

FEARLESS BOSTON FIREMEN

Who Take All Kinds of Chances

A SERIES OF PERSONAL STORIES

CAPT WILLIAM F. FIELD ENGINE 28

"Many thrilling moments are experienced during a service of 21 years in the department, particularly in the down-town congested district. One incident which I don't have to recall, as it is engraven on my mind, occurred at the Smith-Patterson fire in 1897, corner of Summer and Hawley sts.

"Three alarms were given. I was a hoseman on Engine 26, the first company at the fire. We groped our way along the first floor, closely followed by men of Engine Company 7. Our aim was to reach the open basement stairs to attack the fire.

"Both companies were led by the late Chief Egan. When we were about half way down the stairs, through choking smoke, a sheet of flame suddenly swept across the basement directly towards us. The smoke and hot air chased all hands back up the stairs. I fell exhausted in the rush. Later I regained my senses on the sidewalk.

"I owe my narrow escape to the late Chief John Egan, whom, I learned, dragged me along the floor to the door, where he fell into the arms of members of Engine 25.

"In the fall of 1908 I was lieutenant on Engine 3 at the St Augustine Parochial School fire in South Boston. While working our line of hose in the rear part of the building a section of the roof fell, carrying a portion of a floor with it, under which our company's line was working.

"Capt Murphy, later district chief, now retired, saw fire gaining to the rear of us. We shifted to attack it, and it proved a lucky shift for us, as more of the roof collapsed, carrying about two-thirds of the floor above us with it. We



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were enveloped in smoke. Fortunately we were guided to the open air by members of another company and later resumed our work in a safer position. That incident is indelibly written in my memory.

"I was lieutenant on Engine 3, the first company to reach the Arcadia lodging house fire, where the lives of over 20 poor persons were lost. Flames were tearing through the building on our arrival. Knowing what it contained was nerve-racking to say the least. Much has been said and written of that sad holocaust, and I hope I will never be an eye-witness to such a sight again. Still, firemen have to face the unexpected in their daily occupation."

Capt Field was appointed to the department in September, 1892, and assigned to Engine 26, where he remained until promoted to lieutenant, May 13, 1903, and assigned to Engine Company 2. He was promoted to captain Sept 1, 1915, and assigned to Engine 28.