Fires in the Bronx as told on Facebook

Collected as of 3/12/2017
Supported by the Photos of Dennis Smith and Jill Freedman
“The Coffin Cut and the Partner Saw”

A firefighter captain from the F.D.N.Y. asked me why I called the cut in the F.D.N.Y. Saw Bulletin "THE COFFIN CUT" A Chief (AL ECKERT) in the 9th Battalion in 1960 told me, and I never forgot. 25 Square ft will negate a smoke explosion in a cock loft. hence, the size of a coffin 3 x 8 Ft. The division of training tried to get me to change the name because it was a bit "MORBID" I stuck to my guns and it remained.

A little humor behind the cut, Before I wrote the Bulletin, one of my firefighters, Jerry Albert L-31 use to cut that size which I measured after each operation. He also smoked 4 packes of cigerettes and you could hear him coffin when cutting the hole. Hence the real story behide the "COFFIN CUT"

HEY,HEY,HEY--GOT OVER 100 RESPONSES FROM MY POST ON THE COFFIN CUT - MOST ASKED WHEN I DID IT. WE HAD AN AREA IN DA-BRONX CALLED (THE POET'S) IT WAS ALL H-TYPE BUILDINGS. WHEN COOP CITY OPENED IN 1968, A MASS EXODUS OUT OF THIS AREA LEFT THE SECTION TO BURN BABY BURN. TO MAKE IT SIMPLE, THE FIRE WAS THE (INDIANS) THEY WERE TRYING TO GET OUT OF THEIR RESERVATION (COCKLOFT) WE STOPPED THEM WITH (COFFIN CUT) - THEY GOT AROUND THE CUT AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE FORT (TRENCH-CUT) WE SET OUT SCOUTS (KERV-CUT) AND WHEN THE SCOUTS SAW THE INDIANS (FIRE) THEY RETREATED TO THE FORT (TRENCH-CUT) WE THEN CALLED THE CALVARY (TRI-CUT) WITH 1 3/4 HOSE LINE WITH BENT TIP. WE STRETCHED VIA 1/2 ROPE IN A MILK CONTAINER UP THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING.

THIS WAS FOR MY COMPANY L-31 (SAWS WERE NEW THEN) THE BATTLION SENT IT TO THE DIVISION, THE DIVISION SENT IT TO THE BOROUGH AND THEY SENT IT DOWNTOWN AND TRIANING HAD ME WRITE A FORMAL SAW BULLETIN CALLED TOOLS # 9 POWER SAW USE IN THE F.D.N.Y. WE HAD THE FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH H-TYPE WHICH WAS THE FIRST TO BURN IN THE BRONX IF NOT THE CITY.
THIS QUESTION SEEMS TO COME UP A LOT LATELY - WHAT DOES THE K-12 DESIGNATION MEAN. K IN SWEDEN IS KUTTER AND 12 IS THE F.D.N.Y 12 INCH BLADE - WHEN F.D.N.Y. CHOSE THE PARTNER SAW AS IT'S OFFICIAL VENT SAW, THIS IS WHAT THE CODE FOR ORDERING THE SAW FROM ELECTRALUX COMPANY IN SWEDEN. THIS COMPANY IS NOW HUSQVARNA PRODUCTS BUT THE CODE HAS NOT CHANGED. ORIGINALLY DESIGNED FOR A ROAD SAW, FIRE DEPARTMENTS ADAPTED THE K-12 FOR ROOF VENTING -

ANOTHER HISTORY LESSON - THE PARTNER SAW WAS CHOSEN BY THE F.D.N.Y. FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON --WHEN THE FDNY CHOSE TO BUY SAWS, MY FRIEND TONY ROMINOLLI WHO RAN THE SHOPS ASKED ME TO EVALUATE POWER SAWS. HE ASKED ME ABOUT WHICH SAW I WANTED AND I SAID, I HAVE A STIHL CHAIN SAW AND IT WORKS LIKE A CHAMP. HE SENT ME STIHL-HOMELIGHT-PARTNER (NOW HUSQVARNA) AND A COUPLE OTHERS I WAS A YOUNG LT IN LADDER 31 IN THE BRONX AND I TESTED THE SAW S BY SMOKING UP A VACANT BUILDING ROOM THAT WAS SEALED. THE ONLY SAW THAT WORKED IN SMOKE WAS THE PARTNER. TONY SAID OK AND PUT OUT A BID FOR 200 SAW S. HOMELIGHT WON THE BID BUT I SAID THAT WAS THE FIRST SAW TO QUIT. THE HOMELIGHT SALESMAN SAID, HEY THIS COULD BE A LAW SUIT SINCE TONY ORDER 200 PARTNER SAW S. TONY TOLD THE SALESMAN "HEY, I GOT 50 LAWYERS SITTING ON THEIR ASSES DOWN AT CITY HALL- BY THE TIME YOU WIN THIS SUIT WE WILL BOTH BE DEAD" THE SALESMAN WAS SMART ENOUGH TO PICK UP THE PARTNER LINE AND MADE A FORTUNE SELLING PARTNER SAW S WHICH WERE NEW IN THIS COUNTRY THEN.

MY FIREFIGHTERS (JERRY ALBERT) HIS CUT WAS ALWAYS THE SIZE OF A COFFIN. (3FT BY 8FT) HENCE, WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR. JERRY SMOKED A COUPLE OF PACKS OF CIGARETTES A DAY AND WHILE CUTTING, HE WOULD COUGH (HENCE THE REAL COUGH-FIN CUT). OTHER USES LIKE THE BOXER STANCE WAS FROM MICKEY MAYE, A GOLDEN GLOVE CHAMPION. CHARLIE McCarthy I copied his wheel barrel roll so one wouldn’t fall into a hole during heavy smoke. The way to cut (8) was from tom Neary for safety. I wanted to call it the ladder 31 saw bulletin since it came from my bro’s - got shot down by higher up’s- that’s another story

“NASA and the SCBA”
A small story about masks- in the early 70’s john t. O’hagan chief of dept and fire commissioner gave NASA a project- to develop a light weight mask for the F.D.N.Y. - One afternoon NASA came to eng. 82 and L-31 quarters. We were kind of honored being these guys were from the space administration of the U.S.A. They placed on the kitchen table a small mask weighing 20 lbs. I said you guys are great since the masks we carried were 40 plus lbs. one fireman from 82 put on the mask, pulled the straps and broke the fastenings. The pointed face mask he also put on could not keep the helmet straight but pointed upwards. I now said, ”YOU GUYS WERE GREAT GOING TO THE MOON BUT YOU DON’T NO SHIT ABOUT DESIGNING A MASK” . Why don’t you go back to the commissioner and ask him to detail a firefigther to NASA and he will guide them with a mask we will design.. to our surprise the chief and commissioner agreed and we detailed out best knob man in the house.. we all put our heads together with suggestions and designed a mask
THAT WAS AND IS WHAT WE THOUGHT WAS THE BEST FOR THE F.D.N.Y. TO THIS DAY, FIREFIGHTERS WEAR THE MASK THAT WAS SUGGESTED AND DESIGNED FROM "THE BIG HOUSE IN THE BRONX" ENGINE 82 AND LADDER 31.

“Put out the Pope”

POPE PAUL VISITED NEW YORK IN 1966 - I WAS SELECTED BY THE THIRD DIVISION- 9TH BATTALION TO "PUT OUT THE POPE" TRAINING STARTED BY PUTTING OUT MANIKINS WITH FULL CLOTHING SIMILAR TO WHAT THE POPE WOULD WEAR. A PRESSURIZED 2 GAL EXTINGUISHER WITH PURPLE "K" ADDED WAS SELECTED. I WAS TO STAND IN BACK OF THE ALTA IN CLASS A's AND AWAIT ANY ACTION FROM THE THREATS OF MOLOTOV COCKTAILS. MANY THREATS HAD BEEN RECEIVED OF THIS NATURE, BEFORE THE POPE ARRIVED. IT WAS SAID AT THE TIME, "BOB, IF YOU PUT OUT THE POPE YOU WILL GO UP STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN-- IF YOU DON'T YOUR GOING DOWN AND YOU KNOW WHERE" FIREFIGHTER'S DO HAVE HUMOR AT ALL TIMES.
“Thank You Boys!!! From a Bad Cook”

Read a story today by Chief John Salka about generosity by firefighters brings to mind a story back in the early sixty's. I was with Ladder 4 in midtown on the morning of Thanksgiving. We responded from a fire in Hell's Kitchen to Central Park South. Fire was reported on the 14 floor. A very distraught woman met us as we arrived at the fire floor. She had a few Mart's and fell asleep and burned her Turkey. She was crying that it's her first meeting with her new daughter in-law who was coming in from California. I talked to the lieutenant that we felt this woman needed help. We had two Turkeys in the firehouse, one for the day tour and one for the night tour. We all agreed to share our turkey with all the trimming to help this nice lady out. She stopped by the Firehouse days later and said we saved her from the embarrassment confronting her new daughter in-law, with a burned Turkey. She said she will never forget you guys and your generosity. Concluding this story--Two weeks after this incident a truck pulled up to the Firehouse. Inside was a huge color television and a note.-- "THANK YOU BOYS-FROM A BAD COOK"

Thought about my post about firefighters being generous - Another story comes to mind--Doing building inspection of a catholic school a few blocks east of the firehouse from Ladder 31 & Engine 82. The building was in bad shape and need of a lot of repair The principal and mother superior Mary, an outstanding handsome women said to me, Captain, we don't get any help from her people downtown to make any repairs.(this sister had a personality to make a rattle snake into a family pet). I was a carpenter on my "B" job so the brothers and I volunteered to help sister out. We did all repairs that we could and lastly asked is there anything we could do more.??

She said we had done enough for her but as Christmas was coming, she only wished for a rolling laboratory so she could teach science to various classrooms. Back at the Firehouse we had a meeting and decided that "BIG ALICE WOULD GIVE A GIFT TO SISTER MARY" now Big Alice was a huge
machine in La Casa Grande which held mutable brands of drinks. Because we were out so much, the replicators financed the machine greatly. On Christmas eve, we delivered her much wanted rolling laboratory with a thank you note "MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM BIG ALICE"

“The Hottest Firehouse in the FDNY”
These 90 degree days remind me of La Casa Grande (e-82 &L-31) in the Bronx.-The house was in a valley and noted to be the hottest Firehouse in the F.D.N.Y. Having some great mechanics in the house and using funds from "Big Alice"’ it was decided to air condition the house. It should be noted that, this was the first Firehouse in the FDNY to be fully air-conditioned. After several months, I received a letter from the Dept of buildings about the huge increase in our electric bill. Something had to be done to keep our new prize since it was like heaven being in such cool place I knew a guy in Con Edison - I asked him what could be done? He said don't worry Capt., I will install a lazy meter. Wow this was great-It hardly moved when the air was on. Several months later I received another letter complimenting me on my austerity program i told them that I would do. Everyone was satisfied and the "Big House" remained cool. Not only from reputation but from the temperature we enjoyed.

Another story about this project will follow. Now to finish the air condition story- we mounted the cooler fan on the extension of the kitchen on a corner for strength. Things were going great. Even the Deputy Chief Frank Burns called me one hot and beastly night in August. He said, Capt., you got a couple of beds for me and my
aid - "Sure Chief, come on over" Although we spent most of the night out fighting fires, he thanked us by bringing in rolls the next morning with a note "Your guys all so cool" Now unknowing or unthinking, the huge fan blew hot air into the windows of an apt. building in back of the House. A very excited and distraught lady came to the house watchman stating "I gotsta see the Boss" Down i came to the apparatus floor. She said, "I don't mind the sirens and air horns and that son of bitch who plays that guitar at all hours of the night, but that fan has got-sta go" the next morning we moved the air cooling fan to the top of "La-casa grande" and all was well and cool in "The Big House" again.

RETURN TO ENGINE 85-
After my vacation on the Jersey Shore, I returned to E-85 to cover a vacation leave. I now had a regular chauffeur. Frankie was now my knob man. Lot of fire's in 1968 in fact E-85 beat out the infamous E-82 in runs and workers but only by a few. My boy Frankie turned out to be a world beater in the use of the nozzle. He was great. He had great courage and an unusual skill in the use of the knob to my surprise. I treasured working with him. Now the return of Frankie Wrong- My chauffeur got injured by some missile being thrown at him hooking up to a hydrant. Frank was to return to being my MPO. "Don't worry Lt., I will take good care of things" I wondered "Lord help me" We had a good job up on Charlotte Street-" Box 2743.

This is the area where President Carter said on a visit to the South Bronx "This looks like Berlin during the bombings in World War Two" President Reagan on his visit years later. "I think you guys lost this war also" The fire was on the 4th floor coming out two windows. I loved it when fire was showing knowing we didn't have to take a terrible feed The line was easily stretched, slack was thrown out the hallway windows and we were ready to attack. "Frank, start water I radioed Co'mon Frank, start water" for the second time. Frank now said, "It's going to be delayed but give me a minute" Like a kid waiting for Christmas, the water finally came. We had four rooms of fire now but E-85 had great Firefighters and with a tough time we put it out. I now looked out the window at the pumper. Low and behold, the bed of fly-high hose was ballooned all over the back of the pumper. Wrong struck again. The boys were not happy to see this since they had to remove
and drain the entire bed of hose. Now Frankie's excuse was "Lt. some Son of a Bitch pulled the fly-high hose on the street and i thought it was the stretch" "Yeah, Frank I guess you were right and that mystery man who did that, won't own up to being wrong"
NEXT- "I FOUND GOLD"

"I FOUND GOLD"
Leaving the Big House my next assignment was Eng-41 now Squad 41 When- I met a new Firefigther Danny - Now this man was something else, fearless with the knob-my kind of guy- He stuttered when nervous but never at a fire. He had a nickname of scoop since he knew all news in the FDNY before anybody. else. I asked him at the beginning of every tour, "Whats new Danny" He always had something, sometimes before Dept. orders came down with info. He had a great attitude about the Dept. He even knew that I was going to get a steady spot in L-31 before I did. E-41 had a 1st due response in a Italian section of the South Bronx. It had no fires to speak of because the people took care of their neighborhood. E-41 did most of their work 2nd and 3rd due. Danny and I would try to steal lines off the first or second due units. One incident I remember was stealing from :"THE BEAST" Now the Beast was a Lt. in 60 engine. His nickname said it all- in stature and determination at fires.
He was first due and we were third. He had a tough fire on the top floor of an "O" type building with the wind blowing from the Harlem River. Danny and I donned masks which the beast failed to do. Danny and I went at the fire floor I told the Beast that the chief wanted him in the street. The Beast left and Danny and I put out the fire. Now when reaching the street, I told the beast "when you need a company to put out your fires, Call 41. "I can't remember the response but I got out of there before a confrontation, and quick too" Now The Beast never forgot that even when he became president of the Uniform Officers Assoc. He would always say at meetings "Watch that Farrell, he's a thief"

Danny came into the office one morning and told me I got L-31. He pleaded with me to take him with me to 31. The Capt of L-42 wanted me but 31 had more fires since it went out with 82 and 85. When I got to 31 I asked Mr. Willy, the Captain that I want Danny from E-41 to get on board. He said, "Send him up for an interview" I relieved Mr. Willy one night and he said "Bob this guy can hardly speak" Don't worry Capt I will have him on the can with me. Danny went on to be a legend in 31 and I was pleased to write him up for bravery several times. In the feature "Man alive, The Bronx is burning", Danny can be seen and you will note he didn't stutter. Well maybe he did when he saluted the Mayor-He saluted twice.
“THE FLAGS OF ENGINE 85”

I finished my detail at E-41 and was awaiting my steady spot in L-31. This would be the start and beginning of a 14 year attachment to the #1 truck in the F.D.N.Y.LADDER –# 31 This was a day tour of the famous amateur day, group # 25. The covering Battalion chief called the roll and read the Dept Order from commissioner Lowery. He said that all appendages be removed from all apparatus. I looked at my pumper and saw some stickers on it and removed same. Now I thought, my little flag on the antenna is not a appendage. The chief made such a beef to the covering Capt. of ladder 31. who said he would call the union. The chief lost his balls and notified the deputy of the 6 Div. (PASS THE BUCK) L-31 & E-82 had bigger flags then mine. I looked up the word appendage and the meaning was not a flag but an attachment.

