

Harris Among Original Firefighters Still Active

October, 1988

(Third in a series of five articles profiling the chiefs of the Stuarts Draft Volunteer Fire Department.)

One of three original members of the Stuarts Draft Volunteer Fire Department still active today, Charles W. Harris was recently elected a lifetime member.

Raised in a family of seven children, Harris first joined the fire department at the beginning, in 1950 when he was 25.

In 1971, at the age of 46, he was elected chief, the third chief to serve on the Stuarts Draft fire department. He served as chief for seven years, and has spent a total of 38 years with the fire department.

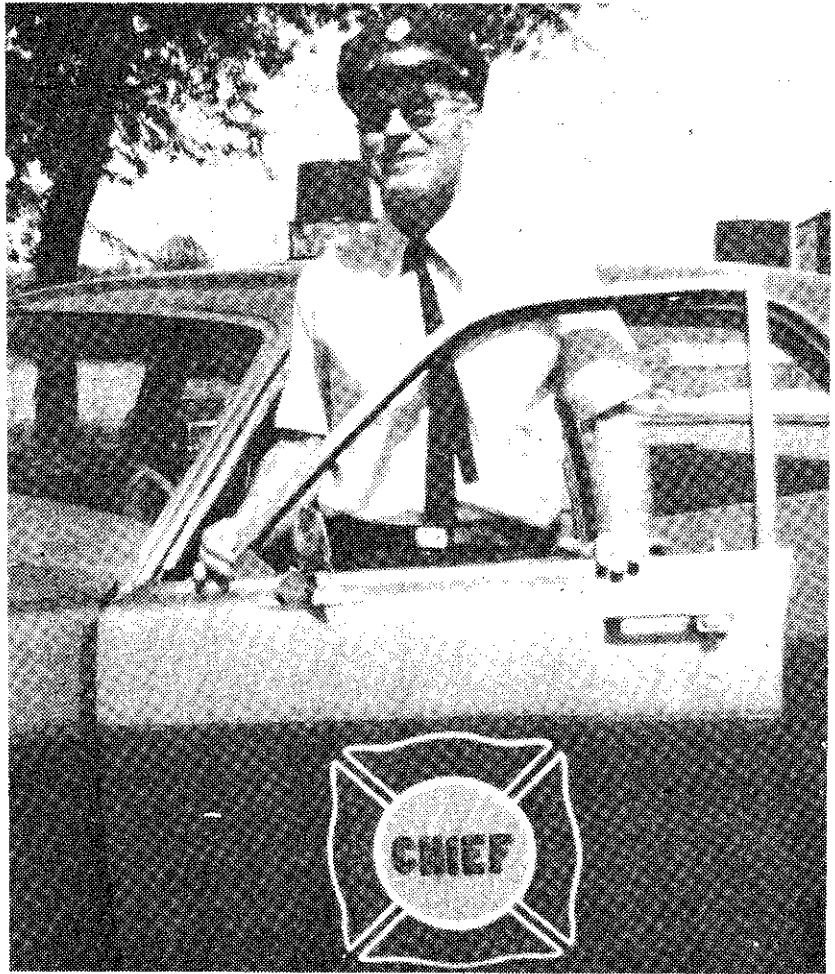
In 1972 he was elected president of the Augusta County Fire Chiefs Association.

The fire he remembers most took place on a cold, windy, treacherously icy winter night. According to Harris, the Springdale Mennonite Church caught fire when the furnace malfunctioned. Even with all their efforts, he said, they couldn't save the church. It was gutted.

"One of the major stresses of being chief," Harris said, "was the responsibility of deciding right and wrong and whether or not my department was doing its best. As there are no two fires alike, every situation is different and calls for different decisions."

"I did my best and let the rest lay," he said.

What he liked best about his service with the fire department, was the satisfaction he felt for a job well done. "Knowing you could be of help to others and



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Charles W. Harris, above, in a 1976 picture with his own chiefs car. The picture was used as a promotion project for area fire departments. Harris, now retired, is one of three original members still active in the Stuarts Draft Volunteer Fire Department.

doing your job well were the greatest rewards," he said.

Although his homelife was sometimes disrupted with calls to fires, through it all, he wouldn't change anything.

Harris views the local fire department as one of the best

because of "volunteer willingness" of people to help and the interest of the community.

Now retired, Harris worked for many years as a maintenance employee for the Waynesboro Du Pont plant. At 63, he is enjoying his retirement in Stuarts Draft.