On January 3, 2008, we lost one of our brothers when Lieutenant John Martinson, E-249, died battling a fire in a 25-story apartment building at 1700 Bedford Avenue in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The 40-year-old Martinson, a resident of Staten Island, was a 14-year veteran of the Department and the son of a firefighter. He had served as a New York City Police Officer for four years prior to joining the Fire Department in 1993. He is survived by his wife Jessica, and a 22-month-old son, John Patrick. Lieutenant Martinson was the Department’s first fatality of the year and the 1,138th firefighter to die in the line of duty in the Department’s history. Lt. Martinson’s funeral was on January 8th at the Church of St. Clare in Staten Island.

On February 8th I was privileged to have been re-elected as your UFA President. William Romaka was also re-elected Health & Safety Officer/Sergeant-at-Arms. Re-elected without opposition were: Vice President, James Slevin; Treasurer,, Robert J. Straub; Recording Secretary, Joseph A. Miccio; Manhattan Trustee, Daniel Murphy; Brooklyn Trustee, John G. Kelly; Queens Trustee, Stephen G. Humenesky; Bronx Trustee, Edward Brown, and Staten Island Trustee, Donald J. Ruland. I feel fortunate to work with this terrific group of men that make up the UFA Executive Board. I believe your confidence in our leadership bodes well for the unity of this union as we move forward.

Our current collective bargaining agreement will end on July 31, 2008. On Thursday, April 17th, the Battalion Advisory Committee will meet at the UFA to discuss the upcoming round of negotiations. Any Battalion Delegate who can not attend is asked to please send an alternate.

We continue to monitor closely the Manhattan District Attorney’s investigation into the
President’s Message
(Continued from page 1)

fateful Deutsche Bank fire of August 2007. Forthcoming news regarding the investigation will be posted on the UFA Web site as it becomes available.

As a reminder, the UFA Delegate Education Seminar is being held at the Trump Taj Mahal from May 13th to May 16th. This is a good opportunity for all members to acquaint and update themselves with what is going on in the UFA. I look forward to seeing you there! As always, stay safe!

Lt. Martinson’s casket is greeted by thousands of firefighters as it arrives at St. Clare’s Church in Staten Island.

(Above) The casket of Lt. John Martinson, E 249, is taken from the Church of St. Clare after his funeral Mass on January 8, 2008.

(Below) Firefighters stand at attention as Lt. Martinson’s casket leaves the Church of St. Clare.
It is certainly an interesting time up in Albany. As you are aware by now, Eliot Spitzer was forced to resign over a scandal.

Our new Governor, David Paterson, is a seasoned Albany veteran that the UFA has worked closely with in the past. He has always been supportive of firefighters and anyone who was at Lobby Day in 2006 can attest to that. In 2006, Patterson was the Minority Leader of the State Senate and met with members of the UFA. At that meeting he pledged his support for our agenda and has further pledged his support in subsequent meetings that we have had with him as Lt. Governor. Since his elevation to Governor we have reached out to him to offer our congratulations and will be meeting with him in the near future. In addition, we are in the process of setting up a meeting with him for UFA Lobby Day which will be taking place on June 10th.

The main focus in Albany right now is getting an on-time budget. It appears that a preliminary agreement is in place, but has not yet passed. Once it does, the rest of the Albany Agenda will be able to move forward. Another item that is keeping everyone in Albany busy is congestion pricing. We have been actively monitoring the situation and have been attempting to get our members exempted from paying this fee. There is still a large contingent opposed to any form of congestion pricing in Albany especially in the outer borough New York City Delegation. At this time it is not known if it will pass the Assembly. The Mayor has, however, secured home rule from the City Council. We will continue to have dialogue with legislators and will keep you informed of any developments.

Many of the items on our 2008 Legislative Agenda have been on past agendas. Each session of the legislature has its own dynamics and a bill that may have been dead last year gets new life in a new session. We are hopeful that this will be the situation this year. Once again we are pushing for the MTA.
(Continued from page 3)

Fare Waiver, Cash for Terminal Leave, and the Citizen Soldier Salary Act which has passed the Senate and now must be passed by the Assembly. In addition, we are supporting new legislation that will provide for interest payments on VSF DROP funds. As always we will be working with the NYS AFL-CIO to pass Taylor Law Reform and other legislation important to our Retirees such as increasing the pension Cost of Living Adjustment. A listing of all of these bills can be found on the UFA Web site. With looming budget deficits in both Albany and in New York City, events such as Lobby Day become even more important. Don’t count on other firefighter to turn out. Take it upon yourself to be there. You owe it to yourself, to your family, and to your fellow firefighter. June 10th – Be there!

