

Galasso, as the second man in pursuit, exited an adjoining window head first in similar fashion falling onto a portable ladder while burning from head to toe.

Fire Fighter George Jackson, a powerful man of great strength, was now alone in the hall and he met the beast head on. Jackson bore the full force of the rolling fire as he continued to move in the direction of egress while burning all the way. His injuries however would not permit him to continue. He collapsed on the floor just several feet from the window.

Engine Company 7, responding second due on the box, made their normal six-minute run from quarters and arrived at the scene in just over four minutes. They quickly caught another hydrant and supplied Engine 10 while stretching the second line to the fire. The rescue company also moving on the box, responded from their uptown station and arrived seconds behind the second due engine.

Rescue 1, under the command of Captain Anthony Dowidowicz, stretched a third line to cover the search for Fire Fighter Jackson. Rescue's Fire Fighter Ronald Boyle ascended a portable ladder and used the 1½-inch line to darken visible fire on the second floor before entering the window. Boyle found Jackson on the floor inside the window where he collapsed, slumped among furniture. He was critically burned about the face and hands but was semi-conscious. In heavy smoke, Fire Fighter Boyle quickly removed his mask and placed it over Jackson's face to "buddy breathe" with his brother until help arrived.

Engine Company 7, under the command of Captain Robert Scarduzio, pushed into the building with their line and knocked the fire down on the first floor. They advanced up the staircase, killing residual fire as they went, and reached Fire Fighters Boyle and Jackson in seconds. In the interim, Battalion Chief Szatkowski special called an additional engine

to the fire to replace the fire control efforts of those units diverted by the rescue operation. Engine Company 3 responded on the special call and assisted units in overhauling the fire building after completing a secondary search.

Fire Fighter Jackson was removed via the interior stairway and transported by EMS to the Cooper Hospital Trauma Unit behind Captain Young and Fire Fighter Galasso. The entire ordeal had taken less than ten minutes.

Captain William Young was admitted to the Trauma Unit in serious condition suffering from severe smoke inhalation and first and second degree burns. His condition was upgraded to stable some three days later and he was transferred to a regular care ward. He was released from the hospital a week later and returned to active fire duty one month after the incident.

Fire Fighter Daniel Galasso was immediately transferred from the Cooper Hospital Trauma Unit to the Crozer-Chester Burn Unit by EMS ambulance, suffering from second and third degree burns to 24 percent of his body. Fire Fighter Galasso spent an arduous period of two months in the burn unit recuperating from his serious injuries. After numerous operations and skin graft surgery, he was finally discharged a

week before Christmas 1990, and continues to receive daily physical therapy on an out-patient basis at an area rehabilitation center.

Fire Fighter George Jackson was also immediately transferred from the Cooper Hospital Trauma Unit to the Crozer-Chester Burn Unit by medivac helicopter, suffering from extreme smoke inhalation, respiratory injury and second and third degree burns to 38 percent of his body. Fire Fighter Jackson's condition was so severe that in the course of the first six weeks following his admission, the burn unit almost lost him on as many different occasions. In the course of his treatment for a variety of injury related problems, Fire Fighter Jackson entered a coma where he has remained for the past two months. During the first week of January 1991, the burn unit staff reported that Fire Fighter Jackson continued to show marked improvement in his extremely long road to recovery. His infections have subsided, his skin grafts have proven successful, and his burn injuries continue to heal well. As of this writing (January 10, 1991), he remains in a coma and his condition continues to be listed as serious but stable.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, the presiding fire administration in the city of Camden organized the services of a critical incident stress debriefing for all members who were directly involved in the incident itself, followed by the participation of all other members who were indirectly affected by the injury of their brothers. The stress debriefing effort was, in fact, the very first time in the 120-year history of the department that such services were afforded to the rank and file.

The office of the Chief Fire Marshal classified the official cause of fire as careless use of cooking appliance. The families of the injured members continue to keep their private vigils of hope and prayer each and every day since the tragedy. The Camden Fire Department continues to mourn the injuries of its brothers and the city of Camden continues to lead the state of New Jersey in the per capita incident of fire.



Galasso