

THE 4 UPS

By: Tim Klett FDNY

In our professional lives, especially for younger F/F's, I have "borrowed" something from a Brother of mine, Tim Klett of the FDNY. It is called the 4 UPS.

The first is, Listen up: When you are first starting in the Fire Service, there is a lot going on. You are entering a culture that is unlike any other one on this planet. You will hear stories, tales and just plain BS. But listen carefully. That is our past talking. All of the information has value; it is up to you to determine how much value it has to you. Listen to the older, over-the-hill, past-their-prime, malcontents, for the little "pearls of wisdom" that aren't in any textbooks. A lot of important information that will help keep you safe and alive on the fire ground is not written down. The fire service is very young. We are losing our experience. The F/F's that went to fires during the war years are slowly retiring. Talk to them before they leave. We are losing our history, we are losing our past. Don't let this happen.

The second up is, Clean up: The firehouse is your second home. Treat it as such. And if you are the junior F/F working, you are the lowest on the totem pole. You get the dirty work, you get to do the dishes, and you get to mop the floors, and you get to clean the toilets. This is not based on any prejudices of race, sex, or religion. It is based on the fact that all the junior people before you did it, or should have done it. You do it until the next probie is assigned to that company. It is part of belonging, it is doing what you should be doing. And it is always pretty funny, because in my experience, the ones that piss and moan about doing the chores usually end up doing them by themselves for a long time. But the ones that just do it, the ones that are the first to get up to head for the sink after a meal, usually find that they have help. They become accepted into the "family" a little quicker.

The third up is, Step up: this goes hand in hand with the previous "up" but there is more. Be involved in your company and in your department. Attend company functions, help run them if possible. In NYC every company I ever worked in would have a company picnic in the summer, a Christmas party in the fire house in December, and a dinner-dance sometime during the year. Become a productive member of your Company.

Above all, go to funerals and services, especially the line of duty ones. Pay your respects. Become a part of the fire service by deed and not by mouth.

The last up is my favorite; Shut up. This one goes well with listen up, but actually goes a little further. Spend more time listening and doing than talking about it. Show by your actions and your deeds what type of F/F and member of this great Brotherhood you are.