



## Hugh Bonner Medal Honor Legion Medal

### FIREFIGHTER THOMAS J. FEE

*SQUAD COMPANY 270 (ASSIGNED)  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (DETAILED)*

October 29, 2012, 2000 hours, Box 1377, Queens

*Appointed to the FDNY on November 22, 1998. Brothers: FF Francis Fee, Jr. is assigned to Rescue 1, and Lieutenant John T. Fee, II, is assigned to Ladder 158. Member of the Emerald Society and the FDNY Lacrosse Team. Resides in Freeport, Long Island.*

The night of Hurricane Sandy was one that we all remember, some because we were in it and some because we watched it on television. There are 13 New Yorkers—including a pregnant woman and several children—who will never forget it, nor will they forget FF Thomas Fee, Squad 270, who played a major role in their survival.

On that night, October 29, 2012, FF Fee was assigned to Swift Water Team 6, consisting of a spare pumper and a boat for water emergencies. The raging storm and rising flood waters put numerous people in jeopardy and, as a result, Swift Water Team 6 was having a busy night. There were 80-mph winds and the storm surge had risen to five feet in some areas. The flood waters raced like an angry river through the streets, carrying all sorts of debris floating on its surface, as well as hidden beneath the surface. The overhead power lines were in danger of falling into the waters below, adding yet another level of danger to rescuers' efforts.

By 2000 hours, FF Fee already had put in more than a day's work; he had helped to remove several trapped people from buildings and pulled others out of the raging, chest-high flood waters. At that time, the members of Swift Water Team 6 encountered several buildings engulfed in flames on Rockaway Beach Boulevard and 114th Street. The hurricane-force winds drove the fire toward 13 trapped people, who had taken refuge on the roof of a building next to those on fire. Forced to the roof by the rising water, engulfed in smoke and facing an advancing, wind-driven fire, they were understandably panicked. In desperation, two of them jumped into the water. One of the jumpers was on fire. Quick action by Swift Water Team 6 members pulled both into the boat before they were swept away by the angry waters.

Quick action was needed to rescue the remaining trapped people. The fire threatened to engulf the building that was their refuge. Dressed in a Mustang suit—a neoprene water survival suit—FF Fee climbed from the boat and onto a security gate. Then, using a knife to cut foot holes into an awning, he climbed up the awning and

onto the roof where the waiting group of frightened victims huddled.

Despite a language barrier, FF Fee calmed them and managed to lower two victims down to the waiting boat. The fire's progress was making the roof untenable and the rescuer knew he had to get the remaining people off the roof and out of the fire's path. There was no time to lower any more of them. Fire had spread to the surface of the roof they were on and the wind-driven smoke made breathing and seeing difficult.

Using his ingenuity, FF Fee obtained a door from the building and bridged the gap to an adjoining building, exposure #2, with the door. He then safely shepherded the victims across the alley, through a window and into the rear apartment of the adjoining building. Using the same door as a barrier, he tried to block the window, hoping to stop or at least delay the fire's extension through it and into their new refuge.

FF Edward Morrison, Rescue 2, forced entry into the building from the flooded street and ascended the stairs, joining FF Fee and the trapped civilians in the rear apartment. The rapidly extending fire now blocked their egress to the street below and their position in the apartment was becoming untenable.

With the help of FF Morrison, FF Fee acquired another door and used it to create a bridge back to the front apartment in the original building. The fire was spreading in the building, but FFs Fee and Morrison were able to evacuate the group down the stairs and out of the building into the waiting boat. The building then became engulfed in fire.

FF Fee, despite being equipped for water rescue as opposed to structural firefighting, saw the imminent peril that threatened 13 panicked civilians and took quick and decisive action to save lives. Surrounded by danger—a rapidly spreading, wind-driven fire, flooding and hurricane-force winds—FF Thomas Fee risked his life to save 13 people from the double threat of fire and water. For his initiative, determination and bravery, he is presented with the Hugh Bonner Medal and Honor Legion Medal.—FM



The brothers Fee—Lieutenant John, Ladder 158, and FF Thomas, Squad 270.