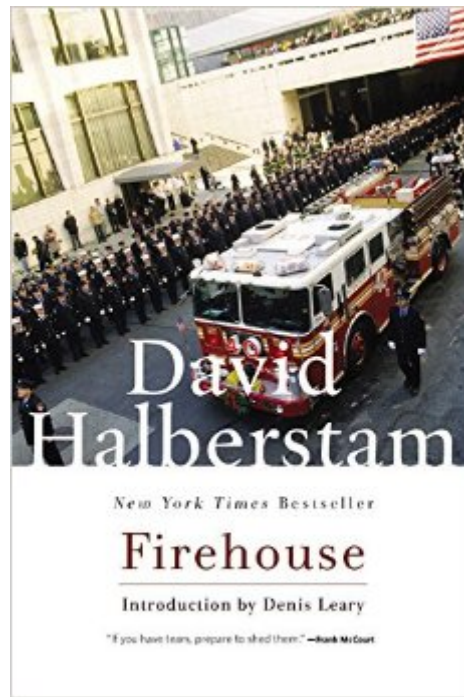


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# Firehouse



## 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

I would guess that I am not the only one guilty of taking firemen for granted before September 11. Sure, I knew that in between relaxing at the firehouse, they got to go out and have some excitement, and that they did good work, and it was all commendable in a very manly way. But with all the losses to the New York Fire Department (343 killed), and the vigil over the site of the World Trade Center as their bodies were finally unearthed, and the heartfelt mourning of their brothers at one funeral after another, my admiration for fireman has increased to something around the level it had when I was a kid and like all kids I wanted to be a fireman. David Halberstam lives on the West Side of Manhattan, and had a distant admiration "for firemen, for their courage, for the highly professional and immensely good-natured way they go about their jobs, and for the fact that they constantly have to deal with terrifying fires in the high-rises that surround us." He had, before September 11, never been in his neighborhood Engine 40, Ladder 35 Firehouse. The firehouse lost twelve of the thirteen men sent on the engine and ladder to the World Trade Center, and Halberstam, in *Firehouse* (Hyperion) tells us of their lives and work. It is a small, graceful, moving, eye-opening homage to firemen and their values. The values are a family matter. Not only are the members of a firehouse family to themselves, for they literally depend on each other for their lives. Significantly, however, firefighting runs in families. Some of the men lost that dreadful day were third generation firemen who, sometimes against the advice of their fathers, never wanted to be anything but firemen.

Anyone who has read David Halberstam knows he is a fine journalist. He certainly does not disappoint in this small memorial of some of the brave men who lost their lives on 9/11, the day of infamy. *FIREHOUSE* is the account of the thirteen firefighters of Engine 40, Ladder 35 who answered the emergency call to go to the World Trade Towers. Of the thirteen who left on the mission, only one returned. Inside the front and back panels of the book is a reproduction of the actual list of firemen who were posted to answer the call on 9/11; their photographs are printed on the back cover. These become a makeshift memorial to these men not unlike the Vietnam Wall or the AIDS Quilt. I found myself looking back at their names and photographs as Halberstam introduces each of the thirteen. These men's bios are sketchy as are the actual facts of what they faced on 9/11. They were overwhelmingly white, most of them married or about to be, many of them the sons or brothers or cousins of other New York firefighters. An interesting tidbit: most of these

men were fine cooks as well. There is hardly a negative statement about any of these men, a fact that shouldn't surprise anyone since Halberstam interviewed surviving relatives and colleagues shortly after 9/11. It is human nature to remember only the good of loved ones so recently after a tragedy. I did learn, however, that Jimmy Giberson, described as a natural leader, was separated from his wife. Certainly I, a complete stranger, do not need more details of his failed marriage. I'm much rather learn that in a video shot by a contract cameraman on 9/11 Giberson is identified as the man going into the south tower ahead of the captain, an unusual fact that at first puzzled the remaining firemen. But a close friend responded: "Jimmy was always in front."

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