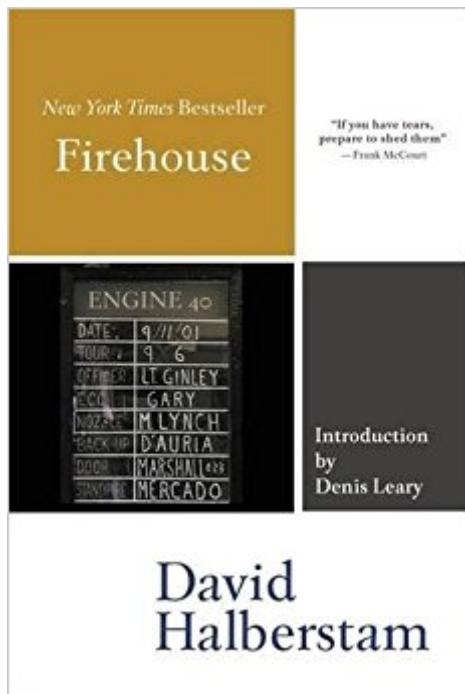


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# Firehouse



## Synopsis

More than 6 years after his death David Halberstam remains one of this country's most respected journalists and revered authorities on American life and history in the years since WWII. A Pulitzer Prize-winner for his ground-breaking reporting on the Vietnam War, Halberstam wrote more than 20 books, almost all of them bestsellers. His work has stood the test of time and has become the standard by which all journalists measure themselves."In the firehouse, the men not only live and eat with each other, they play sports together, go off to drink together, help repair one another's houses, and, most important, share terrifying risks; their loyalties to each other must, by the demands of the dangers they face, be instinctive and absolute."So writes David Halberstam, one of America's most distinguished reporters and historians, in this stunning New York Times bestselling book about Engine 40, Ladder 35, located on the West Side of Manhattan near Lincoln Center. On the morning of September 11, 2001, two rigs carrying thirteen men set out from this firehouse: twelve of them would never return.Firehouse takes us to the epicenter of the tragedy. Through the kind of intimate portraits that are Halberstam's trademark, we watch the day unfold--the men called to duty while their families wait anxiously for news of them. In addition, we come to understand the culture of the firehouse itself: why gifted men do this; why, in so many instances, they are eager to follow in their fathers' footsteps and serve in so dangerous a profession; and why, more than anything else, it is not just a job, but a calling.This is journalism-as-history at its best, the story of what happens when one small institution gets caught in an apocalyptic day. Firehouse is a book that will move readers as few others have in our time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thirteen men from Engine 40, Ladder 35 firehouse initially responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; only one survived. Located near Lincoln Center on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, the firehouse was known for its rich tradition and strong leadership. This gripping book details the actions of the 13 men on that horrific day and the heartbreakin aftermath--the search for the bodies, the efforts of their families to deal with overwhelming grief, and the guilt and conflicting emotions of the surviving members of the firehouse. The book is also about the men themselves and the tight bond and sense of duty and honor that held them together. David Halberstam does a masterful job of illustrating the inner workings of a firehouse, with its traditions, routines, and complex social structure that in many ways resembles a "vast extended second family--rich, warm, joyous, and supportive, but on occasion quite edgy as well, with all the inevitable tensions brought on by so many forceful men living so closely together over so long a period of time." He also explains why so many men choose this life despite the high risk, relatively low pay, and physical and emotional demands of the job. Halberstam and his family live three and a half blocks from Engine 40, Ladder 35, and he writes of these 13 men in such a loving and precise way that he could be describing members of his own clan. Deeply felt and emotional, Firehouse is a tribute to these decent, honorable, and heroic men and a celebration of their selflessness not only as firefighters but also as husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, and friends. --Shawn Carkonen --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Halberstam's gripping chronicle of a company of Manhattan firemen on September 11 is moving without ever becoming grossly sentimental an impressive achievement, though readers have come to expect as much from the veteran historian and journalist (author, most recently, of *War in a Time of Peace*). Engine 40, Ladder 35, a firehouse near Lincoln Center, sent 13 men to the World Trade Center, 12 of whom died. Through interviews with surviving colleagues and family members, Halberstam pieces together the day's events and offers portraits of the men who perished from rookie Mike D'Auria, a former chef who liked to read about Native American culture, to Captain Frank Callahan, greatly respected by the men for his dedication and exacting standards, even if he was rather distant and laconic (when someone performed badly at a fire he would call them into his office and simply give him "The Look," a long, excruciating stare: "Nothing needed to be said the offender was supposed to know exactly how he had transgressed, and he always did"). The book