The deputy Chief of the 6 th division showed up and the Batt. Chief said “The men refuse to strike the flag.” Now this chief was smart. He was facing a lot of veterans. He dismissed the men and now confronted the Captain, the Lt in E-82 and me. He said to the Captain "This is a direct order, take your flag down" This weeny turd who later became and assistant Chief of Dept like a wiped dog took down his flag. Now the Chief gave Lt. Carlos Rivera who later became The Fire Commissioner, also a direct order. "Lt., take your flag down" He in turn did the same. Chief, I said to him Can I see you in my office, He said Ok-" Chief In the Navy I was attached to an elite unit who's motto was Death Before Dishonor" striking my colors would dishonor me so I guess your going to have to hook me up. " Goddammit Lt. I should be giving you a medal rather then hooking you up" He now stormed out the door and left quarters.

I never had any respect for those two officers for the remainder of my career but respected the Deputy who had the balls to face the heads downtown. He called me flags every time we met after that and we remained great friends. I always did the extra step for him. In conclusion, the next day the president of the Officers union had a press conference saying he refused to take the flag down. A day late and a flag short - engine 85 was first
"YOU CAN LEARN FROM A PROBIE" BATTALION CHIEF AND COMMANDER OF THE 9TH BATTALION F.D.N.Y'S MOTTO

I was going downtown in the subway with a choice, the Fire Dept or the State Troopers. On the way I met Battalion Chief Trainer who use to visit my brothers bar on 181 st in Manhattan. I told him about my choice and he said, "I will flip a coin for your to decide" He had a two headed coin which sent me to the FDNY. i reached Ladder 4 and the Capt said come back at 6 pm, report to Lt Clark as you are assigned to the "M" group. Meeting Lt Clark, I said I am to report to the "M" group. He said "Bob, the "M" group is 3 senior members of L-4 Malloy-Mcgregor and Massey. These men are detailed by orders of our Battalion commander Eckert to work in his group with no exceptions.

"You Bob are fortunate to work with over 80 years of experience in this house with the best. If they like you they will make you one of the best in the job but you have to ask." I did everything committee work that the three assigned who drank coffee with the chief fighting old fires. They took a liking to me since I did it all. I couldn't finish fast enough to listen to these stories. They taught me well.

Malloy on forcible entry- Mcgregor on laddering and Massey on roof work - I was called dumb shit until I was first grade. When I reached first grade they stopped. I said to them what's wrong, calling me Bob is a first. what happened to dumb shit- The answer was I reached first grade and I made it > It's now three "M"s and Bob.

Now the Chief- Chief Eckert was the best Chief I ever worked with. Eckert was his name and Fire was his game. He had great command over his battalion and if he said "Jump it was answered, How High" He asked me what I did before I entered the fire service and I answered that I was a blaster on the cross Bronx expressway. He started each lunchtime asking about dynamite and it's use. He got special called one night to an excavation site with a report of a case of loose dynamite sticks open in a box. He ordered me to jump in the car with him. At the scene, all the firefighters police ect were feared of this and made a save distance from the box of sticks. Now the Chief and I went down to the box and I said, "Chief, these are nothing but tamping bags full of sand. These are for lifter holes
for horizontal blasting. The Chief called all the companies in and said "What's wrong with you guys, don't you know this is sand" At that moment he kicked the box and sand went everywhere frightening the brothers there. Now the conclusion-- "On the way back to quarters he said, You know Bob, if those were sticks of dynamite and caused an explosion,- I would have kicked your ass" I said if that was the case I would really would have no ass to kick" From that tour, I became his tutor about dynamite. He had me bring every book about explosives for him to devour. He became the expert in the third division on dynamite. He said to Lieutent Cark, "See Bill you can learn from a Probie" I lived by his standard in every rank I attained.

"GORILLA IN THE BACK YARD"

The Big House had 4 units - E-82-E 85- Lad 31 and the 27th Battalion. The Battalion Chief we worked with was a constant friendly Ball Buster. He went out of his way to accomplish this feat. One call to the Poet area (Hoe-Vyse-Bryant and Longfellow Ect) was a call for a jumper in a rear yard. On investigation I found a gorilla that was skinned but the head was still on. I radioed Chief Hengerly that the jumper was a gorilla. He said to me, Farrell stop breaking my balls and tell me what you found . I said you been breaking my balls for a long time but this is not ball breaking it's the truth. Comon Bob give it up. What silly shit have you planned if i come to the backyard. "Chief, you won't believe this but it is gorilla. Back he came and said to me, "Wait until I put this incident on the air- Nobody will believe my transmission.

The dispatchers kept asking for a repeat of his transmission. The Deputy on the air kept asking for a repeat. Finally they gave a full account choking with laughter as they transmitted the incident that Lad-31 found a skinned gorilla in the back of Longfellow Ave. Their last comment was "Oh well it's the South Bronx-anything can happen here" "Furthermore no report of a missing gorilla from the Bronx zoo close by"
"THE FRANKIE WRONG SAGA IN 3 PARTS."

PART #1 I worked in Ladder Co 4 in midtown Manhattan when I was a young Firefighter. I was fortunate to work with Lt. (GODFATHER) Kelly. He was an outstanding rigger who made us learn this trade since we covered the waterfront of Hell's Kitchen. John T.O'hagan former Battalion Chief of the 9th but now Chief of Dept. had a 4th alarm fire on 86th street-way out of our response area. Remembering Kelly's art of rigging, he special called Ladder-4 to the incident. On arrival we were ordered to secure the 80 ft. cornice hanging loosely and waving in a high wind condition. Kelly formulated his tactical evolution. We spider webbed 5 ropes into 1 and tied that to a roof rafter securing the cornice.

Now entered "Frankie Wrong" from the EAST side Squad. On the street because of the major traffic of 86th St., it was decided to place all Chief cars on the sidewalk and park the apparatus close to the curb. The Battalion Chief on the roof ask to cut a small hole in the roof thinking he had a hot spot. "Frankie wrong said, I'll get it Chief"- swinging his axe at the spot, he missed and cut the main rope holding the entire cornice.. That dropped the cornice on the Chief cars parked on the sidewalk.below. Frank now said to the Chief- "I THINK I DID SOMETHING WRONG" No one on the scene can express what the chief's words off response was but it wasn't pretty.

PART #2 FRANKIE WRONG SAGA
I was promoted in 65" to Lieutenant and assigned a covering Lt. in the 6th Div. I always worked the 25 group - it was called amateur night. everybody that worked this day was covering-no steady drivers Lt's -Capt's and Chief's. I was assigned to E-85 on a blistering hot night tour in July. As i held roll call i noticed a familiar face-It was Frankie Wrong from Squad 8--the Squad was disbanded and it was now Engine -85. Wouldn't you know, Frank was my Motor pump operator (MPO). minutes after roll call we got a run to Simpson St.- The dispatcher informed me of multiple telephone calls of a fire- He also said, I would be alone since companies assigned were working at other fires. We pulled into Simpson Street which was the
length of three city blocks. The fire was showing at the window of a first floor Apt. I thought this is going to be a cup of tea. 2 length stretch charged the line and we entered the Apt. I radioed Frank to break out the windows for much needed air. Frank threw a garage can threw the window and it bounced down the stairs and broke a Apt window below. we knocked down the fire and I radioed the dispatcher that I didn't need any help.

Now an irate citizen started yelling at me that I not only broke his window, but flooded his Apt. He threatened me with his fist but Frankie seeing this hit the guy knocking him cold.

All the neighboring Brothers got excited and air mail (garbage) started flying at all of us I told our guys drop the hose- We mounted the side walk and got the hell out of there. we went back during the night to pick up the hose but it was cut to shreds. I told Frank, protecting he was nice but starting a riot wasn't. i almost wet myself when Frank said, "I guess i was wrong doing that" Weeks went by and amateur night rolled around and another tour with Frankie Wrong. A citizen ran into the house and said you got fire in a building a block north- Turning out fast, we proceeded to the fire which showed out 4 windows on Freeman St.--On the turn Frankie hit a gypsy cab. " Should I stop Lt." i saw nobody was hurt and the cops were there so I told Frankie to hook up to a hydrant close by. We stretched a line to the top floor, got a slack length- L-31 was holding the door waiting for us to get water. I called for water to Frankie and low and behold we got it. We knocked the fire out in minutes. These guys were good. L-31 did overhaul and we washed down. I radioed Frankie to shut down but nothing happened. I said to the Capt. to tell Frank to shut down as they were taking up. the Capt radioed me that there was nobody at the pumper. I now went down and sure enough Frankie was missing.

I asked the cops if they seen my fireman and they said no. Now, out of a tenement comes Frankie running ,with a man behind him carrying a baseball bat. The cops grabbed the man who was yelling that he would kill that fireman. I said to Frankie, "What the hell happened" Frankie said, I was trying to fix a water leak in his apt. which he asked me to do but I broke the main pipe and it flooded his Apt. i guess I broke the WRONG pipe. I told the cops to keep hold of this guy until we got out of there and then let him go. I said to the cops we hit a gypsy cab and they said I will never hear from that since it was probably stolen - I never did hear
YOU CAN'T MAKE THIS SHIT UP
NEXT, "THE FRANKIE WRONG AWARD"

FRANKIE WRONG SAGA - ADDITION THE #2
I forgot the ending to saga 2 - pipe story night- We had a bad night which firefighters call a good night. We had several more fires and things were going good. Frank was doing an excellent job as an MPO. He hooked up fast from hydrant to pumper, the boys in E-85 were the best. All this made me a happy camper UNTIL. The wrath of "FRANKIE WRONG" struck again. Multiple alarms were all over the Bronx. We got special called into 60 Engines area South of the BIG House. Lot of talk on the radio from a Truck Officer on this box that no Engine was on the scene.

I think I might have made a mistake telling Frank to put it to the metal. Swerving in and out of EL-Pillars we came up on two cars waiting at a traffic light. I said to Frank, "Go around them" Frank said, I can make it going between them. We scraped both cars but kept going as Frank said, "you were right Lt. and I was WRONG. The fire was huge and we did a lot of work. I as a new Lt. kept thinking- Three accidents in one night and those huge accident reports for these three. The night wore on and we returned to quarters. Beat from all the fires we hit the pad. At 7am we got an alarm for the longest box in the response area some mile away. Half asleep Frank was yelling for me to get on the rig knowing it was a long response. The Box 4474 at the cross Bronx Expressway turned out to be a false alarm but guess what? Nobody was on the Back Step. Frank said to me, "Don't feel bad Lt. you can't be RIGHT all the time" He also said he liked working with me. I couldn't
and wouldn't answer that. I just thought of the start of my vacation this morning at the Jersey Shore.

**SAGA #3- RETURN TO AMATEUR NIGHT**

My vacation was over and I returned to E-85 for the beginning of a night tour. After roll call I pulled Frankie aside. "Hey Frank, lets get something straight" no more bumper cars tonight "OK.he said, I promise that I will be careful Lt.-, No accidents tonight"

Relieved, I went up to the office where the Capt of L-31 said,-"Hey i hear Frankie likes you and said he's breaking you in to be a fine officer""yeah, I said, I'm going to be an expert on accident reports." 

A Sunday night was tough getting things to eat in the South Bronx but to my surprise Frankie said,Don't worry Boss, We are going to have roast duck i brought with all the trimmings. I got a new way to cook them. I should have questioned Frank about that but i didn't. An hour later i heard yelling downstairs from the apparatus floor. 

Yes, Frankie struck again and set fire to the kitchen .His way of cooking the ducks was fire them in pots of oil. . Something must have spilled and our meal for the night went up in smoke. . Mr. Willy L-31 Capt. said to me," I’d like to see how you handle this report when you’re finished lieutenant"

**NEXT "THE FRANKIE WRONG AWARD"**

**THE FRANKIE WRONG AWARD"**

Came to work one morning-had roll call- Danny did my log in while i did assignments After we all went to the kitchen for morning coffee.

On the wall was something special. A grotesque picture frame- the frame was out
of wack and extremely crooked. The letters were out of sync and crooked too. "the Frankie Wrong Award" was spelled wrong and crooked A figure looking like Kilroy looked over a fence on to a piece of slate and a chalk holder. It was to be noted that, if anybody did something wrong his name would be entered. The award was in service since my last night tour and seven guys made it to the slate. It was said, "Why don't we put Frankie's name permanently on it since he will be there every tour" Frank I heard took it great and said, "You guys are making me famous" We all agreed he was already INFAMOUS.

