

★ BOSTON HEROES ★

Winners of the WALTER SCOTT MEDAL *for* VALOR

The Boston Fire Department with its complex and highly modern equipment not only fights fires and carries to safety persons who would perish without its prompt and intrepid action, but its members are called upon to meet diverse emergencies which appear somewhat odd classified under its activities. Ladderman Edward C. Donovan of Ladder Company 18, has demonstrated with extraordinary distinction this versatility and public-spirited readiness to respond to public needs however and wherever they call him.

During the years of his almost a quarter of a century of active service, he has participated in many rescues of drowning persons as well as of those trapped in burning buildings. The action which won him the coveted Walter Scott Medal for Valor was characteristic. It was about 10 o'clock at night on April 30, 1947, that Ladder Company 18 was ordered by the fire alarm office to Fort Point Channel opposite the U. S. parcel post office on Dorchester ave.

Upon arrival, Ladderman Edward C. Donovan noticed a woman floundering in the water. She was one of the occupants of an automobile that had plunged into the channel. Ladderman Donovan did not hesitate a second. "Fully clothed he dived overboard and assisted the woman to a ladder that was dropped over the side of the wall," reads the description in the commendation by the board, for the Scott Medal award.

"He and Lieutenant John J. Breen of Rescue Company 1 (now captain of Engine Company 26") continues the commendation, "continued diving into the water in the effort to locate the automobile or its other



No. 31—Ladderman Edward C. Donovan, Scott Medal for 1947, awarded by the Boston Fire Department.

occupants but were unable to do so. Both were ordered out of the water after several futile attempts."

Both Captain Breen and Ladderman Donovan were highly commended in General Orders in the 1947 series, for courage in taking great personal risk. Fire Commissioner Russell S. Codman, Jr., awarded the Walter Scott Medal to Edward C. Donovan. Incidentally not the least interested of those who admire the heroism of Ladderman Donovan, are his six children.

A more dangerous and difficult action in the same vicinity was performed by "Laddie" Donovan, on Sept. 18, 1945, when he followed a crazy man who had leapt over the

30-foot wall into Fort Point Channel after a wild chase by a shore patrolman through the South Station. The man fled when the shore patrolman questioned him. Ladder Company 18 had been summoned after Deputy Superintendent of Police James J. Hinchey had thrown a life preserver which the fugitive had rejected. The man, taking advantage of the half-tide, waded into a six-foot sewer pipe. It was into this that Edward Donovan followed him for some 200 feet through muck and slime with the rising tide threatening his life as it rose to his neck. He could not locate the man who had gone on through the pipe and among all the alerted police as traffic was snarled and thousands of spectators jammed the area, one — Captain Carleton B. Perry of the harbor police—heard a voice at a manhole. The cover was speedily removed and there below, with only his head above the rising waters, was the fugitive. With a rope from a police boat they rescued him. He was an escapee from the State Hospital at Mattapan.

Such heroism at a fire—in which Edward C. Donovan participated—was manifested by all the men of Ladder Co. 18, when they carried down ladders an entire family, including children from an infant to those five or six years old, that the new Fire Chief, John F. McDonough, then Deputy Chief of Division 2, cited Ladder Company 18 as a unit, for courageous action at great personal risk. It is a pleasure to this writer in this closing story, to thank Chief McDonough and Executive Officer Slattery at Fire Department Headquarters for their courtesy in assisting this writer to obtain the photographs and commendations of the winners of the Walter Scott Medal for Valor.