On UFA Lobby Day 2007, then Lt Governor David Paterson met with UFA Vice President, Jim Slevin (L), and UFA President, Steve Cassidy (R).

Marching up Fifth Avenue in the 247th Annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade are: (L to R) FF Robert Stanlewicz, E-74; Daniel Murphy, Manhattan Trustee; FF Thomas Brown, E-74; Steve Cassidy, UFA President; FF Patrick Carey, E-74; James M. Slevin, UFA Vice President; William Romaka, UFA Health & Safety Officer and Sergeant-At-Arms; FF Billy Harris, E-74; and Herb Eysser, UFA Staff.
Delegate Education Seminar
—What Delegates Learn So They Can Help You

We will outline in this article many of the topics that will be covered with your Company Delegate at the Delegate Education Seminar, which will take place from May 13th through May 16th. If you would like information about any of the subjects covered, let your Delegate know in advance. There are many elective workshops that he or she can choose from. There are also representatives from many supporting organizations, such as health care providers and pension investing plans, which your Delegate can visit. In most cases they will get you the info you want or the correct contact person for you to call.

Delegates Required Attendance

All Company Delegates are required, in accordance with the UFA Constitution, to attend the UFA Delegate Education Seminar each year. The purpose is to provide comprehensive training regarding the many issues that face their members — YOU — on a regular basis. If you have a question, it’s your Delegate’s job to try and get you an answer before calling the UFA. Part of your dues money is invested in seeing that your Delegate has been provided with all the tools, training and information resources necessary to get you answers to most of your questions. They also know when to contact an UFA Executive Board Member on your behalf to get the help or information you or your family need.

General Session & Workshop Topics

This year our comprehensive lectures and workshops include the following issues and topics: the UFA State of the Union Address; UFA media & PR Strategies; Finding Information in the Delegate Manual; Safe Apparatus Response; Firefighter Legislation and Political Action; the UFA Web site; Lobby Day in Albany; Elected Officials; New Protective Gear; WTC Illness; Honor Emergency Fund; Pension Planning by FDNY Pension Unit; Medical Office; UFA Criminal Counsel; Compensation Accrual Fund (your annuity investing); Deferred Compensation Plan (457, 401k & IRA); Disability Pensions; Retirement Planning; UFA Dental/Optical/Prescription Drug Plans; Grievances & Improper Practices; How To Be an Effective Delegate; ITHP; 50% Indicator; Pension Loans; Roth IRAs; NYS College Savings Program; WTC Medical Care; Cancer; Safe Apparatus Response; and Health & Safety Issues.

Exhibiting Organizations/Service Providers in Attendance

Delegates will visit our exhibitors, who have informative hand-outs about opportunities and benefits for you and your family. Exhibitors include: GHI/HIP, Empire BlueCross/BlueShield, AFLAC, AETNA, AIG Life Insurance, CIGNA, Prudential Retirement, CPS Optical & Dental, General Vision, Health Net, Healthplex, Marsh Affinity Group Services, Morning Pride Manufacturing, NYC Deferred Compensation Plan, Deferred Compensation Plan (457, 401k & IRA);

(Continued on page 6)
(Continued from page 5)

Sterling Optical, Vision Screening, W.L. Gore & Assoc., and many others that offer various products and services. Our sponsors and exhibitors provide generous financial support to help make the seminar better and more informative each year. Your Delegate is also provided with a booklet listing each exhibitor and their contact info. You can use this resource as a handy firehouse reference.

Checking It Out
You can check the home page of the UFA Web site at WWW.UFANYC.ORG for the latest updates regarding the 2008 Delegate Education Seminar, and also review last year’s Seminar Guide Booklet. You will see the intensive education program your Delegate takes part in each year. Besides the Seminar, your Delegate invests considerable time throughout the year in order to become educated on issues of importance to you. Please don’t hesitate to ask your Delegate in advance of the Seminar if you need information or advice regarding any of these topics! You will be pleasantly surprised at how helpful they can be!

HOLY NAME SOCIETY OF BROOKLYN & QUEENS 86th ANNUAL COMMUNION MASS & BREAKFAST

On Sunday, April 13th the Holy Name Society of Brooklyn & Queens will hold its 86th Annual Communion Mass and Breakfast at the Immaculate Conception Chapel, 7200 Douglaston Parkway, Queens, NY.

The Mass will be celebrated at 10:00AM with buffet breakfast to follow at 11:00AM. Donation: $20 per adult; $10 for children under 12.