NEXT "I GOT THE FRANKIE WRONG AWARD"

"I GOT THE FRANKIE WRONG AWARD"

At lunchtime, Lt. Rudy Bilcik E-85 said to the legend, Louie Andrade, E-82" Hey Louie, I got 2 fires under my belt and you have none" Louie said back."The day is not over yet" Lad-31 used to go out with both companies. E-82 went south of the house, and E-85 went North. Who ever went out first L-31 would go with either. These two Lt's were the best Engine officers I ever worked with. They knew their stuff. Lt. Andrade was waiting to get his new Mack Pumper Smart as ever he had a member in chauffeurs school who graduated that day and called the school and had his man drive the new rig to the "Big House" On arrival Lt. Louie told Rudy, "See they only give busy companies new rigs" He now got the middle finger salute from Lt. Rudy. I now mentioned to both," I just did hydrant inspection and all the hydrants are out on Forrest Ave. except one. The brothers cut off all the operating knobs all except one. That's the shower one to keep them cool. I did get another working by breaking the bonnet with a 10 lbs. sledge and used a pipe wrench to get water. worked great" Lt. Bilcik now asked for a 10 lbs sledge from my gold room on the third floor.
The rig showed up and we all uummm and aaahhed. It was a beauty. Louie told the chauffeur to finish the tour since he was the only one who new how to work the pumps ect.- Low and behold, Eng-82 and L-31 got a box for Forest Ave. Eng-82 took the only good hydrant a length away from the fire building. I went to the first floor, forced the door and found the kitchen fully involved. The canman knocked it down but couldn't do anymore.. We closed the door and waited for the stretch and water. Lt. Andrade called for water but the MPO said he got a problem. The operating Knob for water broke off in his hand and we couldn't get water. I radioed my chauffeur to help 82's MPO. Now this was a row of frame building,s I informed the Chief to have all companies to fly-hy from the adjoining blocks since we had no water. My outside vent man now radioed me that both building's were fully involved in the rear from the airmail (garbage) in the yard. The Chief heard this and sent a second alarm. L-19 and L-31 tried trench cutting to hold the fire but it was in the common cock loft of six buildings. The Deputy now sent a Third Alarm since all hands were ordered to evacuate all civilians from these buildings because of no water. A fourth alarm was now transmitted. We finally got water and a long afternoon of surround and drown occurred The Chief of Dept John T. O'Hagan responded on the Third Alarm. He ordered me to the command post after a will hold was accomplished. He said, "Lt., I want to present you with this award for your actions at this Fourth Alarm" He handed me "THE FRANKIE WRONG AWARD" I looked at all the Chiefs at the scene who were hysterical with laughter. I just wondered which Chief did this-Suspect, "Deputy Chief Frank Burns" Now my name was on that award for two tours- "What i said, nobody did anything wrong for two tours even Frankie Wrong" BULLSHIT. CONCLUSION: Engine 82 found a flaw in the operation of the pumps on all new pumpers which had to be recalled to the shops for replacement of the operating handles. Another first for E-82.

"THE THIEF OF RESCUE # 1"

It was a norm for Rescue #1 to put their rig in front of the fire building. at any fire in midtown. Their Capt was an aggressive fire officer. We had nicknamed him "Jumping Joe Rooney" He would fly out of his rig without touching the running board and run to any incident. he really was a great officer even if he did put his rig in front of the fire building. He always promised not to do that but to no avail.

Rescue #1 was on 43 st. between 5th and 6th f ave. One night we had a fire just around the corner from their quarters. I was the chauffeur of Lad -4. There was the
Rescue in front of the building. The fire was on the upper floor of a hotel. Everybody left and I and the chiefs aid were the only ones on the street. The aid told me they were going to hold the rescue for search. He went into the building. My chance was at hand. I jumped into the rescue's rig, drove around the corner, backed into their quarters and ran back to the scene. I now went up to the fire floor and joined in overhaul. The Rescue was now told to take up. In those days chiefs, their aids and rescue's only had radio's. The Captain on reaching the street radioed the Chief that his rig was missing. "Who was the last guy in the street." The aid said he was. I was asked did I see anything and of course i said no. The Chief said he would meet the Capt. at his quarters. Rescue walked a short distance to their quarters. Low a behold their rig was there. The Capt now radioed the Chief that the rig was in quarters. An unsolved mystery but a pissed off captain. When we got back to L-4 he called my Lieut. and accused me of doing to deed. Of course I denied knowing about anything but he insisted it was me. My Lt. said to me, "tell me the truth Bob, did you do it" " Are you crazy Lou, I wouldn't do such a thing" Years later, I was the Captain of L-31 and Jumping Joe was the Chief of the 9th battalion in the quarters of L-4. Moma Leone left in her will to feed L-4 on Fridays. I new the Capt of L-4 George Newman and asked if he could feed my boys. Sure Bob send a guy down with some pots. George did his utmost and fulled the pots with a huge Italian dinner. My guy said the chief asked for me. "Was his name Rooney" My guy said yes. Time to own up- I called the chief to say thanks for the great meal and also said, " Yes Joe it was me who stole your rig" He said with a lot of unmentionable words, " I knew it was you, you son of a Bitch"

"THE BOMB"

At Lad-4 we got a telephone call from Eng-23 about a young covering Lt. that lives by the book. Everything they did on his covering of a vacation was wrong and they are just warning us since they heard his next assignment is a 30 day stint at Lad-4. They said you can't believe this guy. He comes to work with the book of rules under his arm, "Good luck Truckie's we feel sorry for you" We all agreed, "Time for the Bomb". Our tour with Lt.Bob Vello started off with roll call. He introduced himself to us saying he lives by the book. We would at all times not call him lieu or Lt. Bob but by his rank Lieutenant Vello. His first order was to wash the clean apparatus. I as the Chauffeur said to the Lt., "Is this some kind of punishment since the apparatus is spotless" Look Fr. What’s you name" Farrell,
do as i say" "lieu, excuse Lt Vello i have a problem with the boiler and have to relieve the built up pressure by hand operating the relief valve" You better call the building dept and fix it to avoid a explosion" Now Knowing he couldn't get them since it was a Saturday and they were closed I continued to relieve the valve by hand. I had a fan placed in front of the boiler to build up a lot of pressure over the norm. I kept reminding the Lt.about this buildup but he just said, keep me informed. I said you better remind me also.

Now "The Bomb" filling a milk container full of acetylene and placing a match stick head into the container we now had our bomb. This makes like a triple M-80 sound. I kept blowing steam all over the cellar up the stairs onto the apparatus floor. We had drill by the stairs of the cellar and I said at that time I forgot to check the relief valve. Lt. Vello ordered me to the cellar.to check the valve. Now the Deed- I opened the furnace doors, lite the bomb let the steam valve blow and laid in front of the boiler. Down they came and fr. Paff said to the Lt. I wasn't breathing. Give him mouth to mouth resuscitation he ordered Paff. No way, Lt. Vello, this guy hangs out with all the low life's on the Minnesota strip. "Fr. Coke you do it" "I feel the same as FR. Paff, no way" He now bent down and got into position for mouth to mouth. " I now said, Before you kiss me give me a nice hug" Lt. Vello broke out in laughter saying he new of jokes played on new lieutenants but this was the best. "Ok boys you got me" this is going to be a fun detail. Yes, he turned out great We found out Lt. Vello's mother owned an Italian resturant and he was a great chef himself. He cooked some great dinners while detailed to us for the next thirty days. We let him say we couldn't cook for shit. Wait a minute, He was right about that.
"I GOT 3 FROM RESCUE #3"

My brother owned a bar on 181 Street in Manhattan next to the "Fear Not"s of Rescue #3. On paydays, my brother used to cash checks for the steadies in the firehouse next door. Eng-93-L-45 and Rescue #3. As Lays Potato Chips said, 'I bet you can't eat just one', Firefighters just can't have one drink so that day my bro did a great days business. He used to ask me, if off to help him out that day. I was a young Lt. in Lad-31 in the Bronx. Ball breaking at it's best was when I was on the stick. The fear not"s would call me a" Garbage Firefighter", and I would call them "The Air-Force". As I would say, "By the time your guys get to my fires, you guys are told stand fast in the street" or if out of control fires to vent the roof" Your guys are always in the air while i"m in the infantry fighting the fires from within, "The first wave of the battle". Number one guy i got from Res.3 was Jack Mayne. He agreed with me and wanted go back doing first due work and because Lad-31 was number one in fires, it was the place for him. Super jack made his mark with me as my forcible entry man. He excelled at every fire we went to. He was a born leader. He would spend a lot of time teaching the new boys his art. I said to him "Jack your wasted as a firefighter--" Your officer material at it's best" What's your problem ? " Personnel Management questions was his answer" They ask 135 Questions the test and 1/4 is these questions are Personal Management "Jack, if you understand from a Lt standpoint, it's a cup of tea" "The big man taught me (CHIEF OF DEPT JOHN T. O'HAGAN) and I will teach you. We did it together and Jack aced the next exam. He became a cracker jack Lt. and was assigned in Engine 45 on my Northern flank He made his tenure there as They called him "LT.SUPER JACK" He would thank the dispatchers when sending him to working fires. Most likely, the best Lieutenant Engine 45 had or would ever have.

"NUMBER TWO FROM RESCUE THREE TO FOLLOW"

"NUMBER 2 FROM 3 FROM RESCUE 3"

The NEW YORK MET'S had their Tom terrific (Tom Seaver) and I got my Tom Terrific from Rescue #3- His name was Tom Kennedy - Big Tom carried my irons in my late tenure as a lieutenant and most of all when I returned as a Captain. Tom had all the skills Rescue three taught him with the added fact of working with the best of the best in L-31.

I wrote the "BiG MAN" up several times for bravery for which he received many Department medals. Tom devoured the knowledge and experience he gained during the busiest time in the fire service. "THE WAR YEARS" What he learned in L-31 he carried that huge knowledge and experience to -- L-26 as a Lt., L-56 as
a Captain, Battalion 16 as a Battalion Chief and his final assignment as Deputy chief of Division 6. I was proud to call Tom my friend and was more proud of his success in the Fire Department, City of New York.

"NUMBER 3 FROM 3 FROM RESCUE 3"

As I approached my 5 year in Lad-4 I was promoted to the irons man One of the "M" group got promoted- John Malloy. He taught me well. The Lt. said to me, "Bob you got a new Can man, his name is Carmine Croce" Meeting Carmine he told me to call him Buddy. We drilled together getting him used to hitting the Halligan instead of me. He was great from the beginning, a natural.

We got a run one night which was supposed to be a steam leak. It turned out to be two rooms of fire in a sub-cellar. The Lt. ran to the apparatus to call in a full assignment, Buddy and I stretched a house line. I told Buddy to stay at the control valve. When I got water Buddy was at my side. After some time operating, I asked Buddy, "Are you Ok" He said to me, "I'm OK, how are you" This was the beginning of a beautiful friendship since this guy had balls of brass.

We practiced a lot on forcible entry and became so good that Chief Eckert (Our Battalion commander) told the Capt of 4 to keep both of us in his group. That was some compliment from the Top Boss. He nicknamed us "The Killer "B's"- Bob and Buddy. Not only did we work in the fire Dept., we started a successful painting business. We did a lot of work in Greenwich Village.
Buddy had an uncle in Rescue 3 who talked his Capt into bringing in Buddy, although 2nd Grade into Rescue 3. I tried to talk Buddy out of it saying he was breaking up ("The Killer Bee's") He couldn't say no to his uncle so Buddy left for the Fear-Nots in the Bronx. I believe Buddy was the first if not the only 2nd grade firefighter to be assigned to a Rescue but they got a Beaut. Knowing Buddy he became an outstanding member of "The Big Blue"

When in the Bronx, I was Lt. in 31, I used to run in to him at major fires. I always broke his chops about being in the Air-force. and of course I always got the middle finger salute. After a couple of years I was promoted to Captain, Buddy called and asked if we could work together again. I was thrilled. I told Buddy, not only do I need a Chauffeur, but I need an "Informal Leader" I had a lot of puppies that needed guidance and your the guy who can help them out. Buddy did that and the House became a Happy House. and a Great Truck Company which it was already. At a major fire one night, the tower was in operation. I was via Handie-Talkie told tha Buddy was injured. Who cared about the fire, my friend was injured bad. A supply line ruptured and broke buddies femur bone. I told the Rescue on scene not to take him to the local hospital but to Monte Fore since i knew they had a great orthopedic section. This injury put Buddy out of the job. I lost my friend and the New York City Fire Department lost the best. Buddy and I remained friends even when he located in North Carolina. He always said "Comon down Bob,we could play together again"

"CONCLUDING THE 3 FROM RESCUE 3"

THIS WEEK RESCUE CELEBRATES THEIR 100 ANNIVERSARY- MY FRIEND (BUDDY) HAS PASSED ONE YEAR. HE AND SUPER JACK DIED OF LUNG CONDITIONS I BELIEVE WAS CAUSED BY THE TERRIBLE FEEDS THEY BOTH TOOK IN THEIR LUNGS DURING : "THE WAR YEARS IN THE SOUTH BRONX"

P.S TOM KENNEDY AND I ARE STILL HERE

"A LEMON-AID FOR TWO"

Back in the 60's one of the "M"s, John Mallory got promoted to Lieutenant. He was our Battalion Commander of the 9th's secondary aide which was called lemon-aide. I now was voted in by the remaining "M" as the new lemon-aide. The brothers said, 'Don't be concerned Bob, Charlie Gallager never goes sick and he
takes his vacation the same time chief Eckert does". so you will probably never get to drive the Chief." Famous last words, Charlie, broke his ankle and I got to drive the Boss. right away. This was the most informative 6 months I ever experienced since the Chief was a world of information and he loved to share but you had to ask and I did.

One prominent thing I learned from the Chief was at a fire with flames blowing out three windows was to watch the first due line. Water does magic when placed on a fire so don't be in a hurry to send for more help until that line operates. As a Chief in the street seeing the line charged, you know the company is at the floor and is calling for water to move in on the fire.

Then you give the Engine a little time to move in and extinguish. Another thing was venting a roof in a cock-loft fire was to cut a hole at least 25 square feet. This negates a smoke explosion. I always remembered that and wrote in a bulletin about saws years later. The Chief like the way I drove the car - Fast. When his aide came back he joked him saying, You drive this car like my grandmother does -- Slow. - Charlie said to me, What the hell did you do to my Chief while I was on sick leave.

Now the Chief called me to his office and said, I am going to detail you to drive a new chief coming into the battalion. He said it will be only a week or so and then I will get you back in the "M" group. His name is John T. O'Hagan. Ok with me chief if it's only till he gets his aide.

I started my first tour with the new Chief. We did a lot of running with minor fires and then we got the big one, a top floor of an old law tenement. It was blowing out 4 windows.
Engine 54 already was stretched before we arrived. The Chief said to me send a second alarm. I kind of remembered Chief Eckert saying to watch water in the line low and behold the water came into the line and steam came out the windows. The fire was out. The chief now ran to the car and said to me "Did you send the 2nd alarm" No I said, I thought you said, One Engine and two trucks and the rest fast." Ok he thought-did he" He now got me aside and admitted he was to hasty and glad I wasn't.

TO BE CONTINUED

"My lemon-aide #2 WAS Chief John T. O'hagan"

Wow was this Chief amazing- He sucked Knowledge out of everywhere and everyone he met. On the turn of the tours he waited to asked the remaining "M"s about truck work. He found out about my knowledge of dynamite and grilled me on it's use. When we went to any incident he would critique what every firefighter and officer did and why. He said to me, "When I become Chief of Dept, I am going to change the operations of this dept. 100%." I said to myself, "This guys got a lot of hutzpah saying he's going to be Chief of Dept" I kept asking when his aide was coming and he said soon. This went on for months. Finally, he asked me if I wanted to stay as his aide permanently. I said, thanks chief but I want to return to being a firefighter. He repeated to me, "If you stay with me, your going to drive the Chief of Dept" Again I said no but thanks for the offer.

