

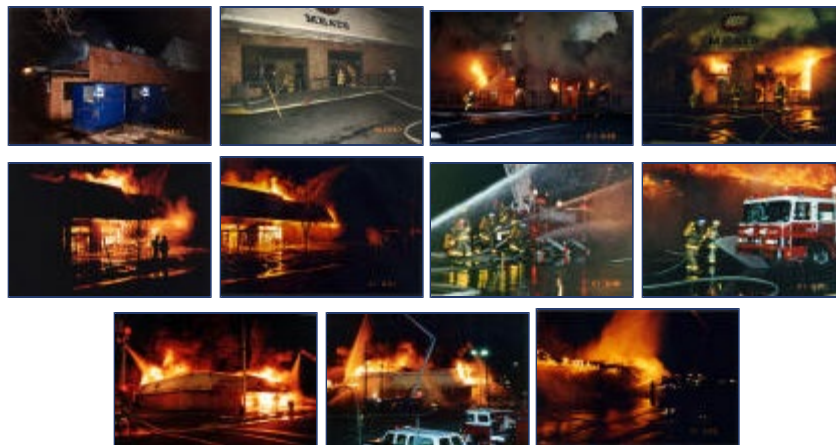
Legeros Fire Blog Archives 2006-2015 - *UPDATE #2: IGA* « *Raleigh Fire Apparatu...* » *Fully Involved on Oak...*
Grocery Store Fire - December 20, 1992

UPDATE #2: IGA Grocery Store Fire - December 20, 1992

09/17/12 797 W, 12 I - + 9 - 8

September 18

How about some pictures from Jeff Harkey, then a member of the fire department's photo unit. Have attempted to display these in chronological order, kinda sorta. Click to enlarge:



September 16

Extensive update to the incident description below, include correcting the times. Added narrative details, and included log book entries from most of the responding companies and units.

September 2

Doing some work this morning on our Raleigh Fire Department Centennial History Book. (Have you [ordered yours?](#)) This stunning image is one of two that'll appear on the front of the dust-cover. That's the IGA Grocery Store at 718 N. Person Street. Three alarms for that one. *News & Observer* photographer John Rottet took the photo. Click to enlarge:



John Rottet/News & Observer photo

What Happened

Here's an incident description. (Memo to self, also update my [historical timelines](#)) Sectors are 1 (front), 2 (inside), 3 (rear), 4 (left), 5 (right), 6 (roof), 7 (staging). Corrections and expansions welcome.

First Alarm

- IGA Grocery Store at 718 N. Person Street.
- E3, E7, T1, R7, C52 dispatched at 11:34 p.m.
- Engine 3 arriving.
- Smoke showing from rear of store around room-mounted air-condition units upon arrival.
- C52 records heavy smoke conditions throughout and all around building.
- Engine 3 declares Code 3, results in automatic dispatch of second alarm, and other operational steps.

Second Alarm

- E4, E11, T11, R6, C51 dispatched at 11:39 p.m.
- Crews attempt to force door in rear of building.
- Two crews (with two hand lines) enter front of store at approximately 11:55 p.m.
- Engine 3 supplies hand lines to front door.
- Engine 11 supplies hand lines to Sector 5 (right of building).
- Attack crew notices ceiling tiles on floor indicating fire overheard.
- Volume of fire grows and moves to front of store.
- Two crews inside unable to extinguish fire.
- Command changes to aerial operations using three aerials.
- Fire begins showing [outside of building?] at approximately 11:53 p.m.
- Truck 1 (snorkel) positions to Sector 4 (left of building), supplied by Engine 7, and operates master stream onto roof.

Third Alarm

- E16, E6, T16 dispatched at 12:07 a.m.
- Crews ordered to withdraw from building at approximately 12:10 a.m.
- Additional truck companies establish master streams at front and right side of building.
- Engine 6 supplies Truck 16 for about two hours, from hydrant at corner of Franklin and Blount streets.
- Hand lines required to cool apparatus from radiant heat.
- Mansard-style canopy on three sides of building becomes fully involved and collapses into parking lot.

Rescue

- Rescue 7 arrives on first alarm, helps with fire suppression. Notes Rescue 6 set up rehab.
- Rescue 6 arrives on second alarm. Assists with entry, suppression, overhaul, rehab.

Continued at bottom of post

Other Photos

There have been others that we've seen, such as [this one by Jeff Harkey](#), then a member of the department's photo unit. Believe that photo appeared in Firehouse magazine. And here are [three more News & Observer images](#). Scroll down the page. Don't have photo credits for those.

Other Fires

This was the last (or one of the last) grocery store fires (fully-involved) in the city. There have been earlier ones. Piggly Wiggly on Fairview Road in 1988 (three alarms), for starters. [Read more](#) about Raleigh's bigger fires.

What other grocery stores fires are remembered around here?

—

What Happened, Continued

Leaving the Scene

- T1 in service, 2:08 a.m.
- E4 in service, 2:15 a.m.
- E16, T16 in service at 3:17 a.m.
- R6 in service, 3:36 a.m.
- E11 in service, 3:54 a.m.
- E6 in service at 3:57 a.m.
- T11 in service, 4:28 a.m.
- R7 in service, 5:11 a.m.
- E7 in service, 8:51 a.m.

