

# Fire dispatcher's grace under pressure lauded

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Gasoline gushed 60 feet into the air nearly two years ago. 30 homes and a preschool were evacuated and the mayor rushed here as a pipeline leak spilled liquid dynamite over Willowbrook.

For eight and a half hours that day, in a computer room with flashing lights, fire alarm radio dispatcher #178 helped an army of firefighters keep 35,000 gallons of spilling gasoline from blowing up.

His calm voice and "coolness" relaying orders earned Frank Geib of Huguenot a citation presented yesterday amid apologies from fire department brass that it took so long for the award to be bestowed.

Smiling and quiet in front of the them, Geib seemed good-natured about the red-tape delay. He probably doesn't faze easily, this man who while walking to the dentist stopped to pull people from a burning building last January in Greenwich Village.

"You can't do too much more

**"You can't do too much more than do everything right."**

- Chief Warren Haring

than do everything right," said Chief Warren Haring, who kept a steady smile beamed at Geib.

"An apology is due you for the late response," said Dudley Glaspe, chief of communications for the Fire Department, who then handed Geib a framed citation.

For his part, the 17-year veteran of the Castelton Corners fire-dispatch center later said he was "just the guy on the radio. There were five other guys here" in the control room helping with the Buckeye Pipe Line rupture on Sept. 23, 1985.

Still, it was the most hectic single emergency he's handled, said Geib, who moonlights as an emergency medical technician for Richmond Memorial Hospital and volunteers for the North

Shore Rescue Squad. He broadcast "well over" 1,000 radio messages that day, relaying orders for up to 87 fire units from the five boroughs and letting the chiefs at the scene know about available equipment. His is a radio language spiked with numbers and codes, delivered with the calm of an experienced obstetrician.

"It was organized chaos," said Geib, 39, remembering the pipeline day as his colleagues ate Italian pastries at the celebration in the dispatch center. "To someone who wasn't familiar with the fire department it would sound like utter chaos, but it went smoothly."

Listening to tapes of that day, Edward Cuyar, Chief Haring's aide, remembered that Geib "kept it all in order."  
"He doesn't get excited. Very calm."

"You can't panic, that's the thing," said Geib later. "It was a very hectic day. You don't think of it at the time. You know your job and you just do it."



ADVANCE PHOTO/IRVING SILVERSTEIN

Frank Geib, sitting at console, directed firefighters at gasoline leak two years ago with a calm voice and a cool head. Behind him are former chief dispatcher Patsy Maggio and Richard Lang, chief dispatcher.