TIP OF THE HELMET TO: Engine 48, Ladder 56, Division 7 for hosting the Memorial Day Collation. There was an excellent turnout for the Memorial Day Ceremony on Riverside Drive. *Never Forget!*

**711 EAST 183 STREET, BRONX:** The May 28, 1982 day tour was a routine day in the Belmont section of the Bronx. It was late Spring and the warmth of the day indicated that Summer was not far off. At approximately 1630 hours, Engine 88, Ladder 38, Engine 48, Ladder 56 and Battalion 18 responded to a pull box alarm, Box 3304, at the Northwest corner of East 183 Street and Crotona Avenue. This was a chronic false alarm box. Units arrived, conducted their investigation, and transmitted a 10-92. At 1707 hours, box 3304 was transmitted again. As units responded, they could see that this time, the scene would be very different.
Engine 88 was commanded by Captain Timothy Gallagher. Also working in Engine 88 that tour was Fr. Joe Brosi, Fr. Joe Principio, Fr. Joe Meliti, Fr. Pete Brower, and Fr. Jim Sideris.

Engine 88 arrived at 1709 hours. As Engine 88 pulled up, they saw there was a structural fire at 711 E. 183 Street (exposure 1 side). The fire was on the third floor of the 4 story brick and wood joist old law tenement. The building was a corner building with the short side of the tenement facing Crotona Avenue (exposure 4 side). Capt. Gallagher transmitted a 10-75.

Ladder 56 was the 2nd due Truck and was commanded by Captain Tom Kennedy. As they left their firehouse and turned the corner onto E. 187 Street, they could see the sky was filled with black smoke in the direction of Box 3304. As Engine 88 pulled up to the building, Capt. Gallagher saw a face in a window of the fire apartment, and then the face disappeared. Recognizing that the person in that window was in imminent peril, he ordered his Firefighters to stretch a hand line to the 3rd floor via the interior stairway as he headed toward the fire escape on the E. 183 Street side of the building. Capt. Gallagher climbed on a wrought iron fence and scaled the drop ladder to reach the 2nd floor balcony of the fire escape.
He dashed up the fire escape and made it to the fire apartment window that was served by the fire escape.

Upon arrival at the 3rd floor fire escape balcony, Capt. Gallagher entered the fire apartment. The smoke condition in the apartment was heavy. Captain Gallagher was forced to operate on his knees. As he was searching for the missing girl, he noticed that fire had complete hold of the rear bedroom and the living room. The fire was encroaching on the hallway of the fire apartment.

After searching the room off the fire escape, Captain Gallagher found the trapped occupant. It was 18 year-old Aracelis Santiago. Ms. Santiago was conscious but terrified. Ms. Santiago was mentally handicapped. Capt. Gallagher had to crawl under the growing fire in order to reach Ms. Santiago. As he reached Ms. Santiago, Capt. Gallagher could feel strength leaving his body. The heat and smoke were taking its toll on him. Ms. Santiago was 200 pounds and in a state of panic. This made it difficult to effect the rescue. Captain Gallagher knew that time was slipping away for both of them.

The Firefighters of Engine 88 made it to the fire floor with their 1 ¾ inch hand line. As they arrived, they saw building occupants trying to kick open the apartment door. They succeeded in kicking in a panel on the lower half of the wooden apartment door.

Inside the apartment, Capt. Gallagher could hear the civilians kicking the apartment door.
Capt. Gallagher started dragging Ms. Santiago towards the door. As they were getting closer to the apartment door, the apartment flashed over. Fire was now over their heads as the fire rapidly expanded. Ms. Santiago panicked, broke free from Capt. Gallagher, and headed back toward the interior of the apartment. Despite being near exhaustion and already burned, he had to go back toward the fire to try to rescue Ms. Santiago from the terrible heat. At that time, Ladder 38 forced open the apartment door and pulled Capt. Gallagher out into the hallway.

Ladder 38 was arrived about one minute after Engine 88. They were commanded by the legendary Lieutenant Leo Fracassi. Lieut. Fracassi L-38 took his Forcible Entry Team
into the burning apartment to find Ms. Santiago. They were making a determined search under extreme conditions. They could not find Ms. Aracelis Santiago. Battalion Chief Joseph Short of the 18th Battalion arrived at 1712 hours. He saw fire blowing out of all four windows on the Crotona Avenue side of the building and one window on the E. 183 Street side of the building on the third floor. Deputy Chief Vincent Dunn of Division 7 arrived at 1718 hours. After a quick consultation with B.C. Short, he transmitted the “All Hands” for 7-5-3304.

Fr. Joe Brosi E-88 had the Nozzle. When Capt. Gallagher was taken out into the public hallway, Capt. Gallagher told him that the victim needed rescue immediately. The forcible entry team from Ladder 38 could not find Ms. Santiago.