Relief Companies

- C53 fills in at Station 1, 11:45 p.m.
- E13 reports to Station 11, 11:52 p.m.
- E14 reports to scene for overhaul, 3:01 a.m.
- E1 arrives on scene for relief, 3:08 a.m.
- E1 fills in for Engine 3 at Station 3, 3:25 a.m.
- E14 fills in for Engine 7 at Station 7, 3:45 a.m.
- E13 back at Station 1, 3:54 a.m.
- C53 takes command on scene, 5:55 a.m.
- E14 back at Station 14, 8:00 a.m.

Day After

- E3, T1, R7, C52 return to fire scene.
- Other companies to training center (E7, E11), for hose washing.
- Crews do not re-enter until following day.
- Store and contents are total loss.
- Five sections of five-inch hose and a pick-head axe from Engine 3 are lost.
- Two two-inch nozzles from Engine 3 are damaged.
- Fire units released from fire scene at 5:30 p.m. Police provide security.

Causalities, Units

- Three firefighters are injured and treated on the scene for smoke inhalation.
- E3, E7, T1, R7, C52, E4, E11, T11, R6, C51, E6, E16, T16, E1 relief, E14 relief, C1, C2, C3, C10.

Investigation

- Investigation continues on second day after fire, December 22.
- Engine 13 and Z. Overton from Station 1 assist Car 198, that morning and early afternoon.
- Area of origin narrowed to ceiling space in rear of store.
- Due to extensive damage, source not identified.
- Arson ruled out.

Millers IGA in Nashville,NC burnt in the early to mid 1980s. Fire was intentionally set .during a break in. A second fire at the same location ignited several days later when the produce which had been piled up at the back door during cleanup went through a "heat" and ignited. (spontaneous combustion ?)

Galax,v - 09/18/12 - 11:23

Mike,
I noticed in the pictures several firefighters are wearing blue helmets, what rank did this identify?

WATSON - 09/18/12 - 16:31

Blue at the time was worn by Rescue guys.

Silver - 09/18/12 - 16:57

Check out the white helmet with a line. You don't see that anymore!

RescueRanger - 09/18/12 - 22:13

The white helmet is Cmdr. Tommy Gattis (retired) – he was the Chief of Training/Safety Officer (Car 10 at that time). Yes, RFD at one time had the rank of Commander and Lt. Commander (at KTC)!

A.C. Rich - 09/18/12 - 23:39

Hey Chief Rich, is the ol' word 'round the firehouse kitchen table true, that those positions were sort of "made-up"?

Silver - 09/19/12 - 01:32

If I recall at the time it was Cmdr. Gattis and Lt.Cmdr. Dunn at KTC?

Chris - 09/19/12 - 09:36

Man that Gattis could run all day

Rob Mitchell - 09/19/12 - 11:54

This is a timely discussion, as the centennial history book committee is reviewing ranks for the retiree portrait pages. (This very limited edition will feature the rather remarkable inclusion of every retiree since the beginning, minus a dozen or two "not pictured." About 350 or 360 portraits!)

Commander was both a title, and an official position in the Raleigh Fire Department. The position was created in FY74 as Fire Rescue Services Commander. It existed until FY85. (But is missing in the FY78 budget, either not approved that fiscal year, or perhaps inadvertently omitted from the budget docs.)

Harold D. Jones (1952-1982) held that position, and was called Commander during his last years. Who held the position after Jones retired, until the position ceased to exist in June 1985? Don't know.

How did the Commander position come to be created?

In FY74, two other positions were also added: Fire Rescue [Services] Officer (six) and Fire Rescue Services Officer II (seven). These probably or certainly corresponded to the personnel that staffed the two rescue trucks, plus perhaps a training officer. The position of Commander was probably the program head, or chief training officer for the rescue units/program.

This is a couple years before to the first EMT classes, but perhaps was created with an eye toward those.

In FY73 and earlier, only the Fire Rescue [Services] Officer position existed. Two were funded. There was only one rescue unit, though three shifts. (The third platoon was created in September 1970.)

The Fire Rescue [Services] Officer position was created in either FY61 or FY62. The fire department's rescue squad started operating in 1953.

The Fire Rescue Services Officer II position last existed in FY77. The Fire Rescue [Services] Officer position last existed in FY79. The Fire Rescue Services Commander position, as noted above, last existed in FY85.

What about J. Thomas Gattis (1969-1999)? In his later years, he was called Commander. The position didn't exist in the budget, but the title was used. His final position was Fire Services Manager. His role was Training Chief. But he was called Commander until the time of his retirement, if memory serves.

Clear as mud?

Legeros - 09/19/12 - 21:24

Great rundown, thanks. So I guess Commander Gattis retired at the rank of District (now Battalion) Chief but was called "Commander"?

Silver - 09/20/12 - 01:29

Not quite. He retired as Fire Services Manager. It was a on-off title/position.

Legeros - 09/20/12 - 08:24

Mike is correct. It was a situation where RFD management placed who they felt were the most appropriate persons into the positions; however they were not at the position's rank. Hence the titles Commander for a District Chief's position and Lt. Commander for the EMS Coordinator/Training Capt's position. Tramp later promoted to Captain while at KTC. (I believe) Commander was used as a title because: (1) it had been used before, and (2) the existing Class A uniform used three stripes for a Dist. Chief (and also three crossed bugles); therefore the equivalency in Navy rank would be Commander(?)

A.C. Rich - 09/20/12 - 16:52

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preferred)

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What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?

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Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

Small print: All html tags except and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.