also reveals much about firehouse culture the staunch code of ethics, the good-natured teasing, the men's loyalty to each other in matters large and small (one widow recalls that when she and her husband were planning home renovations, his colleagues somehow found out and showed up unasked to help, finishing the job in record time). Though he doesn't go into much detail about the technical challenges facing the fire department that day, Halberstam does convey the sheer chaos at the site and, above all, the immensity of the loss for fellow firefighters. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I feel as if I'm talking to a ghost. Not just the ghosts of the men from Engine 40/Ladder 35, but the ghost of David Halberstam who was gone within a few years of writing this book. So many lives lost way too soon. I seem to be on a 9/11 drive, having read *The Day the World Came to Town: 9/11 in Gander, Newfoundland* earlier this year and just finishing *Thunder Dog: The True Story of a Blind Man, His Guide Dog, and the Triumph of Trust at Ground Zero* prior to this book. Although both of those books moved me, this moved me to ugly tears while riding the Staten Island Ferry. I liked how the early pages of the book set the tone for the neighborhood's demographic shift. In some ways it's a biography of the building and company as well as the house. The chalkboards with the names are poignant as cover flaps and now I almost feel as if I need to make a pilgrimage. I liked the way Halberstam worked with the surviving men from the other tours - all but one who went out that morning died - as well as the dead men's spouses to construct profiles that truly brought each of the men to life. No matter how much time I spend on the Upper West Side, I don't think I've ever seen this firehouse. I do feel as if I know all of these men though. Men who no doubt knew they were taking their last ride when they left the firehouse and headed down to Ground Zero within an hour of the first plane hitting. I see Jack Lynch at what is now the Memorial & Museum but what was then The Hole watching and waiting for them to be able to excavate the area where he knew his son was. I see all those memorials, all those kids who will now grow up without their fathers. I feel as if I know Callahan, Giberson and his boots, Otten, Roberts, Bracken and the Bracken Bounce, Morello and his love of cars, Shea, Ginley, GAry. Buddha, Lynch, Marshall, Mercado and D'Auria. I hope that this book and their memories in their families' hearts and mind keep them alive. Like the Arizona and oil.

I have to admit I didn't know about this book until I read Halberstam's obituary. Once I got a copy and read it I quickly decided that this was one of his best works - if not the best. A look into his neighborhood firehouse and the men who worked there and died on 9/11. You meet all the men and

learn about their lives. Most of them had firefighters in their family. Most were married although one was separated and one had a fiancee. It is important to learn about their lives outside the firehouse because it gives greater substance to their lives inside the firehouse. You learn of one man's decision to remodel the firehouse after it had officially been remodeled but left living space restricted and unpopular. His officer was told to stay away because "you don't want to know what is happening" as the man knocked down the walls with a sledge hammer. Their captain is new to the fire house and the men and they aren't sure about him. At one fire he is given an unpopular order by superiors to go through a decontamination process. He tells the superior that you and your men went through the same place we did so you need to do this and we'll be watching to make sure you do. With that he told his men to get on the rig and go back to the firehouse. His men decided that "they had a captain!". Thirteen men went out to the WTC. Twelve died and one survived but with lasting medical problems. What I found to be particularly tragic was that one man was a replacement from another fire house. He didn't even have time to unpack his bag before he went out with the others. Did anyone have a chance to meet him? Did he die not knowing the men around him? I find that troubling - to die with men you know is one thing - to die not knowing them or them not knowing you is worse. Most of the men weren't found right away - it was months later that they were found when an access road was cleared away from the site. Under the road were the men. The vigil by families as they visited the site to mourn and in their own way participate in the search was moving and quite understandable. There are many moving moments in this book. How could there not be. It is something most men knew might happen but were incredibly confident that it wouldn't happen to them. It is also moving to read as the families cope with this disaster in their many ways and on many levels. The only regret I had about the book was that it was published too soon. One man was still missing so we don't know if his body was ever found. Maybe it would have been useful for a followup volume to provide closure for the readers as they have all become intimately involved with the men and families of the firehouse. It is a small book and a relatively quick read but it is well worth it. I think this is one of Halberstam's best efforts and probably one that was the most intimate for him. I highly recommend this book.

David Halberstam has written, in my opinion, the best description of "what firefighters are made of", that I have ever read; and I have read a lot of books about firefighters. I spent 36 years in the ranks, and this depiction of the men from Engine 40 and Ladder 35 of the FDNY is beautiful. The reader will see the real "heartbeat" of those who serve, as well as experience the highs and lows that they accept, both at work, and within their families. You will see love as you have never seen it, and

toughness that is unparalleled. Mr. Halberstam has taken an approach to writing that is both factual and heart-warming, and I thank him for his accomplishments at showing the world the value of these "everyday heroes" who live among us, and who sacrificially provide us with a greater quality of life; sometimes at the loss of their own.

Anything written by David Halberstam is going to be exceptionally well-researched and written, and this is no exception. The flaw with this book is there's not enough of it. I knew that it was a short book, but I ended up wanting a lot more about the inner workings of a firehouse. While there was some of that, it was more a elegy to each of the 12 firefighters from this house that died on 9/11 - and Halberstam never pretended it was anything else, so it's to his credit it left me wanting more. Since his subjects had all died, it's a testament to his reporting skills that he makes them all come alive in just 200 pages for 12 men. A reader does get to know each of them in different ways - they might come across a little too perfect at times, but that's the nature of the subject and not surprising for a book barely a year after 9/11. For a book about a firehouse, without the overwhelming influence of 9/11, Dennis Smith's "Report from Engine Co. 82" is a good place to turn. "Firehouse," however, still humanizes some of the men lost on 9/11, and for that it's very valuable.

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