For tickets contact St. Jude Rectory, 718-763-6300 or e-mail Lt. John P. Cullen (E-235) at: jpc235fdny@aol.com or call 718-833-2161.

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On February 13th, the Department announced quietly on a Department Order its intent to change the dispatch policy on a pilot program in the Borough of Queens which would be effective the next day. This change was spurred on because Queens units response times registered above the citywide average by nearly twenty seconds. The Department seemed to be surprised by this despite the fact that Queens response times had roughly been the same since January 2001.

Immediately, members reported receiving response tickets with no information except the address which at times was nothing more than an intersection. No information on alarm type or conditions and reason for the response. Tickets that dispatched full alarm assignments to water leaks and single unit responses to structure fires were received because the dispatchers were told to get the units started as soon as the address was given and even before they could verify it. Dispatchers were to determine if the caller was reporting a fire or an emergency and that would dictate the type of response they would dispatch.

This change quickly showed that the Department was concerned with only one thing, being able to report better response numbers to the City Council no matter what effect it would have on the member’s or the public’s safety. The Department never gave any thought to the fact that we are taught that size-up begins with the receipt of the ticket and the information given on it. The Department never asked the dispatchers their opinion on this change and how it would affect responses. It was never discussed with the divisions or the battalions, but more shocking is that the Department didn’t even notify the Borough Command of this change.

When I inquired as to the purpose of this change I was told it was to reduce the time it takes to get units on the road and that with today’s technology they should be able to cut response times down at the source. It would seem understandable that if that were the purpose then the Department would have installed Caller ID in their new $50 million renovation of the Queens Dispatch center, it would have designed the dispatch center so that the person receiving the call could speak to the decision dispatcher face to face rather then being in separate rooms. It would seem logical to confer with the field units. But none of these steps were taken because, in my opinion, this would have resulted in the Department having to face the truth. The fact is that insufficient resources are the reasons Queens response times lag behind other boroughs.

The Department refuses to realize that Queens is not the bedroom community it once was. Population growth and a building boom have transformed this borough. Yet the current administration of this Department has never once requested more units to be opened and even allowed the closing of a company in the Long Island City area. Shamefully, the Department relies on our dedication to do more with less and then threaten us when we can’t deliver. Two recent incidents highlight the faults in this policy change. The first incident was when an assignment of two engines and one truck was given for a house fire in Hollis were it was clearly reported that window bars were present. The Department’s answer was that the second truck was assigned when an additional call was received, however, that was three minutes later. The second incident entailed a dispatcher being given the wrong address for a fire in the Richmond Hill area that resulted in units being dispatched around the corner from the fire, delaying the units and allowing the fire to grow to such intensity it resulted in a member being trapped above the fire and suffering second and third-degree burns. Yet even though it took 18 minutes before the transmission of the 10-75 the Department reported a 4-minute response time.

Recently when the Department was questioned by the press regarding this new policy their only answer was that response times were lower in Queens by nearly 24 seconds. This public statement is another example demonstrating that the safety of our members comes second to the Department’s desire to report good response times to City Hall. Hopefully the Department will see that continuing this dispatch policy is a dangerous game and return to find a better solution. Until that time members are reminded that they should proceed based only on the information they receive and not take undo risks to make up for this reckless venture.
Risk vs Reward

The Fire Service has long held and operated under the belief that risk be predicated on reward. That is to say, what has become acceptable is based upon what the outcome might be. Should a firefighter be taking the same risk in a vacant structure as he would in an occupied multiple dwelling? Most firefighters can see the difference in the two preceding scenarios. The bigger problem is the psychological mindset where a firefighter will attempt to justify a foolish act by using extreme circumstances. Should the same risk be taken for a water leak as a known occupied multiple dwelling?

On paper, it is clear that there is a difference, but when the lights and sirens are going, too often firefighters get that tunnel vision, “no matter what” mindset. A recent article in the May 1st, 2007 Firechief.com newsletter, “To Die For” by Assistant Chief of the Shreveport Fire Department Brian A. Crawford highlights this “Firefighter Duty to Die Syndrome (FDTDS)” that was just the subject of a Safety Message from FDNY Chief of Safety Al Hay.

This Risk versus Reward philosophy needs to be updated in all aspects of firefighting. Apparatus response should be the most notable and easily recognized place to start. After all, does it really make sense to respond “balls to the wall” for a water condition as you do for a confirmed fire in a multiple dwelling with people on the fire escapes? While quick response times may be a noble goal, it should never come at the price of our firefighters’ health and safety. It is important to remember the consequences of negligence in responding to alarms and what a chauffeur might have to go through. It will affect him in so many different ways. Family, firehouse, lawyers and the uncertainty of your own future are but a few of the negative implications.