We got along great and he asked me, "Bob, don't you ever get excited about anything we have been going to? The Deputy of the 3rd div. said to me, "Your aide on transmission sounds like he's at a rubbish fire when at a real worker" I said I seen worse and why get excited over something you will solve. "God he said, Your balls are made of stone" We talked about line operations and he said he was going to get a line in between 2 1/2 " and 1 1/2" inch to be more aggressive in movement at a fire and still have enough water. (1 3/4" was his answer) He talked about Tower Ladders and how he was to alternate Ladder companies all over the city. One would be a stick and the next a Tower Ladder so on a response to a box you had both. At that time they were testing one Tower ladder in the job. He was way ahead of his time. He asked if I was studying for Lieutenant ? I said, Not really. Hey, there's a Lt's test coming up six months from now. "Would you like to pass the test ?" I said, common Chief, guys study for years and six month's isn't enough time. John T, Now said, "I will teach you how if you stay with me until I find an aide" "I said ok but didn't believe it"
"THE FUTURE CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT TUTORED ME"

"MY TUTOR WAS JOHN T. O'HAGAN AT BATTALION 9"

The Chief now said to me, "Before we start, you have to promise that you will give me 4 to 6 hours a day including Saturday's and Sundays" "You got my word Chief" and I did. He first broke down the test saying we are not going to study for Chief of Dept, but for firefighter. That's who you are going to supervise. Put yourself in the examiners shoes, He wants to give you a test in first line management. He will give a lot of Personal Management questions since that's his forte for what he knows well, not firefighting " We are not studying up but down.so keep in mind that you study what a firefighter does and should know". .Personal management as he explained to me was so easy that I didn't miss a question. I aced the exam The chief now said I also helped him since teaching is learning. He claimed he studies minimum of 6 maximum of 8 hours 5 days a week and takes weekends off. He made me hold off not claiming my veterans preference points that you can use only once, John T. said, "Save them for Chief" Besides Chief Eckert, John T became my new idol. On the next Deputy Chief's exam, John T. O'Hagan wrote number one See Chief, "Look what I done for you" He said, You Bob, are a piece of works" Now when the Battalion Chiefs had their exam he insisted that I drive him that day. To top his career off John T O'Hagan became the Chief of Department at age 39. He called me when the Captain's list came out and said in jest "What the hell happened to you - You only came number 13 out of 800 on the list" I said," I didn't have you as my tutor for the exam" R.I.P. Chief, You did good for the F.D.N.Y.

"LET IT BLOW"

At ladder # 4 Midtown, Bud Croce and I were the iron men supreme - we thought. Chief Eckert liked our progressive way on forcible entry but said, " You two don't know shit about how fire works and you are going to get hurt". Fire he said, "has fuel, ignition but it needs oxygen". "You two keep charging into fire's without waiting for the air to feed the beast" "let it blow before you make your move" once it lights up all the energy has been reduced and then you can now do your search." When you see the puffing around the frame of the door, you now know the son of a bitch needs air and you are sure it will be a back-draft flash-over that will blow you
guys out the door with possible burns" Force the door but hold it until the engine company get water, open, let it light up and move in and extinguish along with your search for victims The boss always knew fire. He had a sixth sense about it so we listened and learned from this man. We did exactly what the chief told us to do on many fire's we went to after that.

After promotion to lieutenant and assigned to Ladder 31 in "Da Bronx", one night about 2 AM we got a run to Southern Boulevard. On arrival, the one story taxpayer was huffing and puffing at all points. Remembering Chief Eckert's teaching, I knew it was going to be a back-draft when we forced the door, it being recessed with show cases on both sides. Engine 82 stretched a 2 1/2 inch line and charged it. I ordered a 25 ft straight ladder and told my chauffeur to ladder the roof and get me some vents. I told the Lt. in E-82 that we are going to witness a back=draft to stay low. We pressed the 25 on the door, it opened sucking air into the building and it blew. My first major back draft which knocked us all on our asses. The boys on the roof said, "It lifted us about a ft. when she let go" all the skylights ect were sealed up and venting was almost impossible since they only had axes to cut a hard roof. The Chief on arrival sent a 2nd alarm and we spent most of the night doing a surround and drown.

My thanks went to Chief Al Eckert who taught me well and nobody was hurt but could have if we didn't-- "Let It Blow"

"SOMETIMES PAYBACK IS A BITCH"

Got a call from sister Mary who asked me if I could give a small talk at her last assembly before closing the school for the summer this women could charm a lion into a tame pussycat so how could I say no. At the assembly, I opened with a joke I borrowed from one of my senior fire fighters, Charlie McCarthy. He used this on all visits of children to the house from the Public Schools . It went like this- "If I dropped a large 8 lbs. axe on my toe, who would you call for help?" My answers from the children were- I would call a doctor- I would call an ambulance-I would call the hospital- i would call the fire Dept.- Now I would say, "I would call a Tow Truck" Laughter abound, but it loosened up the assembly.
Now I had their attention and went into how important of pulling the alarm box and the operation of the Fire Dept. from the alarm box to the fire.

After the Assembly, The sister called me to her office and said she had a program from the Catholic Charities of box lunches for children. She said she couldn't handle this since the school was closed for the summer and had no help, would I accept the program as payback for repairs we did. Her charm had me in her pocket, so how could I say no?

The truck carrying 100 box lunches would show in the morning. The first day, we were dragging kids off the street to give them the box which contained, A sandwich, a pint of milk, a piece of fruit and cake...As the days passed, we had a line up for lunch each day. One morning I came in at 8 o'clock and saw a line up a half a block long. I told the brothers to hand the lunches out since these kids probably didn't have any breakfast. One morning I got a call from my Deputy Chief that to get into my class "A"s since a car was to pick me up and take me downtown to headquarters. At a large table were some Chief's and at one end was the Mayor of Southern Blvd. I was asked where I got this program from. I was told that all programs has to go through the so called Mayor. I told them that this was not a city operation and I was not obliged to get any permission from any non-service and illegitimate organization. I was now ordered to return to my quarters for further investigation. My Deputy called me when I came back and said I pissed off the asshole Mayor. He accused me of writing reports of suspected arson about his program that he claimed were untrue. I and every fire fighter that went to these fire's new it was arson. My Deputy (Frank Burns) said to the Chief's downtown that the program was discussed with him and he gave the OK to proceed He thought it was good public relations and being from a catholic organization was no need to asked any higher up then him. Balls of Brass, My deputy covered my ass since we never did discuss this. Now the in conclusion, several months passed and one night we got a call to Little City Hall which was fully involved in flames. The fire couldn't got this big without a liquid inflammable being applied--all records were destroyed with no trace. All the contents ,.were strangely missing,. The Major now accused the Fire Dept and specially Ladder -31 of stealing all the contents and that is why his file cabinets gone with all the records. This really pissed me since we all knew this fire was knowingly set by his torch- 'GASOLINE GOMEZ"
'THE POET'S AREA IN THE SOUTH BRONX'

The area, well known to Chief John Salka which is in the 18th Battalion we called, "THE POET'S" This was 5 blocks wide by 5 blocks long. The names of these Avenue's were Hoe, Vise, Bryant, Longfellow and Freeman Ect. which were American Poet's. The makeup of these buildings were of the "H" type. Some were Art Deco, most all with Elevators and built in the 1930's. These building could hold fire with four types of extension -Kitchen pipes gas and water, Bathroom soil and water pipes, Channel Rails and auto exposure. The walls and ceilings were made of lath and plaster. One pest area for fire was in my day in the beginning were the Garbage chutes., Oil Burner startups in the winter. other than that, we rarely went there. The neighborhood was made up predominantly of the Jewish faith. A clean area- with no air-mail in the yards (GARBAGE) A very unique neighborhood with shop's of all types on the Southern Blvd. and 174 St.. In 1968, Coop City to the North opened up and a mass exodus left this area for the new of COOP City .Mayor Lindsey formed a Little City Hall on Southern Boulevard to take care of the people from the burn out's of the South. Bronx It was a block long taxpayer with many office”s and a Local Politician who was called, The Mayor. As the people left the Poet's, The Little City Hall would full the apartments with these unfortunate families. They would buy new furniture, move them and give a stipend of money. Sometimes we would go to a fire in one of these building and find milk grates burning not furniture. One time I notice in a period of months, The same person with a burn out in his apartment. I guess he collected a couple of times.
We started to go to this area multiple times. Terms like Throat of an "H", Coffin cuts, Kerv., Trench Cuts Channel rails Ect. came from here. This area became one of the busiest Fire areas's in the city of New York. I think after many fire's in this area, we left a lot for chief John Salka when he came to the 18th Battalion many years later.

'NEXT THE BURN OF THE POET's IN THE BEGINNING"

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'NEXT THE BURN OF THE POET's IN THE BEGINNING'
occupied all the inline apt's. we had to open the walls and extinguish the fire on all floors. gas meters were shut off and water supply to these apt's. This made these apt's useless to the renters, so in most cases they moved to Coop city with friends and neighbors. Now the landlords fixed the apartments several months after eviction of the occupants and raised the rents five times the norm. They collected insurance money and notified city hall for new tenants. suspected collusion was at hand. The fire marshal office were notified to no avail because of the workload they had. Since this went on frequently, our operations were to throw a rope out the top floor window of the staircase and pull a line up to stop any extension to the top floor and cock-Loft.

We nicknamed the torch, GASOLINE GOMEZ" who was probably paid of with a drug fix. Now the tenants joined the arson by burning their apt.s finding out that they got first preference to locate in a city project at much lower rents. As mentioned before, milk crates burned in most cases old mattresses or just plain trash. The landlord collected insurance money for every apt. It was now time for a complete burn. Gasoline Gomez would dump his gas on the top floor rear of the "H" so it would not be noticed until it got a real hold in the cock-loft. He also had another area he would dump which was the closet outside the bathroom on the lower floors. This was the soil and water pipes void that carried to the cock-loft. When a large fire in the cock-loft of the building, the building is completely destroyed. The landlord now asked for a government loan to renovate or walk away. You could have 30 to 50 fire in these building.s before it has to be torn down.
THIS DESTRUCTION OF THE POET AREA COULD BE SEEN IN ONE ART DECO BUILDING THAT REMAINED VACANT FOR YEARS AS YOU WOULD GO WEST ON THE CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY--TODAY IT HAS BEEN RENOVATED TO IT'S ORIGINAL FORM AND BEAUTIFUL AGAIN.

'THE POET AREA RAN THIN''

In 1968 to 1973, the Poet area was covered by E-82 in the south and E-45 on the North. L-31 responded with both. When E-85 was formed, they replaced E-82 as first due South because 82 was so busy. The Southern flank was covered as 31 and 85 responded together. L-31 responded South with 82 and North with E-85. who ever went out first.

When out with E-82, E-45 a single house, had no first due truck and depended on a second due truck which was several miles away. I always told my chauffeur to listen for the Poet area boxes so we could 10-8 and assist E.45 who we knew would be alone. As the fires increased, 45 got the major share. When receiving a North Poet box we gave it pedal to the metal. I heard the Capt of 45 asked the
dispatcher if he's getting 31. many times. We in turn would be available and leave E-82 to finish many jobs by themselves.

Finally, the Tin House was formed and with a new company L-59 and E-85. to protect the Southern flank and E-45 got a Tower Ladder 58 in their quarters to protect the Northern flank First due. We, Lad-31 now went on the 2nd alarm. We had an increase of work with E-82. One year during this time, Lad-31 did 2000 hours of structural firefighting. Now theirs only 8700 plus in a year so we still did a lot of work.

NEXT- "I CAUGHT GASOLINE GOMEZ"

"WE CAUGHT GASOLINE GOMEZ"

Going to many fires during a time of arson and insurrection, noting the difference between one that was set and one of accidental nature became to a point of--who cares. The arson squad was overwhelmed with so much work that to pay attention to the many arson fires we went to was just to ignore them. I got tired of sending reports of such so I too did ignored reporting also. One such Fire that became one that interested me was one that happened to often. Always at around 3-4 PM in the afternoon was one of arson on the top floor rear of a vacant building. It was thought that this motif operands was well thought. The police changed their shifts
at that hour so patrols were delayed in calling in these fire's The setting of these fires were always using a flammable substance. This gave the intensity of the fire that it extended to the cock-loft for immediate spread and an enlarged conflagration. Obvious when we responded, large black smoke appeared and we knew it was the work of our nicknamed arsonist "Gasoline Gomez" One particular fire we responded of the same nature appeared in the sky. Our stretch was up the stair well as usual that went well and fast since we did this so often. Waiting for water I saw a can by the entrance to the apartment. My outside vent-man now radioed to me that he found a jumper in the built up airmail (garbage) in the alley that was up to the first floor. I said to him, "Render first aid until a get the Chief to get Rescue to take him to the hospital". "Note ambulances didn't respond during this time" We knocked down the fire quickly as usual. Now I said to myself,"Holy Shit Bob, you got Gasoline Gomez" this was a vacant building, "Why was this guy here??."

" TO BE CONTINUED"

'CONTINUATION = GASOLINE GOMEZ CAUGHT"

I now radioed the Chief, We got a guy in the air-mail that has jumped from this Apt. Please notify the Fire Marshal's that we have a suspected arsonist in custody. My Outside Vent-Man says the man has what I believed to be a broken ankle. He also said, that the Perp tried to run but the injury stopped him. I will have the police restrain him and escort him to the hospital which was radioed to my Chief who acknowledged receipt.

Now I said to myself, "You got the guy who has caused injury to firefighter's and probably is responsible for the arson fires of the last ten years" "Get your head on and make sure you start an unimpeachable arson offense" First, continuity of evidence- I got the gas can by the entrance. I poured some of the contents on the hallway floor, and ask for match from one of my known smokers. I lit the liquid and said to my irons and can-man, "Does this act like a flammable liquid" Both nodded in agreement. I now had both smell- "Does this smell like gasoline?" Both agreed Yes - Now I sealed the can with the lid I found on the floor. I reported to the chief of my actions on take up and gave him this evidence for safekeeping. I also said to my Chief, "If you can, have the Marshal's take his cloths for more evidence at the hospital" I had a schematic of the building and the irons and Can-man and myself went over what we believed had happened. The Perp dumped the gas around the apt., took the gas can to the hallway- Went back in to the apt, lit a cigarette by the living room window that faced the courtyard. The fumes ignited
and he was force to jump or burn to death. His luck was the airmail extending to the first floor that acted like a custion to save his life. Only a broken ankle and some contusion's = My God, he was lucky. 6 Stories and lived. I felt like I got the "James Gordon Medal" I got this son-of- bitch. I did everything by the book to send this guy to prison. Now it was out of my hands. I thought if everything goes right we may find out who the boss of the arson problem and why, since this guy was just the touch.

