



## ***Former Chief***

Former chief of the Stuarts Draft Volunteer Fire Department Randal Almorode steps up on the back of one of the company's fire trucks. Almorode served as chief from 1982-1987.

(N-V Photo by Haun)

# Almarode Followed Family Footsteps

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

Former Chief of the Stuarts Draft Volunteer Fire Department, Donald Almarode, followed in family footsteps when he joined the SDVFD in the spring of 1963.

His father, Leroy Almarode, was a member, as well as two uncles, Clifton Forbes and John Forbes II, the second chief of the company.

A native of Stuarts Draft, Almarode was one of four children.

He was elected chief in 1982 and served until 1987, when he was forced to resign due to a heavy schedule and out-of-town business involving his job at DuPont in Waynesboro where he

works as senior systems specialist.

He is still active with the department today.

Almarode said he fought his most memorable fire soon after he was elected chief. The fire, a three alarm house fire, broke in the early morning hours in the Ridgeview Acres area.

"We fought the fire as we were trained and managed to put it out without much trouble, saving the structure. However, the most stressful situation of this call was when a neighboring chief heavily criticized me for how I handled the fire. Fortunately, the SDVFD supported my actions," he said.

During Almarode's term as chief, the renovation of the new fire house in the old Draft School was completed and the SDVFD

moved into their new quarters.

Also during that time, President Reagan wrote a letter to the department in answer to a letter from Assistant Chief W. R. Simon, commending the company.

In his letter, Reagan thanked them for telling him about the many accomplishments of the Stuarts Draft volunteers. "I have great faith in the American people and a letter like yours reassures me in that faith. Your letter did much to brighten my day," he wrote.

One of the most satisfying comments Almarode ever heard was when another fire fighter told him he had handled a fire "just like Uncle Johnny (former chief John Forbes II) would have done."

He said he enjoys the comradeship he shares with his fellow

firefighters. "It's working with the other guys - sharing the burdens, laughter and hard work - these are things you'll always remember," he said.

Although there were many times meetings or family gatherings had to go without him, he said there were still moments that made it all worthwhile.

"You go find the fire and put it out. But here's this little old lady sitting outside while her home burns, weeping for her lost wallet with all her money in it somewhere in the fire. The tears in her eyes when you find it and bring it out to here - that's the greatest reward for all your efforts," he said.

"It's the relief you bring to people in trouble that makes it all worthwhile."