There is currently a “pilot program” going on in Queens that once again neglects the safety aspects of our job. Size-up begins with the receipt of the alarm. Currently, there is little or no information on the ticket and companies are being dispatched to intersections and areas. At what point are you made aware of what you are responding to? Does the Department not understand that radio transmissions can be garbled and communication between the Officer and the members on the back step is inconsistent? So how do you rationalize the risk versus reward for the unknown? Risks versus reward are often broken down into probabilities. Probabilities are configured based upon the many variables available at any given time. With little or no known variables, the risk becomes extremely high for a decreasingly minute possibility of reward. There is absolutely no reason to increase the risk by responding any way except safely!

Choices are always made on the fireground that use this seemingly predisposed mindset. All truck members need to remain very much aware of the engine’s operations, and engine members need to understand truck operations. A coordinated effort brings about the best possible outcome. The element of “Safety” has to be properly weighed before a task can be completed. The FDNY has a long and storied history of leading this nation’s fire service. It is time now to lead this nation in the reduction of firefighter fatalities and serious injuries. For this we will all be thankful!
On Tuesday, March 18, 2008, as 18,000 Rangers’ fans looked on in Madison Square Garden, the families of fallen Firefighters Robert Beddia, Joseph Graffagnino, and Daniel Pujdak gathered as Steven Kessler, SVP of Actuarial & Underwriting at GHI/HIP, presented UFA President Steve Cassidy with a check for $5000 for the UFA Scholarship Fund. (R to L) Joe Graffagnino (father of FF Joseph Graffagnino Jr), Linda Graffagnino, Mia Graffagnino (wife and daughter (respectively) of FF Joseph Graffagnino Jr); Jim Beddia (brother of FF Robert Beddia); Christine and Leo Pujdak (parents of FF Daniel Pujdak) and his brother FF Matthew Pujdak; E-50; Steven Kessler, GHI & HIP; Rangers’ legend Adam Graves; and Steve Cassidy, UFA President.

(Above) Richard Maldonado, E-221, and Kenneth Butler, L-104, presented a check from the One-Pitch Fund in the amount of $15,000 to the UFA for the Thomas Elsasser Memorial Scholarship Fund. The mission of the Elsasser fund is to provide financial help to families of active firefighters who have died non-line-of-duty.
GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

By Herb Eysser, UFA Staff

Squad Unit 3 is as much a part of the history of the City of Brooklyn as is the Brooklyn Dodgers. Organized in 1955 (November 16) in the quarters of Engine 235 in Bedford Stuyvesant, Squad 3 did one thing: they went to working fires and they did that frequently! When Squad 3 was first organized they were a manpower unit carrying basic firefighting tools and masks and they were used mainly as added manpower during the early stages of a working fire. Squad 3 responded “on the box” and had a very large first alarm response district, therefore Squad 3 was always very busy. In 1966 (July 8) Squad 3 was relocated to the quarters of Engine 230 until they were disbanded in 1976 (May 1). Gone but not forgotten!
To: All Participants

From: Board of Trustees

Re: Annual Membership Report

In compliance with Directive 12, Employee Benefit Funds – Uniform Reporting and Auditing Requirements, issued by the Office of the Comptroller of the City of New York, set forth below is a report of the financial condition and operations of the Fund for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2006.

The Compensation Accrual Fund of the Uniformed Firefighters Association is a defined contribution pension plan that provides retirement benefits to New York City firefighters, fire marshals, marine engineers, pilots, and uniformed wipers pursuant to collective bargaining agreements between the City of New York and the Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York, Local 94, I.A.F.F., AFL-CIO (the UFA). Participants are eligible to participate in the plan on the date they commence employment. Benefits are funded through employer contributions, which are established by the collective bargaining agreements.

The value of Fund assets, after subtracting liabilities of the Fund, was $116,737,438 as of December 31, 2006, compared to $105,170,080 as of January 1, 2006. During the fiscal year the Fund experienced an increase in its net assets available for benefits of $11,567,358. Additions to the Fund totaled $19,206,386. These additions included investment income of $9,322,705, and contributions of $9,883,681.

Deductions from the Fund totaled $7,639,028. These deductions included benefits paid to participants of $7,280,729 and administrative expenses of $358,299.

For additional information write or call:

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Compensation Accrual Fund of the
Uniformed Firefighters Association
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Uniformed Firefighters Association

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The above figures are based on actual cases the firm has handled. These results do not guarantee a similar outcome. Each case must stand on its own merit.