

Fire fighting sparks his life

By Judith Doner Berne
staff writer

Remember when you were a kid,
Well, part of you still is.

WHEN KEN KOCH retires from his management position at Detroit Diesel Allison Division of General Motors in Redford Township, he wants to become a fire chief.

Holder of a master of business administration from the University of Detroit, he never got over his young boy's dream of becoming a professional fireman. To help make it come true, the 55-year old Livonia resident recently earned a bachelor of fire science degree from Madonna College.

"I would like someday when I retire from Detroit Diesel to find a small town with a growing department and become a fire chief," said Koch, who is president-elect of the Redford Township Chamber of Commerce.

Indeed Koch (pronounced Cokk) has pursued the life of a firefighter on the side throughout his education and business career plus filling his home with his collection of antique fire-fighting equipment.

AS A HIGH SCHOOL student in a small Pennsylvania town during World War II, the need for able-bodied men allowed him to volunteer with the local fire department.

"One of the fire houses was right next to the school," Koch said. "I was tickled at being able to run out of school when the whistle blew — and be excused for it."

Since then he has served departments wherever he has lived or worked — in New Jersey, Maryland and Michigan.

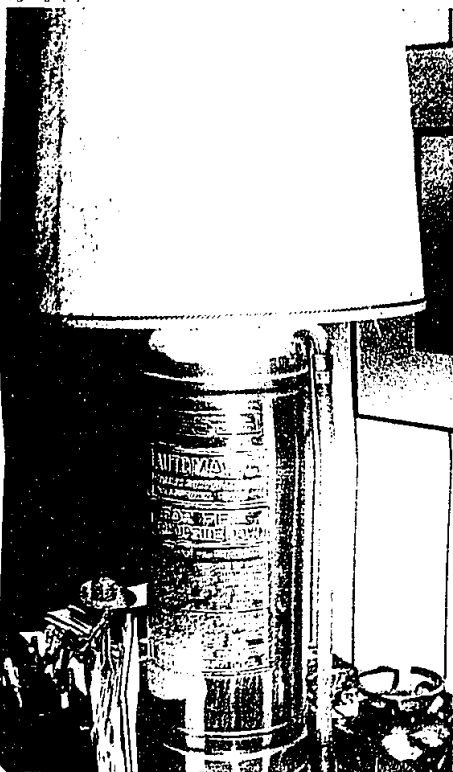
He is Redford Township's only volunteer firefighter, a situation which he would like to duplicate in Livonia. But in both communities, the union situation is touchy.

"The only way I would do it in Livonia is if it isn't a threat to the paid firemen," he said. "That's the only way I do it in Redford."

"I think there has to be some way these communities can learn to integrate volunteers to supplement the departments without threatening everyone's livelihood."

KOCH'S COLLECTION of fire-

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Koch's collection of antiques and fire fighting equipment includes this extinguisher.



The Koch's two Dalmatians, Benjamin and Pepper, fit right into the scene, as does another black and white dog, Sparky.

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