

CHIEF DONALD BURNS



Donald Burns, a decorated 39-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department, was appointed to the FDNY on February 10th, 1962 and spent the next 7 years working in some of the busiest and most challenging neighborhoods that New York had to offer.

After promotion to Lieutenant in 1969, he began his ascent through the ranks, to Captain, Battalion Chief, Deputy Chief, and Deputy Assistant Chief, culminating in his promotion to Assistant Chief in 1990. Fighting fires was his passion, and he inspired many of his colleagues within the Department, who hailed him as an exceptional leader and brilliant tactician and strategist. He was known for his in-depth knowledge of firefighting and the FDNY, and is fondly remembered as a walking encyclopedia for his broad knowledge of New York City.

"Chief Burns was the most intelligent man I ever met," said Deputy Assistant Chief Albert Turi. "He knew more about New York than anyone – the location of any alarm box and every street in every borough. Anything you ever wanted to know about the Fire Department, he would have the answer. If you could be half as good a Chief as he was, you'd still be a good Chief."

Fighting fires was not just a job to him, but his passion—one that rubbed off on many of his colleagues within the FDNY. "He could have retired years ago, but it was his love of the job that kept him going...he could not give it up" said retired firefighter Bob Wood.

Working as the Citywide Tour Commander on September 11th, 2001, Donald Burns made the ultimate sacrifice while directing FDNY operations at the World Trade Center attack.