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MEDIA RELEASE

AFTER 77 YEARS, CFA VOLUNTEER STILL COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE

After nearly 77 years as a CFA volunteer, Rochester's Ray Larcombe remains committed to the cause.

Now 92, Ray is no longer an active firefighter but his memories of thankful faces will stay with him forever.

"There are not too many local fires that I would have missed," he said. "You never forget the satisfaction you get when people show how much they appreciate what you do for them.

"You don't look for any monetary award; the look on their faces is enough."

Ray joined the Rochester brigade on September 2, 1942 after completing his fireman's badge with the local scouts.

He remained active until about 10 years ago and continued to service extinguishers and other equipment for a further five years before a heart attack slowed down his reserve duties.

Ray was made a life member of the CFA in 1992 and continues to attend meetings. He also attended the recent urban championships in Bendigo.

"I still have a look when the siren goes to see if there's anything I can do around the station," he said.

The biggest incidents he recalls were fires at Murray Goulburn's cool store and Rochester High School.

"I worked close to the station so when the siren went, I was generally first there," he said.

Because of his work in a timber yard and general store, Ray wasn't able to join strike teams. However, he was able to contribute to the CFA's surge capacity on holiday.

"One time I was on holiday at Daylesford and they put a call out for volunteers. The fire was across the Ballarat Road and they needed volunteers to try to stop it getting to Daylesford.

"It came over the top of a hill like a pack of trains but the group of us stopped it; we did what we were asked to do."

Ray added that his employers were always very cooperative and encouraged him to contribute to the local brigade.

He remains a staunch advocate of the volunteer system. “They say the CFA is one of the best organisations in the world and that’s pretty right. I kept up my minimum skills training until late in life so I could go if needed. I don’t like a lot of fuss; I just wanted to help put the fire out.”

“The equipment they have now is colossal compared to what we had in the early days. All we had was a knapsack or a slasher and sometimes I’d use a branch off a tree.”

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford says volunteers like Ray are the cornerstone of local communities and their experience and willingness to drop everything to provide vital surge capacity to communities in need makes a huge contribution to the safety and response capacity of CFA and the protection of Victoria.

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