NEXT--GASOLINE GOMEZ "THE TRAIL OF CORRUPTION OR STUPIDITY NEXT

"GASOLINE GOMEZ GOES TO TRIAL"

Two Fire-marshal showed up at our quarters of Eng-82-85-L-31 and the 27 Battalion AKA "La Casa Grande" (The Big house) My Chief called me to his quarters for a sit down with the Marshals. First I asked, Did you get his clothes ?" No the Marshal said. someone named, Giencarlo Querves took them. He said he was a employer of Juan Ottilio (The touch) I asked how come you guys didn't get up there when the chief ordered? "We didn't have the manpower at that moment. - We did get up two days later but the clothes were gone". My Chief said, "Didn't you guys get my message that this was urgent since we got the guy who has probably torched half the South Bronx." "You made the case against this guy weaker, If we found gas residue on his cloths this would improve our case against him" " I think you got a good case now" said the Marshal since you got the can of gasoline and the perp on the scene. I marked the gas can and gave it to the Marshals.
On my next day tour a Bronx Assistant District Attorney (ADA) showed up. He said to me, "I have this case but I don't know anything about the Fire Dept. I would like you to teach me so I can build a case against the Perp." I said the best is to ride with me on a night tour to see just how we work. He said he would get the ok from all concerned. He showed up my next night tour and I tutored him on fire fighting - We were very busy the night he rode. He devoured the info we gave him and now called me to his office for the building of the case. One of my firefighters (Tom Barry) who went to college for a chemistry degree- schooled me on flammable liquids especially gasoline. parts per million ect. i was now classified as an expert at the trail by the (ADA) Tom also school the can-man and irons-man on flammable liquids.

The (ADA) thought we had the knowledge to answer any questions by the defense attorney. I asked the (ADA), " could he find out who Querves was?" He found out that he was part of a (Apartment Association network South Bronx). The trail date was set and we were subpoenaed to the court.

"GASOLINE GOMEZ PRETRIAL"

The (ADA) asked me to meet him to go over some things that were bothering him. For one, he asked my opinion on why did Querves admit Otiillio worked for him after taking his clothes? I said to the (ADA) "In my opinion, he's going to make an excuse that he needed other clothes since the one's he took were dirty from the garbage he landed in. He now had the opportunity to destroy the evidence." I think now that he's going to say, Otiillio (The torch) was on some mission of some sort to be in the vacant building. "One such excuse I thought, was because Querves had bought the building, he was checking it out for renovation. The (ADA) said he thought the same. " I think when and if he does that, I better be ready to break the torch down". "First I have to get Querves to admit that he was there ' to evaluate the construction costs". He had already bought the building from the City with the promise to renovate. I also found he has asked for a federal loan subject to
damage costs. "I thought to myself, "this (ADA) doesn't miss a trick" He now admitted that he doesn't know much about construction" I told him that, This is my "B" job other then the Fire Dept. so I can school you on building materials. We did a lot of homework together and if this comes up the (ADA) will have the questions to ask. Knowing that all renovations used the following materials we went over them together: 2" by 4' -- norm length 8 Ft.-- 16 inches on center between them They measure 3 1/2 inches by 1 5/8 inches really. sheet rock--4 x 8 sheets generally 3/8 inches thick Door ways 32" wide and 6 ft 8 inches tall in the rough. what a plates and lintel's were. Beam, columns, Joyce's, Rafters and Bridging. The (ADA) was ready if only Querves would go down this path.

"NEXT THE TRIAL"

GASOLINE GOMEZ (THE TRIAL)

I awaited my firefighters and the (ADA) in front of the Bronx Cty Courthouse the day of the scheduled trial. I noticed a white lemo pull up. A guy stepped out in a white suit. The Marshal I gave the can to greeted him. I thought this strange but I thought he probably had dealings with him since this guy was Querves. who's consortium owned many buildings in the South Bronx. 54 to be exact. This case was to be handled by a Judge and what her (Mary K. Lowe) ruling would be would be final. When the (ADA), my Irons man, can man and outside vent man arrived, I told the (ADA) what I saw. "He said that was strange". We now started the trial. The (ADA) called Querves to the stand and asked about the employ of Ottilio. He said he was in the building to estimate the damage and order the materials for repair. The (ADA) led Querves into what he wanted and asked does Ottilio order all the materials. "Querves said yes. He does each apt. at a time and then times it by all the apt's in the building". Do you depend on him for all materials ordered. "yes" I was called to the stand as well as my men and we all did well even if the defending lawyer tried to his best to distort but my continuity of our findings could not be broken. The Marshal told the court he took the evidence to the Police laboratory for examination. He was asked by the defence attorney if the can evidence at the trial was the can in question. "He said yes" The (torch) Otillio was now called to the stand. The (ADA) ripped him apart when as asking the properties of building materials Ottilio knew nothing about. materials and the Judge dismissed him as non-beneficed witness. She also chastise Querves for lying to the court about his statements about Otillio being a building estimator. She threatened him with contempt--but because of her final rule, he escaped. Now for the ruling- The judge ruled - guilty but at the same time dismissed the case due to a lack of evidence. The can in evidence was found by the police laboratory to have no
carbon deposits in it. In other words, no gas in the can. I thought the (ADA) would have a stroke. The Judge now called the (ADA) and me to her chambers. She complimented the (ADA), me and the firefighters for presenting her with an excellent case but had to dismiss on the evidence presented. Conclusion - The marshal either lost the can and picked up a similar or a Police mix up. It brought back my suspicion of the Marshal greeting Querves at the Court House steps. Were they involved or was it just a complete accidental screw up - I knew i caught (GASOLINE GOMEZ) but to no avail - I looked at the can in evidence and there were no markings that i deliberately embossed on the can. The (ADA) in the years to come became a Federal Judge in the County of Queens and i went back to fighting arson fires

"THREE MERITORIOUS AWARDS AT ONE ALARM OF FIRE"

Our norm of response to fires was, North we went with E-85 and South with E-82. This particular day, we went with E-85 to the Charlotte Burn, Box 2743. Fire was on the third floor of a Old Law Tenement. The wind was fierce from the west the same as the face of the building. Lt-Rudy Bilek always sharp did a fire escape stretch into the apartment with the wind at his back. We had made a primary search of the apartment and Rudy communicated with me of his intentions. Two rooms of fire towards the front so we backed out and closed the door. Rudy and his gang put it out in minutes.
Jerry-A my chauffeur, radioed that the dispatcher received urgent call from the 27th Battalion that he needed a full alarm assignment with an ambulance and to have the second due Engine stretch in to Kelly St. from the north since all hydrant have operating nuts cut off. I told Jerry give a 10-8 and said to Rudy, finish up, We got an urgent call. Rudy said "get going I will finish the overhaul" We arrived at Kelly St. and saw Lt. Carbo waving us to the fire building. I looked at Jerry-A and he said to me, "I know lieu, the Bonnet Trick" He grabbed a 10 lbs sledge and a Pipe wrench and proceeded to break the cast iron bonnet and use the pipe wrench to operate the hydrant. I communicated with Chief Shank who was on the fire floor. He said, "Bubala, (His nickname for me) Get up here, I got a man who says his wife and kids are still in the fire Apt.and he is pretty burned Knowing I didn't have water I told Fr.Ritt and Fr.Phail to take two 21/2 Gal Cans. From the drills I did with this forcible entry team, on my training diagram, Forty Feet down the hallway ment the first room would be the kids room. I told Phail, that's yours Ritt and I will do the rest of the search.

TO BE CONTINUED
PART TWO: MERITORIOUS AWARDS

We arrived at the fire floor hallway and the Chief was holding a man badly burned on the landing below. "Bubbula, (His nickname for me) see what you can do, He says his wife and kids are still in there" The flames were coming out the top of the entrance door. The many years of layers of lead paint had the hallway of the apt ceiling rolling with flames and fire drips of paint. Phail was a master with a can. He gave us some space to enter the hallway. We heard cries from the first room and Phail went in and got the little boy. I took his can while he took the boy to the hallway outside the apt. He and the boy had burns. Ritt and I got to the Kitchen which was the fire room. We were on our belly's operating the first can. Cry's from within made Ritt crawl towards the trapped mother and two kids. He proceeded to drag the mother holding a child under his arms. "Get them out Ritt, i'm running out of the second can. Riit got them to safety but yelled back in that she dropped her baby. "Oh shit I said to myself, I have to get her now" The kitchen was now blowing into a tented tunnel of flames. Crawling about 6 ft.I found the baby. Droplets of burning paint were all over me but i crawled out the apt with the kid under my arms. E-82 got water and proceeded to put out the fire. we took the victims to a waiting ambulance and to Bx Lebanon Hospital. The only other unit besides E-82 and L-31 was Rescue #3 who heard the urgent and lack of units to full out the All-Hands. Ritt, Phail and I went to the Rescue for oxygen and some first aid treatment for the burns we all received. Chief Shank brought the Deputy Chief over to us and said, "I am writing these three Magnificent Bastards up for a meritorious award" These people would not be alive but for them and i witness the entire operation. The Deputy agreed after Chief Shank told him what we did. I said to Chief Shank, "Hey Chief, I thought you said you never use curse words" Bubula, I am ordering Rescue 3 to take you three to the hospital for burn treatment. You guys did a days work and should be proud.

Firefighter Ritt got a class 2 Ward for Great Personal Risk and a Fire Department Medal
Firefighter Phail got a Class 3 for Unusual Personal Risk.
Lieutenant Farrell got a class 3 for Unusual Personal Risk

Conclusion: The fire was caused by the Father using paint remover to remove paint from a kitchen table. He accidentally knock over a gallon of paint remover by the kitchen stove which hit the pilot light and hence ignition of vapors, the spilled liquid and paint built kitchen cabinets.
"EMBARRASSED BUT ALIVE"

Thought about a friend who I worked with in Ladder #4 even though it was 55 years ago. His name was Harold Paffmen. We nickname him from a TV show "Naught and Naught". I was the chauffeur and Paff was the Tiller-man. We were a good team together. He could read the moves I made in the congested traffic of Mid-town Manhattan. We were fast but good going in and out and between cars on runs in The Hell's Kitchen section of our area. We had a Peter Pirsh Duraluminum Ladder. You could raise, rotate and extend this ladder at the same time. This to me was the greatest tiller rig of it's time.

We got run to full out a 2nd Alarm North of our Fire District in the the high seventies (We came from 48 st.)

The Lt. and Forcible entry team left and entered the High Rise Building while Paff and I put the apparatus out of harms way. When we entered the lobby, The Chief said to us that the fire was on the 10 floor and all companies were walking up since the elevator was out of service. He said he was also walking up. Paff said to me, lets bring up our two masks just in case they haven't vented the roof. We entered the side of the building and low and behold, there was a freight elevator. We put on our masks and started up to the fire. Paff opened the scuttle as we went up seeing the heavy smoke coming into the shaft at the top floor which was the fire floor. We stopped at the floor below the fire and entered the fire stairs along side the elevator. This was standard op's. No companies were up there yet so Paff and I thought we might find the fire for the them or stretch a house line. As we opened the door to make the search, we heard moans.
We got to two victims and dragged them to the stairwell. It was the Chief of the Eleventh Battalion and his aide. The first alarm company's were stretching from the floor below. I told them, twenty to the left, it's blowing out the into the hallway. "Stay with them Paff, i will get the roof" the floor above was the roof door and I chocked it open. Paff took the chief and his aid to the floor below. Both took heavy feeds but were Ok. The fire was in a one bedroom apt and Engine put it out with out any problems.

The Deputy Chief gave a will hold and released the second alarm companies and we returned to quarters. Two hour's later the Chief of the 11th Battalion showed up at our quarters. He called Paff and I to the apparatus floor. He thanked both of us for getting them out of a bad situation. He admitted how stupid he was to take the elevator to the fire floor and chock the door. (Reason Elevator was not operating) Paff said to him, "Hey Chief, Shit happens" He asked us not to repeat what he just told us since he should have known better. "Ok Chief Paff said, You owe us one in jest"

Paff and I never told any of our Brothers about this- together we said "Even Chiefs can be stupid even though they call us that all the time". Later that year Paff and I did an aerial rescue. the Chief of the 11th was in charge and witnessed it. He wrote Paff and i up without telling us on the scene. He sent down a note to Paff and me saying, "I owed you two a Big One, Debt Paid in Full"

Harold Paffman passed away some years ago- R.I.P.FRIEND

"FOLLOW THE DUCT"

Talked to a firefighter from mid-town. I asked him do you guys get a lot of duct fire's since they put in filters and extinguishing systems. He said rarely. This brought to mind a Duct Fire we had in the early sixties. This was prior to these systems. Our Battalion commander formulated a method of attack. We got these fire's quite often in the Time Square Area in Battalion 9 district. Chief Eckert would order the Engine to raise their pump pressure to 200 psi and crack the Engine nozzle in half to form a fog effect with heavy droplets into the duct above the stove on fire. This created air and steam up the duct putting out
some or most of the fire. In those days we didn't have the fog nozzles of today. He ordered the 2nd due truck to go to the top floor of the building and follow the duct down checking any extension on any floor.

One fire I remember was on annual inspection day in class "A"s awaiting our Deputy Chief to arrive. We got a 2nd due response to a Hotel Fire on the East Side. I was the chauffeur and Fr.Paff my tiller man. We did, as our Chief said, went to the top floor and started down checking each floor descending. Reaching the 23 rd floor we found a huge fire in a laundry room. Having no radio's in those days, we forced a door into one of the rooms. I called to the operator to connect to the Manhattan Fire dispatcher. I told him to notify the 8th Battalion chief that I needed an Engine Company. The dispatcher said to me that the chief went down to one engine and two Trucks. I told him we need an Engine regardless and get me one. Paff and I now stretched a house line and tried to hold the fire. We knocked down most of the fire but couldn't get it all since it was very deep seated in shelf's of sheets and linen's We had mask's as s.o.p demanded by Chief Eckert for this type of fire so we weren't taking a beating until our air ran out. Now we were taking a big feed.. We were fighting the fire for at least 30 Minutes and had it under control when an Engine finally arrived and relieved us. Chief Eckert had it right to "FOLLOW THE DUCT" since this duct went into from the outside and through the large laundry room. Our uniforms were filthy on return to our quarters. The Deputy Chief told our Lieutenant to give us a Mark. and an 'A-OK' - GOOD job

"R.I.P.L-31- FIRST IN OUR HEARTS- 2ND IN THE BRONX"

In the early 70's, our Chief of Department visited our quarters. I knew the Chief from the 9th Battalion. He wanted to have lunch with us and sort of pass the day. I think he was on a mission of some sort knowing him We didn't see him much since
we caught many fires and runs that day on the air. We got back at 3 PM but he was gone. He told the Battalion Chief that he had to get some relief to these companies. Two weeks later, a dept order came down that a request for fire officer's and firefighters for special assignment to tactical control units he was organizing. Well, some weeks passed and one of the new T.c.u's were assigned to L-31. They worked relief to L-31 from 3PM to 12pm as the first due ladder Company and 31 was to be 2nd due. Some time later I fell through a floor from a bobby trap and damaged both my legs. To recoup I was assigned light duty to a permit office in the 7th Division. This office was manned by Firefighters who could no longer do the job but still didn't want to leave because of injuries sustained. One such guy was a stone cutter before he got injured. My men in 31 were down because the running dropped from the T.C.U. relief. They needed a lift since they were mocked at not being #1 anymore.

