



## **Ron Griffin** **Retired Fire Chief, Strasbourg & District Fire & Rescue**

Ron Griffin started his long-standing volunteer firefighting career by joining the then-named Strasbourg Fire Department on January 2, 1980 under the command of Fire Chief Roy Erickson. Not too long afterwards, Ron became actively involved with the Department, and in 1982, Ron assisted with the building addition on the present fire hall. In 1983, under the forethought of Roy Erickson, Ron and Roy approached SaskTel and Motorola to assemble a radio system for the Department, which is still used to the present day. At the time, both companies essentially said, "You want to do what?" suggesting that such a system would not be feasible. Roy pushed the companies hard and the Department ended up with a system that has worked perfectly for years. The radio system has only been upgraded twice; once to make improvements and once after a lightning strike caused damage. The system was copied by the Province of Saskatchewan in the later 1980's and was made widely available to all volunteer fire departments around the province through the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP).



In 1983, the Department obtained a used 1977 oilfield water tanker which was located in the Village of Bulyea. This allowed the Department members to respond quicker to fires depending on the location in the R.M. of McKillop No. 220 (RM). It also had the added bonus of firefighting alongside members of the Bulyea Fire Department.

Working with Roy, Ron became a member of the local Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) in the 1980's, and later became the Planning Committee Chairperson. Ron continued as the Chairperson until 2007 when the position became shared between Rita Kerr and Larry Doetzel to help better organize the operations. Ron was also involved in the development of the mutual aid agreements in the Last Mountain Mutual Aid Area, which provided protocols for neighbouring fire departments to assist other departments in times of need.

In 1990, Roy Erickson retired from the Department and for two years, the Fire Chief position was shared between Dale Rubidge, Rick Mckenzie, and Ron. In 1992, Ron became the sole Fire Chief.

In the early 1990's, Ron became a member of the Saskatchewan Association of Fire Chiefs (SAFC) and the Department became a member of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Fire Fighters Association (SVFFA). As well, the Department had some women volunteer, and to this day, the Department still has several female members. Ron believes that this may have been the best thing to happen to the Department in many years.

In 1995, the Department purchased an ambulance from Hansen's Ambulance Service and converted it to haul members and equipment to calls. Ron also completed the training to become a Fire Service Instructor. That year also saw the start of the provincial 911 system, to which the Department became a part of very quickly. At the Canadian/Saskatchewan Association of Fire Chiefs joint spring conference in 1995, Ron made a motion to lobby the Federal Government for

a \$500.00 income tax deduction for volunteer firefighters. It was passed unanimously at the conference, and was later implemented by the Federal Government. Today the deduction sits at \$3,000.00 for both federal and provincial income taxes with a petition currently out to increase the federal number to \$10,000.00.

In 1996, Ron pushed the municipal councils of the day to allow the Department to start performing extrication (Jaws of Life). Once approved, the Department proceeded to purchase some hydraulic tools, hand tools, and various other pieces of equipment, and then participated in their first extrication training shortly thereafter. Their first extrication call was only one month later.

In 1998, Ron created a Junior Fire Fighter Program for 16 year old youths (and up) to join with parental and school permission. Since the program's implementation, 21 youth have been involved with the Department, with several having stayed on the Department as adults.

During the 2000s, the Department saw the purchase and replacement of several fire vehicles, all of which Ron was instrumental in obtaining. In 2000, the Department purchased a new GMC pumper truck which was designed by Ron and some of the Department members. During that time, the Department merged with the Bulyea Fire Department to become one entity, since all the training and firefighting were already being done together and it was simpler to maintain one set of records. Both parties agreed it has been a positive move for both Departments and communities. At that time, the Department changed their name to the Strasbourg & RM 220 Fire Department to encompass more of the area served by the Department.

In 2006, the Department purchased a used Rescue Truck to better suit their needs as the old ambulance could not handle the growth of the Department, including carrying the weight of members and equipment. The Rescue Truck was purchased with federal and provincial grant funding, and in the end, cost \$0 in local taxpayer money. In 2011, the Department designed and purchased a new tanker/pumper truck to replace the old oilfield water tanker and it is presently located in the Bulyea Fire Hall.

Ron has completed many modules of education pertaining to arson and fire investigation, including too many other courses to mention. Ron has been involved in a number of fundraising ventures to help pay for equipment deemed necessary by the Department members to assist them on the fire ground.

Over the course of his career, Ron has been given many awards for his volunteer service. In 1998, Ron received the Volunteer Award from Last Touch Regional Recreation Association. In 2000, Ron was awarded the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal by the Governor General of Canada for 20 years of volunteer service. In 2005, he was recognized by the local Department members for 25 years of service. In 2006, Ron was presented with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association Meritorious Service Award for over 20 years of volunteer service. In 2009, he was awarded the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal by the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan for over 25 years of service. In 2016, Ron was recognized by the SVFFA for 35 years of service, and in 2016, Ron was presented an additional bar to the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal by the Governor General of Canada for over 30 years of service.

In 2018, Ron appointed three new Deputy Fire Chiefs to start the training and transition for a new Fire Chief upon retirement. That year, the Department changed their name to Strasbourg & District Fire & Rescue to better reflect the area that they serve and the services they offer.



Ron worked for SaskTel in Strasbourg from April 1978 until his retirement in July 2007. Ron was later employed by Rocky Mountain Phoenix Emergency Vehicles as an Emergency Vehicle Technician working on fire vehicles around Saskatchewan and Alberta. Ron is married to Barbara and they currently reside in Strasbourg. They have two children Chantel and Tanner and presently have one grandchild. Ron volunteers his time around the community as an ice caretaker for the Strasbourg Curling Rink. In the past, Ron has volunteered as manager for Bantam and Midget hockey. During his spare time, Ron enjoys fishing, snowmobiling, curling, and bonfires at Last Mountain Lake.

Ron officially retired as Fire Chief from the Strasbourg & District Fire & Rescue on January 2, 2021, having volunteered a full 31 years as Chief. Ron plans to stay on the Department in an advisory capacity for the new Fire Chief and the Department members. He also plans to be involved on the committee responsible for the construction of the future new fire hall.

On behalf of the Town of Strasbourg Council and the community, Council wants to extend sincere appreciation to Ron Griffin for his long and dedicated service to Strasbourg and the surrounding area.