

House Fire



By- John Albers

Thursday evening at 9PM, I was tucking my younger son in bed when my radio dispatched the report of a house fire. The first unit on scene announced a “fully engulfed structure fire” while I was still in route which quickly magnified the intensity of the situation. We soon learned the family was safe and out of the house. Upon my arrival flames were visible from the windows, eaves and roof. Additional resources from Milton and Johns Creek were also dispatched to assist Alpharetta’s bravest.

As luck would have it, I was still wearing a suit. I quickly took off my tie while putting on my fire gear, but there will be serious attention needed from the dry cleaner on my favorite navy blue suit. My adrenaline quickly went into overdrive while putting on my airpack, helmet and bunker gear. With tools in hand, I was carrying over 100 pounds more than normal and ready to work.

I was quickly put to work getting a second hydrant flowing water and then up on a ladder truck. Like the cavalry, we attacked the flames with all of our resources. The logistics are simply astonishing with our army of trucks, hoses and people. The intense fire was clearly no match for us. I had a unique view from the bucket of Alpharetta Truck #3 extended over 100 feet from the street with a deluge of water pouring onto the burning roof. After the large flames were beaten down, we got on the roof and cut a hole for ventilation of smoke and hot gases to protect those below. The roof was steep and with another ladder hooked at the peak, two of us stepped off the big bucket to complete our task with chainsaw in hand.

Later the assignment of finding hot spots inside the house and salvaging the family’s possessions was our priority. It is difficult to describe the feeling of seeing someone’s home ravaged by a fire. I had to quickly remind myself it can all be replaced and everyone is fine. The cold weather was a blessing at first, but rapidly the roads and hoses were getting slippery with ice. When I took off my airpack, it was encased like an ice cube.

Three Gatorades and a cup of coffee sure hit the spot as we took a few minutes to rejuvenate and rotated in fresh crews. I arrived home after 1:00AM Friday morning sweaty and smoky. After 20 years of being a fireman, I was again thankful nobody was injured and humbled to serve with my fellow firefighters.

After cleaning up, finishing some work and home items, I called it a night about 4AM. After 90 minutes of sleep it was time to wake up and get back to work. I must admit, my muscles are sore and I am

feeling my age. However, I stand ready to use my God-given talents to respond to the call for help when needed.