Ladder 56, the 2nd due Truck, arrived at the 3rd floor landing and Capt. Kennedy noted the conditions. He saw Capt. Gallagher on the floor badly burned. He took the Forcible Entry Team of Ladder 56 to the top floor. They made entry to the apartment directly above the fire and found a light haze. L-56’s Outside Vent Firefighter called his Captain and told him that the apartment *not* directly over the fire apartment was heavily charged with smoke and there were 8-9 people huddled in the apartment not wanting to leave.

Ladder 38 positioned their aerial ladder on the E. 183 St. Side of the fire building. It was a spare apparatus and was not working properly. They had difficulty in raising the aerial ladder. However, it eventually was placed at the top floor to help in the removal of the trapped occupants. Fr. Vinny Albanese L-38 and Fr. Tom Sidor L-38 removed some of the occupants via aerial ladder. Ladder 56 removed the remainder of the trapped occupants from the top floor via the interior stairway.
When Captain Gallagher heard that Ladder 38’s Forcible Entry team could not find Ms. Santi ago, he summoned whatever strength he had left and he re-entered the fire apartment. Conditions in the apartment were extreme. Captain Gallagher was able to find Ms. Santiago in the kitchen of the apartment. But now, Captain Gallagher needed help to get Ms. Santiago out of the apartment. Fr. Joe Brosi E-88 passed the nozzle to Fr. Joe Principio of E-88. Fr. Brosi met up with Capt. Gallagher and he and Lieutenant Fracassi helped remove Ms. Santiago and Captain Gallagher. Fr. Principio advanced the nozzle onto the fire. In so doing, he had to lay prone on the floor to tolerate the heat. It was 1718 hours and the 10-45 was transmitted. At 1720 hours, the 10-45 code 2 was transmitted by D.C. Dunn.
Engine 48 arrived as the 2nd due Engine Company. They stretched the second hose line to the floor above the fire (4th floor). This hose line was used to extinguish fire extending within the walls to the top floor. Ladder 58 was special called as an additional truck on the 10-75. Their bucket was used to remove Ms. Santiago from the third floor to the street.

The Bureau of Fire Investigation investigated the cause of the fire. It was determined that a 5-year old started the fire on the stove and tried to hide it under a bed.

Ms. Aracelis Santiago would later succumb to her injuries days after the fire. Captain Timothy Gallagher was removed to Jacobi Hospital and later the Cornell Burn Center by Rescue 3. He was hospitalized for two weeks with burns. He received a “Class I” award and the “Hugh Bonner Medal” for his actions on May 28, 1982. He was the “Daily News Hero of the Month” for May 1982.

The speed, aggressiveness and the tenacity of Captain Timothy Gallagher is legendary. Those who witnessed this act of extreme courage and heroism are able to describe it with great detail. It is firmly embedded in their memory. Nicknames in the Fire Service are very often telling. Captain Timothy Gallagher’s nickname was “Tough Timmy.” There may not be a more appropriate nickname ever assigned. God Bless Tim Gallagher.

Thanks to Captain Joe Principio L-58, D.C. Vincent Dunn (Ret.), Lieut. Joe Brosi (Ret.), D.C. Tom Kennedy (Ret.) Fr. James Murphy (Ret., Photographs), the FDNY Fire Records Unit, and Fr. Chris Roberto E-48 for their contributions to this essay.
Author’s Note: Captain Timothy Gallagher was appointed in 1965. He was cited for heroism on 10 previous occasions. He served his country as a U.S. Marine before joining the FDNY. He organized the first FDNY Hockey Team.

Author’s Note: Lieutenant Leo Fracassi joined the FDNY on January 1, 1947. Prior to joining the FDNY, he served under General George Patton in the 3rd Army, 11th Armored Division European Theater of Operations during World War II. He was awarded the Purple Heart and the European Campaign Medal with 3 battle stars. He was awarded a “Class II” award, a “Class III award”, the Mayor LaGuardia Medal, the Thomas E. Crimmins Medal, a “Class A” award and a “Class B” award while on the FDNY. He is the oldest recipient of the “Daily News Hero of the Month Award” for June 1984.

LESSONS LEARNED OR REINFORCED:

When entering a window from a ladder or a fire escape for an uncontrolled fire, remove the entire window. If conditions rapidly deteriorate, you want to be able to escape without your SCBA getting hung up on part of the window. “You want a whole hole to get out of, not a half a hole.” Rollover is a precursor to flashover. It appears as sporadic flashes of flame in the smoke near an opening (door, window, etc.). There is a better air mixture at these openings which causes the flash of fire. This is an indicator that flashover is about to occur. Rollover can trap firefighters, i.e.: when Rollover occurs at a trap door to a cellar, the flame from the rollover will fill the cellar opening. Rollover is one of the many things the firefighter at the door is looking for.
Flashover takes place after rollover. It is the sudden ignition of the fire gases within an area. “Flashover signals the end of any effective search or rescue operation: it signals the death of any trapped victim or firefighter inside the blazing room: it signals the end of portable extinguisher use as a means of fire control—a hose line is now required to contain the blaze: it signals the beginning of a structural collapse danger: it signals the end of the growth stage of the fire.” Safety and Survival on the Fire Ground, by Vincent Dunn, 1st ed., pp. 57

When flashover occurs with Firefighters inside, there is limited time for those directly exposed. It is generally accepted that a Firefighter can crawl 5 feet to safety when a flashover occurs. If the Firefighter has his/her personal protective equipment (PPE) on improperly, the 5 foot figure is reduced.

