
Remembering our Veterans on Memorial Day 2016
October 4, 1965 was a sunny, early autumn day. Sunshine bathed the Bronx as people worked and carried on with their day. On this day however, firefighters in the Bronx would be challenged and tested.

At 1300 hours, Bronx fire dispatchers transmitted box 3390. Engines 79, 48, 81, 75 and Ladders 37, 46 and Battalion 15 were dispatched. (Historical Note: This was the alarm box assignment at the time. Ladder 56 was not formed until 1968 and was not located on Webster Ave. and E. 187 St. until August 12, 1981. Battalion 27 was not located in the Bronx until 1969. It was quartered with Engine 82 until June 1, 1978 when they moved to Engine 79.) When the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) arrived at the box, they saw a fire at 2734 Jerome Avenue at the corner of E. 196 St. The building was a one-story taxpayer. It was constructed out of brick and wood joist. It was a vacant building that had experienced a previous fire. Prior to the previous fire, the occupancy was a supermarket. Smoke was showing on the Jerome Avenue side of the building. A 10-75 was transmitted.

Engine 48 was commanded by Lieut. John Manning. He ordered his Chauffeur, Fr. Andy Dellacato, to take a hydrant on the East side of Jerome Avenue. Lieut. Manning went to the building to perform a size-up. He ordered his unit to stretch a 2 ½ inch hand line.
On Engine 48’s hand line was Nozzleman Fr. Richard Adams and Back-up Man Ken Harrington. The hose line was flaked out and the firefighters prepared themselves for their advance on the fire. Lieut. Manning ordered his Chauffeur to “start water”. Fr. Adams bled the air from the nozzle and they began their advance.

As Engine 48 started advancing the hose line into the store, suddenly, the members on the hose line began to feel heavy items striking their backs and shoulders through their turnout coats. They could hear people yelling. It was the front parapet wall beginning to collapse. The units had not been on the scene for five minutes.
The nozzle team of Engine 48 was buried underneath the bricks and mortar from the front parapet wall. Firefighters on the scene immediately rushed to their aid. They quickly removed the rubble that covered their fellow firefighters. The firefighters of Engine 48 were removed to Fordham Hospital after they were extricated from the rubble.
With the fire still raging and growing, Battalion 15 transmitted a 2nd alarm. The parapet wall collapsed around the perimeter of the building. The fire was involving the roof. Exposure 3 was a 6-story multiple dwelling. This multiple dwelling was in danger from the out-of-control fire. The orders were for everyone to stay out of the unstable building. Portable universal nozzles were set up by Engine Companies. Ladder Companies set up their apparatus so that their ladder pipes could be used for extinguishment.

Division 7 arrived at the fire. After obtaining a briefing from Battalion 15, a 3rd alarm was transmitted. Eventually, Chief of Department John T. O’Hagan arrived at the scene and took command. The fire was declared “under control” late that afternoon. In the rubble, the operating firefighters saw ominous signs of what happened hours earlier. One of Fr. Richard Adams boots was seen in the rubble.
And, Fr. Ken Harrington’s helmet was spotted resting between a show window sill and a beam. The news coming from Fordham hospital was discouraging. Fr. Richard Adams was removed from the fire scene unconscious from being struck in the head. He also suffered an injury to his spine, vertebrae L-4. He was paralyzed from the waist down. He spent 8 months in the hospital. He would require 3 years of painful physical therapy. Fr. Richard Adams progressed to the point that he could walk with the aid of two walking canes while he swung his hips from side to side.

Lieut. John Manning was struck on the head and he also suffered a dislocated hip. He was near Fr. Adams when the collapse happened. He and Fr. Adams took the brunt of the falling bricks. Lieut. Manning returned to full duty after an extensive recovery process. He was promoted to the rank of Captain in 1976. He retired in 1988.
Fr. Ken Harrington was the Back-up Man and was only a slight distance from Fr. Adams. However, that short distance was the determining factor in the severity of injury. Fr. Harrington suffered only minor injuries. He returned to duty in a short period of time to work in Engine 48.

Fr. Richard Adams was forced to retire. His son Kevin would eventually become an FDNY Firefighter. He was proud to make his way into the Fire Academy on Randall’s Island on February 16, 1999. He walked into the auditorium with the aid of two walking canes to see his son graduate from Proby School. His son Kevin is now assigned to Engine 48.


**Random Thoughts on Taxpayer Fires:**

**Parapet Wall Collapse:**

A parapet wall is a continuation of an exterior wall. Their stability is subject to many factors. One of such factors is if the parapets are tied into other parapet walls or is it a free-standing parapet wall. The free-standing parapet walls are less stable. Parapet walls can be extended around the entire perimeter of the building.
Often, two different types of brick are used on parapet walls. Finished glazed brick is often used on the exterior side of the building. This glazed brick does not absorb moisture as does ordinary brick. This ordinary brick is more susceptible to the “freeze-thaw” affect than the glazed brick. This “freeze-thaw” effect can erode the masonry.

As was the case in the fire on Jerome Avenue and E. 196 Street, the parapet wall collapsed around the perimeter of the building in one wave. The parapet walls were tied together with steel reinforcement rods and once the collapse started, it brought down the entire parapet.