To picked them up, as a joke I had my tombstone guy make me one. It said, R.I.P. 31 "First in our hearts, 2nd in the Bronx" My stone cutter was from ladder 38 which he cut in the stone also. We sneaked down on lunch hour and waited for 31 to get a run. While they were out we put the stone in 31's location on the apparatus floor. We left and returned to our office. Man, did i case a stir. When I went down for my check on payday, the talk was they would kill that son of a bitch who did that. The men were mad as hell in the beginning but became a kind of a joke after a while. I think it did help moral wise and now they were proud of the stone. The stone traveled all over the job even as far as Midtown Manhattan. When missing, an officer of the company would call and say it was in his quarters. L-31 would send some guys to retrieve. I never did own up to this until now. The picture can be seen in Dennis Smith's Photo book about the Big House (La Casa Grande) a year passed and the T.C.U. was disbanded and L-31 became #1 again. I believe the stone remain's in the "BIG HOUSE" Today but they’re not number one anymore. We burned the area down and it's a nice place to live in "DA BRONX" (WELL MAYBE NOT)
"THE TALES OF TWO CHIEF'S IN TWO PARTS" PART # ONE

I was a Lemon-aide to these two Chief's- Chief of Department, John T. O'Hagan and Assistant Chief of Department, Alfred Eckert. Chain of command dictates me to begin with John T. I drove both these guys in the 9th Battalion in the 60's when their regular aide was off or on medical leave. (Just a Lemon-Aide) As mentioned in early post's John T., said when he became Chief of Department he would change operations 100% and he did. John T. was a combat paratrooper in World War Two in the South Pacific theater.

Coming home from this conflict he entered the F.D.N.Y. and rose through the ranks very quickly and Captioned the famous Rescue #1. He came into the 9th Battalion in the 60's. He rose again to Deputy Chief writing #1 on the exam. He was beat out by Chief Eckert from being #1 on the list by seniority in rank. Both these Chief were assigned to the 3rd Division which is the Bon-ton of the F.D.N.Y. When the Chief of Department test took place, John T. wrote #1 and was #1 on the list. Next is his accomplishments as the Boss. He introduced tower ladders and ladder trucks to respond at the same box. Tower Ladders introduced a new method of firefighting. Made 1 3/4 inch lines standard into the service for residential fire's upgrading from 1 1/2'. Upgraded rescues as water scuba teams and jaw's of life. Light weight scuba masks. Through the Lock method of forcible entry. Local Law # five- firefighting in Hi-Rise Building. Firefighting standard of Ladder Companies using Chief Reagan's Ladder #3. John T. fought against the building of the twin Towers- He said many times if a airplane hit it, as it did to the Empire State Building, The buildings would fail. He also said, 5000 square feet of fire the building would also fail. -John T. was ahead of hie time as proven by 911 incident. To relieve overworked companies, He formed tactical control Units and finally Interchange of units to not only relief overworked units but to train slow companies to upgrade and keep them sharp. Finally, he set the whole job to school to be taught how to fight fires in different buildings. And this was on their off tours on overtime.

In my opinion John T O'Hagan was he best Chief of Department we had or ever
will have. Rest in Peace Chief - you did your best for the FIRE DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK.
P.S. JOHN T. OHAGAN not only was the Chief of Department but was also Fire Commissioner at the same time and that my friends is tough to beat in any organization.

"THE TALE OF TWO CHIEF'S"
PART #TWO

This Chief was my idol- Eckert was his, name and fire was his game. He had a sixth sense when it came to fire's. Just to be around him, you got a knowledge of firefighting. When he talked you listened. When he wasn't around I called him, Uncle Al.

One of the toughest Firefighters I ever met. I can remember one incident of a fire in a sub-cellar garage with two cars on fire. The engine was having trouble getting down to the seat. Grabbing the tip of the nozzle he pulled the brothers down to the fires, directed them to operate and when over complimented them on the job. He had run into a sharp duct and split his head wide open.

When we got back to quarters refusing me to take him to the hospital he now said, Bob get some tape and pull the wound together. I got Lt. Clark who Eckert liked to demand me take him to St. Clare's Hospital. They put 60 stitches in his head. A tough Dutchman he was.

Now during World War Two, Firefighters were exempt from going into the service. Chief Eckert had two young boys and his wife pleaded for him to not volunteer. Al was Captain in Engine 47 in Harlem at the time. The Navy gave officer ranks to Rank Firefighters. Deputy chief McNiff who was Al's boss got a full Captains rank and was in charge of the fire school at Pearl Harbor. He told Al he could get him a officers rank if he joined. By the time Al decided all officers rank were fullled. One of Al's fireman got a Lt/jg rank and was assigned to Pearl harbor fire school. When Big Al decided all officer ranks were fullled and Al got a petty officers rank but was also assigned to the fire school under McNiff. Now one
day Uncle Al got into a bru-ha with his fireman who was the J/G. He called Al a (stupid fucking Dutchman) and Al cole-cocked him. Now that's 20 years in Leavenworth striking an officer. Chief Mcniff took over and warned the Lt/jg that he would have to press charges not only to Al but to him as well. To settle the dispute without pressing charges he transferred Al to the first ship out of Pearl Harbor which was a ammunition ship. At Okinowa the ship[ was hit by two Kamakazi planes. one started afire in the munition hold. The Captain called for an abandon ship and left the ship with all members. Al single handed took a hose line and put out the fire. He then waved the captain to come back on board. Al was transferred to a hospital ship. The story Chief McNiff always told, was that Eckert should have got the Navy cross but got a Bronze Star instead. He said tha a bronze needs no investigation but a Navy Cross does and how was he to explain the abandon ship.

You can't make this shit up. uncle Al came home and immediately studied and became Battalion Chief. We never did hear about the fireman the chief cole-cocked. I guess he ducked Captain Al the rest of his career in the F.D.N.Y Chief Eckert went on to be a Deputy Chief of the 3rd Division and Chief O'Hagan's right hand man as Assistant Chief of Department. For a guy who didn't have even a grammer school education because he had to support his family-- Big Al Eckert did mighty good and the men who worked for him as I did, thought he was supreme

REST IN PEACE UNCLE AL - YOU WERE A CREDIT TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

"FIRST RELOCATION IN 14 YEAR'S AND 3 DECORATIONS"

We never relocated in the 14 years assigned but as the fires reduced in our area, we started to relocate. One such relocate was to Ladder 44 which was getting busy. We were like a fish out of water not knowing the area we were going. Luck has it by my Chauffeur Buddy Croce knew the area because he was assigned to Rescue 3 when it was in the quarters of E-71. When we responded, we were sent by a telephone alarm for a fire in a six story corner building. On arrival, a man was hanging out the window of the sixth floor with heavy smoke over his head. Heavy electric wires were blocking any aerial rescue. I knew this layout from a study done at the Bronx Building
Planning Board. I used to get layouts for my training boards from them. We had no Engine Company when we arrived so I gave a 10-75 which would get some help. We were riding short by one guy so I told Buddy, "you're on your own with the basket of the tower ladder". I had Tom Kennedy on my irons and a probie newly assigned on the can. We raced up to the fire floor but were met by a woman who had her night clothes burned off. I told the probie to take care of her and proceeded to the fire apt. I told Tom it's a long hallway to three rooms. The guy should be on the right. The fire had a good hold and the two of the three rooms to the left were fully involved. Both of us got to the room where the guy was hanging on the sill of the window. Tom tackled the guy who was about to jump and brought him down on the sill and laid on him. I closed a paneled glass door that had most of its pane's out from the heavy fire. I took a mattress off a bed and placed it on the face off the door to hold back the flames.

I told Tom we will have to wait for the Engine to help us out. Tom said, "Buddy is turning the Tower at the end of the block and has mounted the sidewalk across the street". He's putting the out-riggers in an alley and the other between two cars. He's yelling, "Hold on, I can get you". I told Tom, "He better hurry, I can't hold this fire much longer". I radioed the chief in charge that we were in bad trouble and we need the Engine Company bad since we are trapped. He said they were stretching now. I was losing the fight on the door from the flames coming around the edge's of the mattress. Tom yelled to me "Capt, Buddy's riding the basket up by himself, he should be here in a minute". The basket arrived and took the victim and Tom and now me as the room lit up blowing flames out the window. Buddy lowered us to the street saying, "You don't think I would let you two down". Going over what Buddy did was his unbelievable good thinking. Driving to the end of the block, turning and mounting the sidewalk, driving back measuring the alley and the space between the cars - He now had the space for tormentors and the angle needed to go over the electric lines and get to us.

The Chief told us that the area was busy and the first engine was from the 2nd alarm assignment. He also said, "You guys did a magnificent job and I am writing all three of you up for your bravery".

Captain Farrell Ladder 31 got a class 3 for unusual risk of his life.
Fr. Tom Kennedy Ladder 31 got Glass 3 for unusual risk of his life.
Carmine Croce Ladder 31 got a meritorious citation for his ingenious act saving both his comrade's.
"SHED NO TEARS"

We got a special call, "Truck only" to a location on Jennings Street. When we arrived the street was blocked off with Police. They waved us in to the front of a building. The Police Officer in charge said to me, "Captain, We discharged a hot gas canister into the top floor Apt.of this building - It's a hot gas canister and It's going to cause a fire if not removed" "Can you guys get it out for us ?" First thing I said was, "Do you have a Perp in there ?" "No he said- nobody could take that gas so the Apt. is empty for sure" "You will need your air masks - this is why we called you"

We had very busy times in those days and our mask cylinders were waiting for the Mask Unit to replenish ours.with air. I told the Cop in charge that we didn't have any but we will remove the Charge. He said, "Are you guys kidding, you can't go in that Apt. without masks" I responded to him that "You guys don't know Bronx Firefighters" Tom Kennedy, my Forcible Entry man was on vacation so I said to my Chauffeur Buddy Croce, "Bring the irons and a shovel" the rest of you guys stay in the street. The Cop shook his head in disbelief. Buddy and I were Called "The Killer Bees" in 4 Truck in midtown because we were so good at forcible entry. Here we were, back together again. On the way up I told Buddy, ""

When we get in, Two rooms and the window of the living will be on the left" That's were we will start after getting air there" I put the iron between the two locks, Buddy hit it firm and the door opened. We held out breaths and proceeded to the window. We hung out for some air. Buddy saw the canister, used the shovel and tossed it out the window. We both stayed a while gulping air. I now said to Buddy, "Lets show these Cops we don't need Masks to do their job so wipe your tears, hold your breath and lets get out of here" On the half landing were three ESU guys with their gattling guns..I said as we passed, "Make sure you secure the Apt when you leave" I heard one of them say, "These guys must have leather lungs"

When we reached the street we told the officer in charge, The canister is in the alley and we are going to take up" He now said, "You Fireman are Crazy Bastards"
"THE MAKING OF A LIEUTENANT"

The F.D.N.Y. 3rd Division had a policy when it's members were on the Lieutenants list to alternate assignments. If you were in a Truck company you got detailed to an Engine until promotion. This was their way of training officers in their Division and eventual return when promoted To the 3rd Division. Deputy Chief Eckert saw to it that I was detailed to who he believed was the best Engine officer in the 3rd Division, Captain Joe Brochu. of Engine Company 65. Capt Joe, (AKA Broken shoes) greeted me with the a point that Chief Eckert wanted him to train me into an Engine Officer. He said, "You now have the knob so I can watch over you" Capt Joe showed me his amazing knowledge of Engine ops.during my year assigned to him. We did a lot of duct fires during this time and one such trick he taught me was, "Knee the hose" Doing Chief Eckert's way of high Engine pressure and a half cracked nozzle for large droplets of a fog effect. He had me knee the hose about four feet from the knob, pull it towards me and open the half cracked nozzle into the duct. This absorbed the nozzle reaction from the flow of water. He also said it could protect me in a hot situation by putting it overhead on the ceiling letting the water cool you down. He also showed me to cup my hand into the stream which could splash water on me but could get air also. We also did a lot of stand-pipe work The Capt explained his bag of gold which he carried to all standpipe op's. It contained, a nozzle, 2 fittings painted, Red and Yellow., a standpipe wheel, a pipe wrench, a spanner wrench, 100 ft of 1/4" nylon rope and a flash light. The fittings red were from national standard to FDNY threads,Yellow for u.s pipe threads. He explained why 3 lengths rolled up's gave us 25 ft more then the law allowed of 125 ft from the standpipe.

The captain had me do roll calls, the riding list and the log every tour. He also had me do one hour drills as required during day and night tours with no repeats. He explain the hose pack and why on engines. Engine 65 during learning period responded to not only many duct fire's but quite of bit of standpipe jobs in commercial
establishments in the garment center and hotels which were predominant in 65's area of response. Two major fires during my detail were a response to the 23rd street fire and the Hanseactic ship fire. Super Joe, a previous 4 Truck firefighter, returned to 4 until his retirement. Thanks Captain Joe for your effort to make this Johnny-Lieutenant an Engine Officer you would be proud of—R.I.P CAPTAIN JOSEPH BROCHU.

NEX'T "THE HANSEACTIC SHIP FIRE AND A UNIT CITATION"

"THE HANSEACTIC SHIP FIRE"

Working with Captain Brochu was like learning from an Encyclopedia of fire. He lived and breathed Fire and was always willing to share his knowledge. He was on my ass all the time correcting any mistakes I made which was many in the beginning with him. He said, "You make them here with me but don't make them when you're promoted since wherever you are assigned, your men will depend on you" I paid attention to anything this man said. Joe had a Dept Radio in his office. He had it on all the time listening to the fire's in the Bronx and Manhattan. Joe slid the pole this day yelling into the kitchen, "Boys we are going to go to a big
one- "I just heard on my radio that Engine #2 called for a full alarm assignment of a ship fire" We are assigned on the 2nd alarm so I want 4 rolled ups ready and you guys get your gear ready" At that moment the Bells rang a 2nd alarm. Joe said lets keep our heads, stay with me and we will do our job like we are trained to do.

On arrival the Capt ordered the rolled up's to be place on a baggage cart along with his gold bag. Engine 2 (a pier Co) had large lines stretched with it;s 2 piece apparatus. We reported to the chief of the 9th battalion and he said to stretch to the first deck. The gangway was jammed so Joe left the men of 65 on the pier with orders to hook up to a supply. He and I went up to the first deck with his bag of tricks. He said to me, Coil the rope and tie it to the operating wheel and throw it on to the pier. 65 guys tied the rope to the lead rolled up and Joe and I pulled two lengths onto the deck. Now I thought this was the reason for the 4 rolled up's. The rest of 65 came up to the deck leaving our M.P.O.at the apparatus of Engine #2.

We had a huge fire in the ball room on the first deck. The Capt called for water and we extinguished the wood paneling in the ball room and everything burning. It was evident the fire was coming from below since the fire kept igniting. after about an hour of operating the fire still kept igniting. A call came for a relief of two Engine company's fighting the huge fire in the Engine room. I kinder knew Joe would volunteer us.

"Do any of you guys have Navy fire fighting experience ?" Myself and George C said we did. "Ok then I just volunteered us to relieve one of the companies in the Engine room" I will take Bob and George with me and you two guys stay with this fire.

