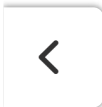




Two men honored for firefighting service

Jim Davis and Fred Hunsdon Sr. recognized for 50 years of service



By **Shaundra Bartlett Yaw**

Oct 14, 2022 1:00 PM





Fred Hunsdon Sr. receives his wooden plaque in honor of five decades of dedicated service.

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CHILSON | On Oct. 11, two men who have dedicated their lives to firefighting with the Chilson Volunteer Fire Department were honored with a surprise presentation prior to the department's monthly meeting.

Members of the Essex County Fire Police joined members of Chilson for a lasagna dinner prepared by its oldest member, Frank Murray. During the dinner, the ECFP presented Jim Davis and Fred Hunsdon Sr. with plaques that commemorated and acknowledged both men and the over 50 years of service each has given to fighting fires.

Davis, at 82 years old, is the oldest active member of the department and is involved with the fire police. He and Hunsdon both have served as past chiefs of the Chilson Fire Company.

"I joined when I was 31 years old," recalled Davis. "Jim Treadway handed me an application and told me to fill it out." A master of persuasion and a quick sell — apparently that's all it took for Treadway to convince Davis to invest the next five decades into firefighting.



the intention to make fifty years, it just happened; time seems to pass quickly.”

Motivated to keep the fire department a Chilson-based organization, Davis remarked that it’s amazing how technological advances have changed and evolved the art and science of firefighting.

“The department has come a long way; we are doing things that weren’t even thought of years ago thanks to technology,” said Davis. “Fifty years ago, all fires were fought from outside — you broke a window and aimed a hose inside. Now, we fight it from the inside out, which is much more effective.”

Davis added that the use of infrared cameras that allow firemen to spot a fire hiding inside of walls had also been a game-changer, as well as pagers and radios aiding in more effective dispatch.

“I was surprised, very much so,” admitted Davis of the wooden plaque he was bestowed on Tuesday. “We have to determine which wall we are going to put it on. I received one from the department several years ago, so the question is (whether) to display the two close together or separate,” he added with a chuckle.

Hunsdon, now at age 80 and also still active with the fire police, signed up with the department in 1963, primarily out of a desire to help his small, salt-of-the-earth community.

“The Chilson Fire Department was built in 1961,” he said, “Back then, the department didn’t have enough financing to even hardly function. We didn’t have turn-out gear — you just wore what you had — and we didn’t have tools; it was all just what you put together with what you had at home.”

As the years went on and the department was able to grow and acquire necessary vehicles and equipment, so did Hunsdon’s haunting list of experiences, including a massive garage fire, a plane crash, tractor-trailer accidents, and a fatal motorcycle accident involving a pickup truck in which both husband and wife were killed.

“Some people can’t go into a scene like that and come out unbothered for the remainder of their life.” Hunsdon said thoughtfully. “I remember them, of course, but they don’t keep me



Both men agree that their 100+ years of combined firefighting service are about one thing: tremendously helping the community and saving lives.

As for Hunsdon’s plaque, “My wife will be in charge of where to display it,” he said with a wink.

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