



Ken Robinson doesn't have any idea how many fire calls he responded to over 30 years with the Imperial Volunteer Fire Department (IVFD). "I responded to as many as I could," he said recently.

Robinson, 65, retired Dec. 1 from the fire department, citing a number of reasons.

"Like I told the group, I want to give a place to a younger man. With my age and physical capability, I didn't want to jeopardize (the members).

"The officers said it didn't make a difference, but it makes a difference to me," he said of his age. After the recent Harchelroad Motors fire, "We were all up for close to 24 hours and it took a toll on me."

A number of big fires stand out in his mind over the years. The most recent, of course, was the Harchelroad fire in October.

Others include wildfires between Lamar and Highway 61, and from the city dump to Enders Reservoir, as well as the Imperial Auction Market structure fire.

Robinson and wife Vikki moved to Imperial in 1973 from Hastings. His brother, Don, was a rural fire department chief for Ayr, Neb. for many years. That department was part of the Hastings rural fire department.

Knowledge of his brother's service contributed to Robinson's decision to join the IVFD in 1979.

Another reason was that former Chief Bob Allen needed a driver/pump operator, and was aware of Robinson's experience with irrigation wells through Haggard Drilling.

"I knew a lot about pumps and driving, and I've been a driver/pump operator every year except the year I was second lieutenant," Robinson noted.

He has served as president, vice president, sergeant at arms and second lieutenant. Robinson has also served on the design committee for purchasing most of the trucks and pumpers currently used.

He's also driven most of the trucks and pumpers. When the fire alarm goes off, it's a race to get to the truck. "I enjoy what (truck) I can get into," Robinson laughed. It's first come, first served for drivers.

Serving on the IVFD has been most rewarding, he said, because he's been working with "some of the best firemen in the world." Right up there, though, is the fact that he's been able to serve along side his son, Dan, for the past 10 years. Dan is now assistant chief.

During the past 30 years the equipment has gotten "bigger and better," Robinson stated. The biggest change, however, has been the training.

"The amount of training for today's volunteer fireman has increased tremendously from when I started." Certification is now required, and "There's a lot of time in required training for voluntary persons, which is very demanding. The same thing is expected of us as are paid firemen," he noted.

Being a volunteer fireman is "shouldering a huge responsibility, because our volunteer firemen

are to protect lives and property. Sometimes when you can't do that it's pretty tough."

Fire Chief Bryan Dannatt said the IVFD is grateful for Robinson's experience and time. "When anybody retires from the department, like Ken, there are a lot of years of experience and things they've seen and done," he concluded.