"THE HANSEACTIC ENGINE ROOM FIRE"

Finding our way to the Engine room was a trip. The original company's that stretched these line's did a magnificent job. Had to be about ten length's. It went down an after hatch along the shaft alley, and then two length's to the Engine room. We arrived and relieved two Engine Companies. These guys had it-they were beat down both physical and emotional from not being able to put the fire out.

One of the line's was operating into a half hatch and the one we got was into a doorway hatch. The fire was large but like a chimney fire going up. The smoke was quite bearable since it was going up two large air ducts. The Chief on the
scene, said nothing has darken this fire down so we are waiting for foam.
Both George and I agreed, this was an oil fed fire and Navy fire training said you have to get to the source. We told Joe about this and I asked him to let me try. He said, which I knew he would, "OK but I will give you a half a length of hose and if nothing happen's, I will dragged you two out. George stayed by the hatch feeding me hose. I went in about 25ft. and did the knee trick. Kneeing the half cracked water nozzle application of large droplets, I swirled the hose. George was now tapping me to get out as the Capt ordered. I put the line over my head but the water turned to steam from the two boiler's we were between. I tried the cup into the nozzle and that worked cooling me down and I got some air. Back to the swirl and as chance would have it the fire went out. George took the Nozzle and we backed out to the hatch. I felt drained and weak but felt great that we put the fire out. Now Capt Joe said to us, He heard the chief call the command that 65 entered the Engine and put out the fire contrary to orders. Now Joe pulled us aside and said, "If they press charges on us I gave you guys the orders so your clean" "OK" We were now ordered by Chief John T.O'Hagan to the command post. The Chief said to Joe," Fantastic job Joe, Write your self up for a Unit Citation with my Endorsement" Now Joe said to him, Guess what Chief, A truckie put out that fire" The Chief responded, "Wouldn't you Know

"TO THE SOUND OF THE BELL'S"

I lived in Riverdale section of the Bronx. On my block lived 3 F.D.N.Y.. Firefighters, FF John Meaney Eng.75, FF Walter Powers Eng. 82 and Lt. Jack Kelly Eng 69. and the Lt's Rep. for the Officers Union. Walter and John talked about how the Bronx was starting to burn. Walter said to me, Bob last month we did 500 runs with 75% workers. John said, his company use to be a camp but it too is starting to pick up work. As general Custer said, "I rode to the sound of the cannon", I said to myself, I have to join the brother's battling the "War of the Bronx"
I got promoted to Lieutenant and I asked Jack Kelly where I was assigned. He checked it out and said i was returning to the 3rd Division. I asked Jack could he get me transferred to the 6th Division. Sure he said, I will see that happen's. Jack did his thing and i was transferred to Battalion 17, 6th Division.in Da Bronx.

Arriving at the quarters of the 17th in with E-92 and L-44, the Chief was out so I went to E-92 office. I new the Lt. who covered in L-4. We greeted each other and then he said, "Bob, your going to be assigned to E-92, E-82, Sq.-2 and E-68 in the beginning. Then as you get relieved by a new Lt. you will cover all over the 6th.Div. The Chief you will work in E-92 and E-68 will be on you and brake your balls no matter what you do. He does that with all johnny Lt,s so don't take it to heart. He does that even if you right so don't argue with this guy Your use to plying jokes so no Mein-Herr's because he's German. "Oh you have heard of me doing this" " Your Rep. in 4 truck proceeds you- No jokes with this guy"

Now Chief Nicener returned and I went to his office to report. immediately. Now for the sermon. He started with how I have to live up to his standards and he goes by the book." I will be watching you when you work in 92 and 68 so be aware". Yes sir, I will follow your order's to a T. I left saying top myself, "What a hard Ass but I worked with this type of guy before.

To be continued

"MY FIRST TOUR IN ENGINE 92"

Had my first roll call as a Lt. The Chief witnessed it looking for any mistakes which Johnny Lt.s always make. Captain Brochu trained me for over a year doing this, so no faults's were found.This didn't go over to well with him I could see. He was looking for faults which in the norm found. We got special called to on a second alarm and he was assigned. At the fire, the Deputy Chief ordered a back up line with the first due Engine. We stretc thed and entered a adjoining apartment which was on fire. My Chief was on the fire floor and after take up he pulled me aside and said "Don't you listen to order's? "Your orders were for backup not going on your own to fight another fire" "Hey Chief the first due didn't need backup but the adjoining Apt. needed extinguishment " Your not to make that determination but to follow orders" When we took up, the Deputy said to me "Good job Lt., I was out of engine companies and glad you took that apt. "Better tell that to Chief Niesner, he just balled me out for doing that"
We got another job that day in the hallway of a old law tenement under the stairs on the first floor. It was to much for a can so I stretched the booster line and put it out. Now the axe fell- The Chief called me in his office when I returned to quarters. He went up and down my ass how I should have stretched a line and not used my booster."This is an occupancy, not a car fire,. What would have happened if you couldn't put that rubbish out. Now I pissed him off saying, "I knew you were coming and would back me with a second line" This did not go over well with him. He said "Lt, you think your a hotshot because you got a lot of medals" You will work from now on by the book" I yes sir'd him to death and got out of his office. He must have checked my personal folder out "Medals" The next night tour I had was in Eng-68. Telephone, telegraph tell a fireman and the boys in 68 new I was on the Chief's shit list. They said don't worry Lt., He never comes on the night tour. Famous last words. The Chief showed up. I was on the bottom of his out house so I might as well dig a little deeper. I called the roll, "Achtung" and called the name's of the platoon. The men kept their demeanor."All present and accounted for Chief" "What's this Achtung Lt." Sorry Chief, I was brought up speaking German by my mother and I go back speaking the language sometime".Well watch you step I don't need wise guy's in my Battalion. Next Teachers Pet
"TEACHER'S PET"

Got a job in 1430 University Ave. Believe it or not, it was not only the building I grew up in but the same Apt. but not on the same floor. My uncle live on the 4th floor but had moved to long island years before. We lived on the first. This fire was on the 5th floor. The dispatcher said I would be all alone since every company that was assigned were at other fire's. On arrival I gave a 10-75 for the fire saying I needed help. The entrance to the building was through a tunnel into a round courtyard were the stairwell windows showed. We stretched 4 lengths to the yard. I took the irons, rope and two men to the 4th floor hallway window. My man in the yard tied the line and we pulled up two lengths. I yelled for him to bring up a hook. After we got water. I knew the layout so when getting water we forced the door. We now entered putting out three rooms of fire. The hook arrived and we pulled ceiling's finding the fire had control of the cock-loft. We darkened the fire as we pulled ceilings. We worked more fire in the loft from the adjoining Apartment. We had in under control chasing small pockets as we went. I complimented the men of 68 for the terrific job they performed.

L-45, AND Eng.93 came in from Washington Heights along with Eng. 92, L-44 and Chief Niesner. "Chief, I need my people to get a break" "OK he said" "Thank you much Mein-Herr" We all left for the street with the boys choking with laughter The next tour I went around The Chief called me to his office. He said sit down Lt." I was at a Steurben (German) meeting and Assistant Chief Eckert asked me how you were doing. ""Oh, I said you saw Uncle Al. "I didn't know you were related" "I guess it was on you mothers side and that's how you speak some German" Ya, I said. "By the way Lt. you did a good job at University.ave job and I told Chief Eckert I am recommending Engine 68 for a Unit Citation". "The men well deserve it -Your men are a credit to your Battalion.Chief" He now said to me which almost floored me, "Maybe Lt. we can find a spot for you in my Battalion" "Great Mein-Herr" Opp"s sorry chief it's my German thing" I now left for a 30 day detail in Eng. 85 never to return to the 17 Battalion. He never found out i wasn't German and not related to Chief Eckert.- I think

"HE WET HIS PANT'S"

Strange things happen's when you least expect. Doing building inspection on Simpson St., I notice one of the building was under renovation (probably from a Government Loan which was common on this street) I said to myself, "Let me
check out just what their doing and the new construction that was being done." They had removed the plaster and lath and replaced with sheet-rock. The thing I didn't like was the lowering the 9 Ft. ceiling's with 2 x 4"s. The soil pipe's had no protection from 1st floor to cock-loft. To me shoddy construction all around.

Wouldn't you know, on my next night tour we got a fire in the same building on the top floor blowing fire out a front window. Eng-82 as usual did a great job stretching up the stairwell, we forced the door with little effort. 82 got water and we entered, did a primary search while 82 knocked two rooms of fire down. Remembering the drop ceiling's I had my can-man bring up a cement hoe to pull any ceiling's or wall's we met. I radioed my roof-man not to cut the roof since the drop ceiling's held the fire from getting in the loft. Mel, my roof-man radioed me that our saw was missing after he did first aid ventilation. I ran to the roof and got a hold of Mel and said, "Just where did you put it down" We both looked all over the area and found nothing. I finally shined my flashlight on the next dead end roof and saw a crouched guy hiding behind the parapet wall. He couldn't go any where since he was on a dead end roof. I grabbed this guy by the neck and laid him on the parapet wall overlooking an alley I now said to him, "Look, dirt-bag my saw or your going to eat cement" "Oh God mister Fireman, don't throw me off, your saw is in the hallway of the next building" Check it out Mel, if it's not there this Mutt goes over" "It's there mister fireman, please don't throw me over" He now wet himself Mel found the saw and I gave the Mutt his freedom as he ran over the attached roof's to find an exit to the street. There was two Cop's on the roof, and one asked, Were you really going to throw him over" Nah, just and act but I got my saw back.."Jesus, Lieutenant we wondered for a minute and thought you were gonna"

A book was written by a cop in the 41 Pct. called "Fort Apache" I wondered if this incident wasn't told and the author used it in his book. the author wrote about two cops throwing a perp off a roof in one of his tales. "Just wondering"
"THE FALSE ALARM, BOX 2785"

This one summer night, Ladder 31 and Engine-82 went to this box 2785 14 times-Crotona and Charlotte St. The brothers were always sitting on the Park benches across the street from the box and laughing at our multiple responses. Big joke watching these huge pieces of apparatus, blowing their sirens and air horns when arriving to this location. Talking to mutt'sville didn't help so back to quarter's awaiting another response. The Police didn't help since they were busy with their own things. One response they did chase the brother's but only to have them return after they left. On our 15th run, I noticed Lt. Louie (the legend) walking with paper in his hand picking up dog shit. Louie, I said, "What the hell you doing" He answer, "Got a surprise for our esteemed brothers the next time they pull the Box" Louie now mounded the dog shit on the operating handle of the box. "This Louie said, "will stop this nonsense" Louie I said, "Your a piece of works" We took up and returned to quarters.

Not back 5 minute's and we got the same box to respond 2785. On arrival we notice 5 fingers in dog shit on the operating handle of the box. Louie now said, "I guess he will not be shaking any hands with his brothers tonight" In Dennis Smith book, "Report From E-82", Lt. Andrade told the story of responding to this box 2785. His report via the department radio was as follow's: "Engine 82 to Bronx" - "Come in E-82" We have a fire in Crotona Park in a tree: "We have extinguished the Fire, Rescued the Squirrels and are now taking charge of their Nuts" "Additional unit's not required":The dispatcher's choking with laughter asked for a repeat so they could send it all over the Bronx and maybe city wide. After this, every time we went to this box Louie would say "I looked to the East, I looked to the West, a 10-92 (false alarm) is the best.

ADDENDUM TO POST: All Companies assigned to this Box one day were another Fire at the infamous Box 2743. Relocating companies full out the assignment for a fire at 2785. It was on the corner building facing Crotona Park. The brothers were once again laughing at the Firefighters fighting the fire who were to the belief they set. This time, the Brother's of the F.D.N.Y. to get some justice, by throwing pieces of broken cornices on to the local brothers sitting on the bench. These turds now went to the Mayor Of Southern Blvd. to complain. The Mayor called the Local Police, Assist. and Deputy Chief of the New York Fire Dept. to meet at the quarters of Lad-31 and E-82. The Mayor said he had witnesses who could identify the Firefighters who threw the missile's. All these Dept heads met at our quarters. Deputy Chief Frank Burns called me aside and said to me, This
Mayor has a beef about you sending arson reports about his organization so don't volunteer any information except to the complaint they have. I will then tear his ass off for a bias complaint against us. I know you will object to a line up of the men but do it and follow my lead. Clever Frank, Now asked me for a roll call. I followed his lead by having one. He now asked the Mayor to have his witnesses pick out the firefighters who they could identify the missile thrower's. Three Turds stepped up identifying three of my men. Now chief Frank told all that these men were at another Fire and could not be the accused. He now lambasted the mayor of making false and demeaning accusations against his firefighters. He dismissed all of us and told the Mayor to Leave Quarters with his batch of liars. The Mayor was not happy with that and the assistant chief either since they came from downtown for this useless trip. We all showed a lot of respect to a chief (Frankie Burns) who had our back.

"THE SISTER BURN"

My Captain was William Grimes. We called him "Mister Willy". He was an aggressive officer and firefighter. I relieved him to start my shifts. He always had something for me to do knowing I would carry out his commands. I was the Hydrant officer who looked after the many in our district. Mr. Willy liked my method of breaking the bonnet and using a pipe wrench to operate broken hydrants. He asked me to check out and record vacant buildings in our district while out doing hydrant inspection's. I now was now the "Vacant Building Officer" plus "The Hydrant Officer" He thought that the new crop of vacant buildings would be a good place to train the brothers to keep them sharp so he wanted their locations.

While out on such inspection, one day we came upon two sister's trying to load a large refrigerator on a hand truck. "Sister's I said, you look like you need help" Sister Bridget and sister Clare were very small in stature. Each weighed about 90 Lbs. "Oh sister Clare said, "Aren't you boys nice and I guess we took on more then we could handle" We took the Frig into there small Apt. I was always a bug on Apt layout's and noticed beds in an area that should have been a living room. I now asked the sister's how come. Their answer that the bedroom facing the street had rocks thrown through the windows so for safety, we moved inward. I said to myself, How could anybody want to harm these two teaching angels. We also
moved a chest from the front room to there new bed area. Both thanked us and we resumed our inspection duty. We also turned down an offer for a cup of tea.

Years went by and I was covering Captain in Engine 73. We responded to a telephone alarm of fire in E-82's area who was out at another fire. Arriving at the location, I couldn't believe it was sister Bridget and sister Clare's building. The front widow of their Apt was on fire from a gasoline bomb. The 27th Battalion chief was at the scene before us. I raced to the door of the sisters Apt. The entrance door was fully involved with fire from an evident pour of gasoline. I kicked the door open and was confronted by a full tunnel of fire. The Chief said to me, "Bob, you cant go in there it's to much fire" I said, "I know Chief I can't but I have to try" Running through the flames I made it to the living area remembering it was the sisters bedroom. I found sister Bridget crying out under a blanket. I picked her up, covered her with the blanket and ran back through the flames to the safety of the hallway and gave her to the Chief. My line was now charged and I thought about Sister Clare. Was she still in there? E-73 was always known to be aggressive so we put out the two rooms of fire quickly.

