

Over a half century of service in the blink of an eye

By Sue Gannis

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Jim Cornelius is a name synonymous with the MountainTop Hose Company in Fairview Township. For over 66 of his 82 years of life, Mr. Cornelius has given back to his friends and the entire Mountain Top community as a volunteer to the Mountain Top Hose Company (MTHC). For fifty years, he has served steadfastly as the treasurer of the fire company. “Our fire company started out from modest beginnings to successful fund raising efforts,” explained MTHC President Dave Hourigan. “Jim came up with some of those plans and always gave his opinion,” he continued. One of the qualities Mr. Cornelius brought to his position as treasurer was his supportiveness to the decisions made by the board. He sometimes disagreed with the plans, but Mr. Hourigan emphasized that Mr. Cornelius was always supportive to the company when a decision was made, even if he did not agree. “He was always ready to change,” cited Mr. Hourigan.

At what Mr. Cornelius refers to as a “critical time,” he recalls when his home in Mountain Top was burning. He was in fifth or sixth grade and it was the only home he knew. He lived alone with his mother and remembers the Mountain Top Hose Company saving his house with their first fire engine. It made a lasting impression on him and as soon as he turned the age of 16, Mr. Cornelius became a member of the Mountain Top Hose Company. As gratitude and recompense to the company that was there for him and his mother, he felt the overpowering need to join.

He continues to live near the site of his homestead with his wife Gerri. Modest and soft-spoken in nature, Mr. Cornelius has a hard time standing in the spotlight of recognition. Taking the focus off of himself, he acknowledges the other members and volunteers of the fire company. “It’s always a pleasure to work with these guys. It’s a very nice, nice organization,” he reiterated repeatedly. A quiet celebration with just members of the fire company is planned to recognize Mr. Cornelius and his many dedicated years of service. That is how he wants to remember the occasion — just like his faithful service — quietly and simply. “He gave 50 years of devoted service to the fire company,” proclaimed Mr. Hourigan, “that is really extraordinary in this day and age.” The fire company and all of Mountain Top certainly can count on Jim Cornelius being there for them. Although Mr. Hourigan describes Mr. Cornelius as a “great asset to the fire company”, it is the Mountain Top community that reaps the benefits of Jim’s selflessness. The mark and heart of a volunteer with a purpose.