

A Firefighter's Mettle

Many years ago, a huge oil refinery caught fire. Flames shot hundreds of feet into the air and the sky filled with grimy smoke. The heat was so intense that firefighters parked a block away, hoping for the heat to die down before they attacked the inferno. Instead, the fire raged ever closer to a nearby row of tanks.

Suddenly, a fire truck came careening down the street. With its brakes screeching, it hit the curb directly in front of the blaze. The firefighters jumped out and began to battle the blaze. Inspired by this act, the other firefighters drove closer and joined in the fight. As a result of their cooperative effort, the fire was brought under control in the nick of time.

Those who witnessed these events decided to honor the man who had driven the lead fire truck so fearlessly to the brink of the blaze. In preparing for the awards ceremony, the mayor said, "Captain, we want to honor you for your fantastic act. You prevented the loss of property, perhaps even the loss of life. Is there something we can give you as a token of our appreciation?"

The captain replied without hesitation, "Your Honor, a new set of brakes would be dandy!"

Unusual circumstances oftentimes spawn remarkable acts of courage. Generally speaking, there is little time to consider when a valiant response is needed. People react out of the character that defines them.

Acts of heroism all begin the same way: one person is willing to try when all others are not.

--Beecher Hunter