.A.O.  
Town of Ajax*

## A FAMILY MAN

Mark Diotte, Deputy Fire Chief has worked with Randy Wilson since 2006 when he joined the moved

## LOOKING AHEAD

Randy Wilson will retire as Fire Chief for the Town of Ajax Fire and Emergency Services and Regional Fire Coordinator on June 30, 2010. He plans to take time to relax and enjoy his good health, loving family and exuberant grandchildren. His strong convictions for helping others, doing the right thing and having a healthy work/family life will have lasting effects throughout the Fire services department and the community. Good luck, Randy!



**Joe Dickson, MPP**  
Ajax-Pickering

Congratulations Chief Wilson on your achievements, enjoy your retirement.

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Chief Randy, It has been a pleasure working with you to design the new Ajax Fire and Emergency Headquarters.

Congratulations on your past service and All the Best for your retirement and beyond.



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Thanking you for your services to our community for the past **Thirty-three years.**

*All the best Chief Wilson!*