

# JOHN F. CONNELL MEDAL

Captain  
JOSEPH A. CONIGLIO  
Engine Company 231

*Appointed to the FDNY on April Associate degree in Fire Society and the Company Resides in Riverhead, New 27; Jeffrey, 25; and Jody, 25.*



*30,1960. Served in the US Army from 1954 to 1957. Science from N.Y.C.C.C. Member of the Holy Name Officers Association. Cited on five previous occasions. York with wife, Janice. Father of four: Denise, 28; Steven.*

**S**unday, May 14 had been a routine tour for Captain Joseph Coniglio, a 29-year veteran of the Department with five previous citations under his belt, and his fellow firefighters at Brooklyn's Engine Company 231. It was a mild spring evening. But, as is so often the case in the war against fire, this proved to be merely the proverbial calm before the storm.

The alarm for Box 1671 was transmitted at 2034 hours reporting a fire at 251 Osborn Street in Brownsville. Joseph's was the first company to arrive at the scene, a six-story apartment with flames consuming a fifth-floor apartment. While his men began stretching a hose line up the interior stairs, he raced ahead of them to the fire floor.

Upon reaching the fifth floor, Joseph encountered three Housing Authority police officers huddled in the public hallway at the open door of the fire apartment. The trio informed him that there were three residents trapped in the rearmost room of the apartment, the bedroom. From his vantage point at the entrance, Joseph could see that the fire and smoke were blowing from the kitchen and across the interior hallway that leads to the bedroom, preventing the escape of the occupants.

*Awarded since 1983 in honor of the late Dr. John F. Connell, adopted in 1923 by Engine 2 in what was then Hell's Kitchen. With encouragement of firefighters who became his substitute fathers, he received his medical degree. He attended thousands of fires, treating firefighters and civilians without a thought of personal recognition. Endowed by his son, the late John F. Connell Jr., and first awarded in 1983, the award continues from Rosemary Connell, the widow of John F. Connell Jr. Included is a \$250 award.*

professionalism engendered by a long and distinguished career with the FDNY. It is with pride that the Department presents the Dr. John F. Connell Medal to Captain Joseph A. Coniglio. —ML

Quickly donning the facepiece of his breathing apparatus and dropping to the floor to avoid the intense heat, he began to crawl down the hall. As he approached the flames obstructing the middle of the hallway, Joseph received a report on his Handie-Talkie that one of the victims, a young woman, was threatening to jump. In the face of this development, he knew that a single second's delay could spell the difference between life and death. Although the hose line was not yet in position to protect him, he stood up in the searing heat and sprinted down the hall into the rear bedroom.

Inside the bedroom, Joseph saw Desiree Isaac attempting to follow through with her intention; she was halfway out of the window when he dashed across the room and pulled her back inside. Isaac was hysterical, and she made another attempt to jump, necessitating restraint.

Having removed the woman from immediate danger, Joseph was able to turn his attention to the other two victims, the woman's two young daughters. Because all three victims were suffering from smoke inhalation, he removed his facepiece and shared his compressed air with the three of them.

Sometimes bravery involves calmness and

patience. Nearly three decades of battling fires had taught him that in his present situation the best thing to do was wait with the victims until his company charged the line and began to knock down the fire. Fortunately, it wasn't long before they were able to do so, at which point Joseph removed four-year-old Shawntaye Isaac and informed Firefighters Michael Galgano and Daniel Brandenberger of Ladder Company 120 of the other two victims' location. All three victims required a day of hospitalization for smoke inhalation but suffered no permanent injury. Joseph's actions in the face of an extremely hazardous fire situation prevented a 20-year-old woman from plunging to almost certain death and averted severe-if not fatal-injuries to her two