The building at the corner of Jerome Avenue and E. 196 Street had a previous fire prior to the fire on October 4, 1965. This building was already in trouble. Fire had already weakened the beams. There may have already been partial collapses of structural members. Other structural elements would have to take up the load of the collapsed or weakened members. Building components support each other. The building is strongest when the roof is intact which ties the walls together. Once a wall is compromised or the roof is no longer intact, the building is in danger of a collapse.

Steel “I” beams are used as a “lintel” to span openings in masonry walls (show windows, doors, etc.). Steel is used because it has tensile strength. Masonry has no tensile strength. Parapet walls are constructed on top of the
steel “I” beams. Steel is affected by fire. It expands and weakens. A 100 foot steel “I” beam when heated to 1000 degrees F. will expand 9 ½ inches. This expansion is strong enough to push out bricks or push other structural members off their designed support.

Masonry walls are designed to be loaded in compression. Once a masonry wall is “out of plumb” the wall is no longer being loaded with an axial load (straight and true). The wall is in trouble. FDNY Special Operations units have surveyor’s transits. These transits can detect wall movement. However, the operator of the transit must be constantly looking at the device. In the absence of a surveyor’s transit, firefighters can be positioned at each corner of the building to “sight” along the wall to see if there is any movement in the wall.

Parapet walls may have ornamental cornices, or marquees, or signs, or awnings. These items pull on the wall in a way that it is no longer loaded axially.
When these items are present on the building, an earlier than normal collapse can be anticipated.

When a collapse zone is set up, anticipate a 90 degree angle wall collapse with bricks bouncing out further than the height of the building. In addition to the vertical collapse zone, the horizontal collapse zone must be considered. Anticipate the entire length of the parapet collapsing. Barrier tape should be used to identify the collapse zone. Firefighters must respect the collapse zone. The sidewalk is always in the collapse zone.

In visiting the site of the collapse at Jerome Avenue and E. 196 Street, it was discovered that the fire building was not torn down. The building was rehabilitated. The parapet wall was put back in place. It can be seen on the E. 196 Street side of the building that the new parapet wall was constructed of concrete block. The building now has an automatic sprinkler system.

Any kind of a major fire in a store, anticipate fire spreading to other stores and the cockloft.

**ENGINE COMPANY OPERATIONS:**

For medium or heavy fire conditions in a store, 2 ½ inch hand lines should be used for the initial attack. The reach and the volume of water in the 2 1/2 inch hand line is needed at these fires. These hand lines can be reduced to 1 ¾ inch after the initial attack.
Many of these buildings are equipped with sprinkler systems. Generally speaking, each sprinkler head discharges 20 gallons per minute (GPM). The sprinkler system Siamese must be supplied after the initial hose line is in place and operating.

Most Engine Companies are equipped with Bresnan Distributors for cellar fires. When these appliances are deployed, they must be protected by another hand line.

If a hose line is advanced down into a cellar fire, a protection hose line should be stretched to the cellar entrance. This is the point where rollover will occur. This back-up hose line will protect the cellar entrance and any extending fire coming from the cellar.

Sometimes at taxpayer fires, hose lines are ordered to the rear to make access or protect exposures. Company and Chief Officers should be aware of the possibility of opposing hose lines. Supervision of these hose lines is essential.

The life hazard in these buildings can vary. The store may have many more patrons near holidays or special promotions for the store. After hours, these stores may have people sleeping in the back room of the store.
As these buildings are not compartmented, the use of search ropes is highly recommended.

It is important to place portable ladders to the roof early in the fire. A good location for the portable ladders is the wall between buildings. This will help incoming units and Chief Officers define where the fire building ends and the next building begins.

The Roof Firefighter should transmit the following information to the Incident Commander: Size and shape of the building; Location and volume of fire or smoke; exposures; presence of signs, machinery, etc.; if there is any indication of a cockloft fire.

Once a Firefighter is assigned to cut locks on closed steel roll-down gates, it is preferable that this firefighter continue to cut locks on the rest of the closed roll-down gates. This will facilitate forcible entry into the exposed stores.

It may be necessary to use portable ladders in the rear of these buildings. In such cases, portable ladders can be pulled up to the roof by hand or by rope. Tower Ladders can also be used to bring portable ladders to the roof level to be used in the rear.

There must be a heavy emphasis of Tower Ladder placement in front of the taxpayer. Aerial ladders should not occupy the front of the building. A properly positioned Tower Ladder can cover a 100 foot frontage of a taxpayer.
At taxpayer store fires, firefighters may be tasked with shutting down utilities in the cellar. To accomplish this, two mask-equipped members must be used. Carbon Monoxide can migrate downward into the cellar during the extinguishment process. Pockets of heavy concentrations of Carbon Monoxide can be expected.

When forcing steel roll-down gates, check the door to the store before forcing it. Many store owners leave the front door unlocked. Their thinking must be that if someone can get through the steel roll-down gates, then the front door will not stop them.

Do not break the front show windows without a charged hose line in place.

Emphasis must be placed on vertical ventilation in order to limit the horizontal spread of fire and facilitate the hose line advance into the fire area. Skylights and scuttles and their returns should be opened first. There are instances that vertical ventilation is not possible. If the building has trusses or has gypsum planking, do not operate on the roof.

Deputy Chief Jay Jonas, Division 7


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