

Raleigh Firefighter Loses Leg, 1958

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On February 18, 1958, Raleigh firefighter Claude W. Johnson broke his leg on duty. As that day's *Raleigh Times* article reported, he fell on ice at the scene of a house fire at 407 Folk Street. Fire Chief Jack Keeter said "he jumped a fence and fell on the ice." He added that Johnson "was in satisfactory condition, but would be in the hospital for some time." Johnson was admitted to Rex Hospital, records a notation in a Ladies Auxiliary scrapbook. Five fire companies responded to the 6:45 a.m. blaze, which was reported by fire department switchboard operator Roy High, while he was r

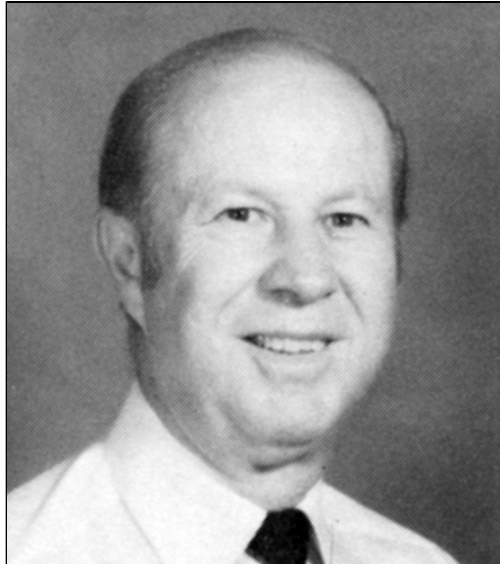
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An undated newspaper story said Joh

lost about four inches

re above *Raleigh* amputation. He

lost about four inches of his leg when the wheel caught, was required to press his stopped emergency to the hospital. Johnson had been a member of the department for three years, the article reported, and was a Rolesville native.¹ Officials were quoted as saying he'd be transferred to the fire department's switchboard.² Johnson retired on March 30, 1976. That's four years after the Raleigh and Wake County Emergency Communications Center assumed call-taking and dispatching duties.³ This portrait was taken in 1984.



¹Legeros records the hire date of Claude Johnson as September 16, 1956. The above news article isn't dated. The amputation may have happened in 1959, several months after the injury.

²[Driver Vernon J. Smith](#) also lost his leg, in an apparatus accident on November 14, 1952. He worked in light-duty roles as his health permitted, including as dispatcher. He died of his injuries on March 10, 1956.

³Roy High, mention in the first paragraph, was a former firefighter. He was injured in an accident involving the auxiliary truck and a Greyhound bus on September 11, 1947. High and Firefighter H. S. Stephenson were both thrown from the vehicle, and sustained injuries. As the story goes, High never returned to line duty, and remained a dispatcher the rest of his career.