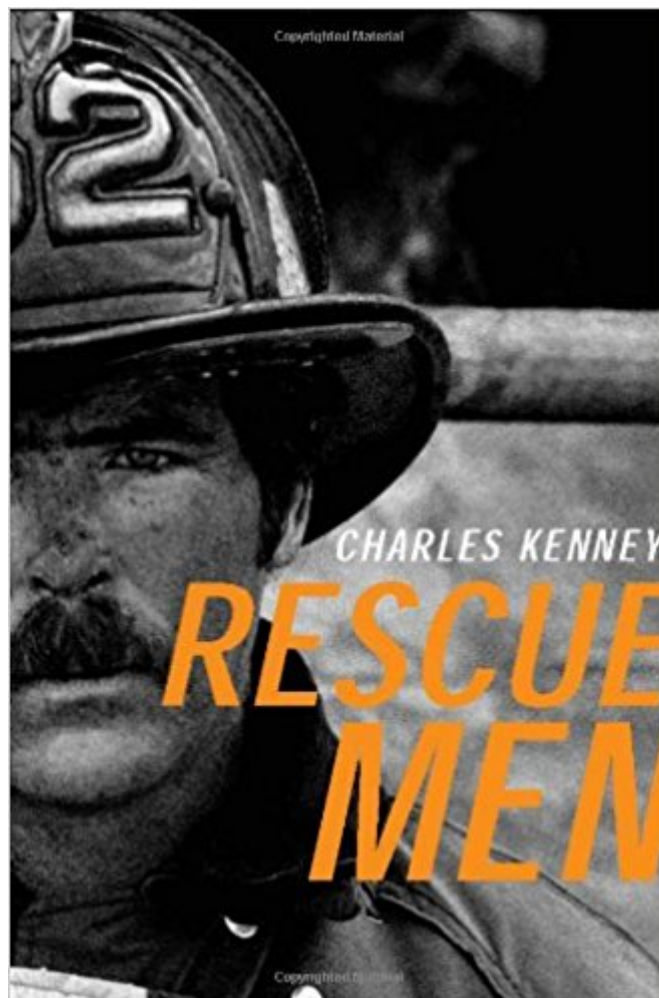


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# Rescue Men



## Synopsis

The men in Charles Kenney's family have been drawn to firefighting since his grandfather Charles "Pops" Kenney joined the Boston Fire Department in 1932. In his working class, Irish-Catholic neighborhood, there were other jobs that offered a decent wage, but none had the sense of belonging that comes with being a fireman, or the purity of purpose that comes with saving lives. Pops was on the scene of the notorious Cocoanut Grove fire in 1942; the author's father, "Sonny" served with distinction until an explosion blew him from a third-story window; and two of the author's brothers were "sparks" as children, amateur firefighters, whose career goals were thwarted by a court order integrating the Boston fire department and changing the rules for employment forever. One became a cop, the other a paramedic and rescue man with an elite squad sent to Ground Zero in the aftermath of the collapse of the World Trade Center. Spanning sixty years of firefighting history in America, *Rescue Men* captures what it's really like to be a fireman.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Author (The Last Man; Keep Faith, Change the Church) and former Boston Globe journalist Kenney uses the events of Boston's 1942 Cocoanut Grove Fire ("the greatest fire in the city's history"), to which his grandfather responded as a rescuer, to frame his account of the role firefighting played in the lives of the Kenneys over three generations ("the arc of a story that began and ended with the Grove but contained within it a story of our family"). Because Kenney himself never was part of the "amazing brotherhood" of firefighters, much of his narrative stays at arm's length, relying on

documentary-style narrative techniques that maintain an air of authority but mitigate the pathos of the personal. However, the technical descriptions of firefighting, the gripping accounts of fire-related rescues and the sketches of men in love with sacrifice are well handled and moving. In addition, Kenney's ability to weave the story of six brothers growing up in blue-collar Boston, raised by a firefighting veteran father and a bootstrapping granddad, into a tapestry of great social change (WWII, civil rights, integration of schools and the fire department, 9/11) makes for an engaging tale. By the time a Kenney brother is sent as a rescuer to the World Trade Center, the family story and the social one are concluded with fulfilling thematic unity. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"A compelling family memoir about what it's really like to be a firefighter." -- Quincy Patriot-Ledger, February 20, 2007  
"A vivid, readable account of the dangers and bravery inherent in emergency services and inherent in [Kenney's] family." -- Library Journal, February 15, 2007  
"Brilliant...It's a MUST read... a perfect gift for anyone interested in firefighters, firefighting, or Boston Fire Department history!" -- Firefighter Blog (firefighterblog.blogspot.com), March 15, 2007  
"a profoundly moving, multi dimensional story. It's a sweeping, impressively researched history....It is ferociously beautiful book about families." -- Boston Globe, March 27, 2007

I did not buy this earlier because it was published along with a string of poorly written fire service memoirs. I decided to try it recently and could not put it down. Equal to the classic Report from Engine Company 82.

Love reading about Boston's brave. I would tell you to read it. It show the world of firefighters and the brotherhood.

Why would anyone, ever, run into a burning building, and why would a retired firefighter care about how a decades-old fire that killed 492 people started? Charles Kenney, in his story about generations of firefighters and rescue men, offers a rare and compelling look at some of these special people, their motivation, their families, their lives. This book gives us a glimpse of the hearts and souls under the uniforms. It is a sympathetic tribute to some of our communities' first responders, and all the more meaningful in our post 9/11 world.

Impeccable condition, signed 1st edition, great read!

My grandfather was a Boston policeman, and he had to remove bodies from the Coconut Grove. My grandmother said he had nightmares for years after The Grove. The author has been accused of playing on his father's alcoholism-- Lots of people are alcoholics. Alcoholism runs in families. It runs in Irish families, it runs in African American families, and in the families of some firemen and policemen. That's life. Better to talk about it than sweep it under the rug. I'm glad Charles' dad got sober.

I really enjoyed the book, it has a combination of stories from firefighters discussing different calls and incidents, which I think is neat because it is always cool to hear about and learn from other stories. In the book, it seemed as if there were a few stories that were left incomplete, while there were others that seemed to go on and on. It was still an all around great book, I would strongly recommend it to anyone interested in hearing some good fire department stories.

First let me say this I did not pay the cover price for this book and that helped with my review. As a firefighter for a city just north of Boston; I found this book to be very good for many reasons. First it was about fires I remember hearing about. I was not alive for some of them, but I did hear about them from men in the fire service. I am also intrigued by the local nature of this book. I know many of the locations described throughout the book. I can remember the scenes that he paints. As some other reviews indicate there is some jumping around but then again Kenney does a decent job of staying on track. I viewed it more of parallel stories. He would talk about something happening in his actual family and then tell a story about a major event happening in the "other" family the BFD. So as a member of the fire service and the local community I can offer a somewhat biased opinion. The book is good and even better if you get it for a bargain.

I am not sure if Charles Keeney is trying to write a history of Boston, his family or developments in firefighting, but whatever he is trying to do, he accomplishes a lot along the way. This is as much a family memoir as it is anything else, yet it also manages to offer a fascinating view on the history of firefighting in the late 20th century. He offers stunning views of some of Boston's major fires including the infamous Coconut Grove. His father's struggles both with alcohol and his desire to solve the mystery of the origin of the Coconut Grove fire are particularly fascinating and heart breaking at times. He does keep himself out of the story but as he is a reporter that actually works to the benefit of the story in my opinion. If you want to read a book written from the heart and that

doubles as good history read this book.

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