There are three phases of fire growth in traditional fire behavior. The growth (or incipient stage), the fully developed phase, and the decay stage. Once flashover happens, the fire is now in the fully developed phase. Rollover occurs near the end of the growth stage. The fire can move into the decay stage by fire department extinguishment, reduction of available oxygen or reduction in fuel available to burn.
There are no silver bullets in relation to ventilation and flashover. For example: You can prevent flashover by performing vertical ventilation to prevent heat build-up. Or, you can prevent flashover by not performing horizontal ventilation in a fire that is near flashover to starve it of oxygen. If you are in a position to vent, you must be able to predict what the effect of the ventilation will be. You must take into account the wind, the stage of the fire, if the fire is confined, and if the hose line is in place and has water.

When a Firefighter becomes lost or disoriented, this is usually the first event to being trapped by a flashover. In order to prevent being disoriented, have a search plan, do a size-up before entering a fire area. If the fire area is a large area, utilize a search rope and use “team search” procedures to make this tactic safer. Make good use of the Thermal Imaging Camera. Try to get an apartment layout by looking at floor level before the hose line is opened up.

The normal oxygen supply in air is 21%. At fires, once the oxygen supply in a fire area drops below 17%, there is a noticeable change in the perception and behavior of trapped occupants. The reduced oxygen supply combined with the inhalation of products of combustion impairs physical coordination and judgment.

A common human behavior at fires is “ambiguity reduction.” When people are under stress at fires, they seek to find uncomplicated ways of resolving their problems. They tend to do things they are familiar with to reduce the stress at a fire. This is what prompts children to stay in their rooms, hide under beds, or hide in closets rather than flee their home or apartment at a fire. This human behavior was shown when Ms. Santiago escaped from Capt. Gallagher and retreated back into her apartment. Another example of this behavior is common at hotel fires. Hotel guests have been known to stay in their rooms rather than trying to escape the fire.

Another common human behavior at fires is “altruistic behavior.” When presented with a high-anxiety situation (such as a fire), it produces an increased need for affiliation. Those who are in fire emergencies want to be with others and be able to communicate with them. Fire victims tend to gather together and seek refuge in rooms until they received instructions that it was safe to evacuate. This behavior was exhibited at the fire at 711 E. 183 Street by the group of 8-9 people
who were clustered together on the floor above the fire, not wanting to leave. This is known as a “convergence cluster.” These “clusters” serve to reduce the anxiety and stress in individuals in a threatening situation (such as a fire).

The Command Priorities at fires are: 1) Protection of life (civilian and Firefighter), 2) Fire Containment, 3) Property Protection.

All FDNY Firefighters have been issued personal harnesses. The hook of the personal harness is large enough to hook onto the rung of an aerial ladder or portable ladder. If operating on one of these ladders, use the hook of the personal harness to secure yourself.

When climbing down an aerial ladder or portable ladder, always face the ladder. If you are facing the ladder and you lose your footing, you will fall into the ladder. If facing away from the ladder and you lose your footing, you can fall off the ladder.

The order of priority for removal of fire victims is: 1) Interior Stairway 2) Horizontal Exits 3) Fire Escapes 4) Fire Department Ladders 5) Life Saving Rope.

When climbing standard fire escapes, do not place your foot in the center of the step. Place your foot near the stringer and make sure the step can support your weight. The most common type of fire escape collapse is step failure.

When climbing a standard fire escape ladder, always face the ladder.

When releasing a fire escape drop ladder, stand under the balcony. If the drop ladder comes out of its tracks, the one area it will not fall towards is under the balcony.

When re-setting a fire escape drop ladder, gain access to the lowest balcony by portable ladder or via an apartment that is served by that fire escape. Do not climb down a drop ladder and jump to the sidewalk after just re-setting the drop ladder.

October 21, 2015, a New York City police officer was fatally shot in a gunfight Tuesday night near FDR Drive in East Harlem. That officer was Officer Randolph Holder, 33, who died shortly after at Harlem Hospital, Police Commissioner William Bratton said. The suspect in the shooting, 30-year-old Tyrone Howard, was then taken into custody.

“He was killed in the line of duty, murdered,” Bratton said. “Tonight, he did what every other officer in the NYPD does, when the call comes, he ran toward danger. It was the last time he will respond to that call.”

Holder was a native of Guyana and a five-year veteran of the NYPD.