I searched for Sister Clare and found nothing. I later learned that she was on vacation, Thank God. The chief said to me, "Bob you face is burned" Get my aid to take you to the hospital for treatment. "I honestly didn't feel anything". The Dept Doctor came to the hospital and placed me on sick leave seeing i had burn's on my legs. Those acetate Sears trousers -- they where easy to clean-not good for fire. The 27th Battalion Chief picked me up at the hospital and drove me to my car. He now said to me, "Jesus Christ Bob, you scared the shit out of me doing what you did" I told the Deputy I'm writing you up for an award. Conclusion --Got another Class 3 award for unusual risk .More than that, I got an invitation for tea from Sister Bridget and sister Clare. Now how can one beat that ??

"Tiller to Tower"

In my tenure as a Lieutenant for seven years in Ladder 31, I worked under two great captain's. One was William (Mr. Willy) Grimes and John (shoes) McCaffrey. John got his nickname from the high shine he always had on his shoes. (ahem). Mr. Willy was a pipe man all his time on the job. He worked in E-58 as a Lt. and was known as a very aggressive officer. He worked with John O'Reagan L-26 of Ladder bulletin 3 fame. When he came to 31 he insisted that the bulletin be followed like a Bible. I disagreed with tool assignments and said it's just a guide not a must do no matter what. He wanted the Chauffeur to carry an ax but I countered" How does he get the drop ladder down with an ax. How about the
second window off the fire escape, you can only get that with a hook" The roofman he wanted also an ax and i said, "He may get the door but how about venting the top floor and picking up a roof". I wanted a Halligan and a Hook. He finally said I could do this in my group. Months later he changed to my way after saying to me, "It makes sense to do it like you said and I am going to call O'Reagan about this." Mr..Willy made Chief and I said, "You got to work downtown- It's the toughest place to work as a Chief. He took my advice and landed in my old Battalion 9. He called me some months later and said I was right about the change.

Now Captain McCaffrey was a breath of fresh air. A true truck officer. Fr. in L-27, Lt. in L-48 and now we got him in L-31. I agreed with him on all truck work and he agreed with my methods as well. We got along and he loved truck work as I did. He lived up to being a top officer in L-31. The only thing we disagreed was the Tiller Rig. He loved them and I hated them. We were due for an apparatus change and he was going to get a new Tiller Rig. He said to me, "Bob, were getting a brand new Tiller Rig that I have requested with the Chief in charge of the shops- See I got pull in this job". Now I said, "How about a rear mount since as you know, I hate depending on two guys with the tiller when we only have one Chauffeur with a Rear Mount.

"Bob I want my tiller and that's final and I am getting one - It's all assigned and the Tiller Rig is mine" My last words were, "Hey Jack, How about a Tower Ladder" -- "No way Bob I getting my Tiller" to be continued:
"TILLER TO TOWER #2"

John now asked me, "Bob, just why don't you like Tiller Rig's? Well, Vinny Bollon took me for a ride 12 blocks with out a tillerman .I heard the sound of E-82 warning and thought it was mine. Both sounded alike so I thought I had my tillerman in place. Because Vinny drove so fast, the tiller tracked. but when he slowed down we hit multiple things and i stayed up all night doing accident reports. A new Frankie Wrong in the tiller who had no explanation of why he wasn't up there. "Now that's why I don't like Tiller rigs-You have to worry about two guys instead of one"

Now the Captain was going to be promoted in about 8 months. I was going nowhere since I passed up a captains test so I thought ? Maybe I could use a mark from an owed favor from Tony Romagnoli Chief in Charge of the Shops who I had worked with in E-54 years ago. I was with Tony at a third alarm and while we went down a hallway, a chimney collapsed and Tony was dragged with it. I grabbed Tony by the legs and yanked him from falling 5 stories. He said, "Bob I owe you one" Now to collect my the mark. I called Tony and asked him could I get a Tower Ladder instead of a Tiller. He said, "Bob I could but your Captain has used his weight to get a Tiller Rig" If I do this he will be up my ass with complaints but I do owe you one so I will be always out when he calls to complain. "Now remember big guy, my debt is paid" This will cause me a big headache but a mark is a mark" Weeks went by and we were notified of our Tower Ladder was ready for pickup at the training school. Fortunately Captain Jack was on vacation. I took my chauffeur Jerry Albert and we went to the island to exchange Rigs. The rig's had number starting with the year 73xx. I naturally looked for 7331. Jerry said it was a dog but 7313 was great. So that was our choice. Drilling commenced and we all fell in love with this beauty. Jack came back from vacation and I thought he would have a stroke. He kept calling but couldn't get a reply from Tony at the shops who ignored his calls.. "This is some mistake that I have to resolve" I now said, "Hey Capt, why don't you try living with this Rig, we can always change" "Alright, I will give it a try"

Conclusion: After six months, you couldn't get Captain Jack McCaffrey to change Rig's. He too fell in love with 7313 and peace was in Ladder 31 again. He never found out I used my mark to get this Honey of an Apparatus. It had 88,000 road miles and 395,000- engine miles when the F.D.N.Y retired 7313 and is still going in a city in Virginia. The Best Rig I ever had by far.
"E.M.S.-BIG HOUSE" Example #1

Spanish occupants in the area we worked, were used to going to a local fire House for any medical needs in the country they were from. They came to us for any minor injuries from cuts to burns etc. Sometimes we treated things that really were out of our league but we tried.

Example: One night L-31 got a call from the Bronx Dispatcher of a water leak at an Apt on Boston Road. We kind of knew it was a run that wasn't going to give the occupants any sympathy since it was 3 o'clock in the morning. While responding the Dispatcher now radioed that the Box Alarm had been pulled so now I said to myself, "It's a Job not a water leak".

Well it turned out that it was a water leak but it was from a pregnant 16 year old girl. She broke her water and was now in the process of giving birth. I recently read an article of Birth delivery so I kind of knew what to expect.

I hand talked via handi-talkie to E-82 to hold the line. Lt. Andrade came in and I said, "Louie we are going to deliver a baby" "Holy shit Bob, I will follow your lead". The girl was hiding her pregnancy from her family by wearing a large over coat. We were surrounded by onlookers leering at the delivery. Louie now chased some on the onlookers to another room. As the baby came out, I lifted it to the mother's stomach. I asked for shoe lacer's since we had boots only, got two, and now asked for a knife to cut the umbilical cord. To my surprise I got a choice of three knives. Louie tied the cord on one side, I tied the other. Now I cut the cord. Louie said, "We are now ready to welcome this fine Lad to the world". The brave little girl now awaited an ambulance to take her hospital. She was some soldier, enduring great pain. When we returned to quarters we discussed how demeaning it was to this little girl giving birth with an audience leering over her while she had her little boy. Dennis Smith our built in author (Report From Eng-82) wrote to Johnson & Johnson about our dilemma. Low and behold they sent and made baby delivery kits which entailed: A covering blanket for privacy, plastic close pins, a cutting scissor, medical pads and other articles for delivery. Frank Burns our Deputy Chief now said to Louie and I that he will special call the "Big House Mid-Wife's" to any incoming births in his Division. This was advertised in the W.N.Y.F Magazine by guess who? He was a devil in his own way.

"Next gun shots on southern Blvd" Example #2
"E.M.S.- BIG HOUSE"
EXAMPLE #2
Before E.M.S. service was established we depended on the local hospital for ambulances. Since the area they covered was so large we never got them quickly if not at all. I use to visit Bronx Lebanon often to replenish my Medical Supplies. The head nurse was a stern person who knew her stuff. She always said to me, "Lieutenant, No need for your Irish charm, what do you need." "I might as well give you what you want, for after all you get my patients first"

I always got what I wanted from Miss Sadie. She was a great servant to the public and worked very hard at her Vocation. I always thanked her with a nice cream cake which I know she loved. She always responded with, "Lieutenant, you have better be in heaven one hour before the Devil know's you died" I would take my booty and kiss her on the cheek.

Chief Liebock and I was in the kitchen drinking some coffee this one particular evening. Both E-82 and E-85 were out on E.R.S. Box's The chief and L-31 got a box, Freemen St. and Southern Blvd. As we arrived, gun shots could be heard. Two guys were firing into a Bar on the corner. They jumped into a waiting car and took off down Southern Blvd. Jack Mayne and I went into the Bar. Two Patrons were shot. One in the neck and one in the leg. I said to Jack get our medical Box. I took the neck guy and Jack the leg guy. Having Jack was like having a corpsman in the Marine Corps. I saw my guy had got hit in the carotid artery and was bleeding badly. I took a roll of bandage stuck it in the wound, used my belt to tie his head on his shoulder. Jack and Dan had removed the guy to our running board and placed a tourniquet on his leg. Chief Liebrock said no ambulances are available. I said, "I will take these two to Bronx lebanon Hospital. "I didn't hear that Lieutenant" Off we went and I radioed the Bronx Dispatcher that to notify Lebanon that we were coming in with two serious gun shot wounds.

We arrived and Nurse Sadie and doctors were waiting. They got them into the emergency room quickly. After a while a doctor came out with my belt in his hand. He now asked, Who did the neck injury? I guess I expecting a balling out but said
it was me. He now said, "That trick you did with the roll of bandage saved his life"
"He was lucky the carotid artery was only cut a half way so some blood got by but
the bandage roll really did the trick to hold the blood, other wise he would have
died from the lose of blood." Sadie now appeared and said, "Great work Boys,
That's the biggest ambulance we ever saw" We returned to Quarters and I
complimented the men especially Jack - I got Jack from Rescue-3 which trained
him well in first aid, and his performance was outstanding.

"ADDENDUM TO E.M.S. #2 big house"
We returned to quarters only to be confronted by a Deputy chief covering in the
6th Division. We did the standard roll call and now he wanted to see me in the
Battalion 27th office. Chief Liebrock our Battalion Commander was present when
he said he is preferring charges against me for using Fire Dept. Apparatus to
transport civilians to the hospital. "You must know that it is against department
policy to transport civilians via Department apparatus" "Yes I know Chief but this
was an emergency" Before I could say more, Chief Liebrock interrupted and said,
"Chief Smithwell, I gave Lieutenant Farrell personal permission to take both
victims to the hospital. Bronx Lebanon stated that any delay in receiving these gun
shot victims would have been certain death for both. "The doctors called me about
this to complement my members for doing a fantastic job"

Now Chief Liebrock said to the Deputy, "Life is more important to us here in the
South Bronx more than breaking antiquated rule's. You should be thanking these
men instead. Your idol threats looking to press charges for saving lives does not
have any merit and by the way, It was me who is responsible. Just remember
Chief, "The Fire Department goal is the save lives and here my men did just that"
"I will be proud to take your charges" In #2, Chief Liebrock said He didn't hear me
going to take these victims via apparatus to the hospital. Now he saying he gave
the orders which he didn't do to protect me. I now said, Wait a Minute Chief,
"Your dismissed Lieutenant say no More" After a session of twenty minutes
behind closed doors the Deputy Chief left saying to me on the apparatus floor,
"Your Chief told me what you guys did so all as I got to say, "Nice going Lieu, I
withdraw the complaint"
"E.M.S BIG HOUSE EXAMPLE #3

Two fires before 11:pm time to eat our late dinner. Just as we sat down, a Box came in for Hoe Ave. and Home St. As we entered the street a distraught girl was waving us to her building. She said her mother needed help. As we entered her apartment we could see her mother on a couch, gasping for air. I Radioed the 27th Battalion to have my chauffeur bring up the oxygen the chief carried in his Wagon. Buddy Croce arrived quickly and placed the face piece on her and made her sit up. She weighed at least 300 Lbs.

I radioed the Chief again to see if he could get a priority ambulance response for an evident heart attack. Seeing this time frame, I had the victim placed on a large but strong oak chair. With great difficult because of this women's weight, 4 of my firefighters lifted her on to this chair and we started down the stairs. Buddy kept adjusting the oxygen as we went down. Reaching the first floor, the victim jerked her head back violently, One of my men unthinking, remarked, "Hey Capt, She's dead" "No she's not I said, give her more oxygen Buddy" Her two son's hearing my man's remark went ape-shit. They said, "These Fireman have killed my mother." My Chief radioed that remarkably an ambulance had arrived so we quickly removed the victim to the ambulance and told the driver to take he to Bronx Lebanon hospital as quick as you can.

We got out of there with great haste with the two son's yelling curse words at us. At quarters, I chastised my man who admitted he was wrong for doing such a thing. Buddy Croce now entered his name on the Frankie Wrong Award in capital
letters with additional phase, "Dumb Shit Extraordinary" During the night at about 3am I heard 3 gunshot's. Normal for the area, I paid no attention. The next morning it was noted that two holes were in the brick front and one in the frame of the bulletin board. The next night the daughter of the victim came to the fire house and apologized for the behavior of her brother's I now asked, "Did your brother's shoot at the Fire house" I can't answer that Captain but if they did, I apologize for that too" "Oh well, Just another South Bronx Fairy Tail I guess !"

"THE JENNINGS STREET COLLAPSE"

June 7, 1974 6x9 tour started off with it's usual fare. I got my first All-Hands fire at 18:15 PM. Buddy Croce my chauffeur, told me, "Hey Capt. we missed a 2nd alarm over at Jennings and Intervale Ave" "Were almost finished here, tell the dispatcher we are 10-8 and available" The 2nd alarm was two blocks north of the Big House. As we passed the Command Post I stopped and ask Chief Byrne, 6th Division "Need me Chief, This my Box 2739 "He responded, "Got enough people here to put out the Bronx so find yourself another fire" We passed him again several times going to other alarms rubbish and false and each time i asked, "Need me yet" "Get our here he would say".

At about 2045 a 3rd alarm was transmitted and We got special called to the 3rd. Reporting to the command post Chief Byrne said to me, "I need you now Bob" Check out the building, I am using all-hands for finding my men" (SEVEN WERE BURIED) I told my Bro's to get every roof rope they can and FF Croce said to me, " I know Capt, the Kelly thing" "Right on Buddy" We then cut up all the roof ropes we could get, stretched a 1 3/4" line up the fire escape to put out the remaining fire's on the top floor. I told Benny Cassidy, (Ex Eng 82 guy) to handle the fire why the rest of us tied the hanging debris over the man below digging. We formed a spider web of rope's holding the building from falling on the brothers below. At one point I held FF Croce by the ankles while he tied a major portion of debris directly over the rescuers. "He said to me, "Hang on to me tight Capt." I said, "Don't worry guy if you go we go together" We worked for over two hours until
we got the word that all members were rescued. FF Cassidy worked alone putting out fires all over the 6th floor with the 1-3/4" which was a great accomplishment in it self. While taking up Chief Byrne said to me, "See I told you I really did need you and special called for you" Good job Bob, Tell your men they covered my ass well" "I am recommending your Company for a Unit Citation"

P.S. The Kelly thing was taught to Buddy and I by Lt. Bill Kelly an outstanding rigger when we were in 4 Truck in Mid-town Manhattan so the knots we used were his. Especially his Timber hitch. "R.I.P. lieu"