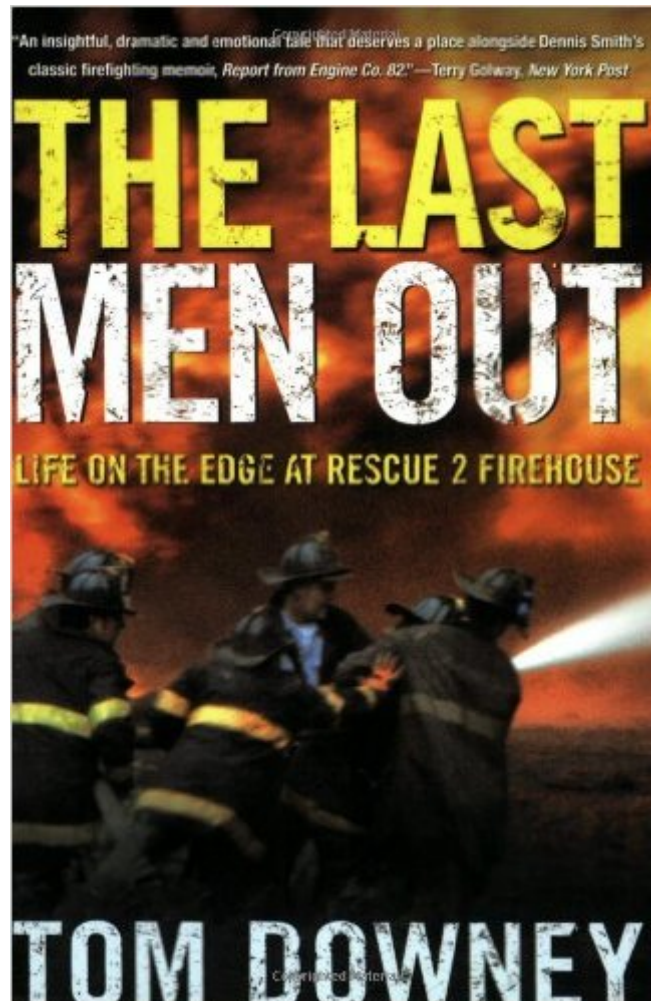


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The Last Men Out: Life On The Edge At Rescue 2 Firehouse



Synopsis

"An insightful, dramatic and emotional tale that deserves a place alongside Dennis Smith's classic firefighting memoir, *Report from Engine Co. 82.*" -Terry Golway, *New York Post* Brooklyn's Rescue 2 has long been known as one of the country's top firehouses, a model for departments nationwide. Recognized for their expertise and commitment, Rescue 2's men handle only big blazes where civilians and their fellow firemen are in danger. Beginning in 1996 with legendary Captain Ray Downey's promotion, the story follows the trials of his replacement, Phil Ruvolo, as he works to win over his headstrong men. A new Rescue 2 is forged through changes in firefighting methods and blazes that quickly become legend. Through the crisis of 9/11 and the subsequent rebuilding, Ruvolo triumphantly fills the late Downey's boots, heading Rescue 2 toward a future worthy of its past, its heroes, its city. Filled with firefighting detail, raucous humor, and gritty real-life scenes, *The Last Men Out* is a new classic for an era in firefighting that is more risky, complicated, and dramatic than any before.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is incredible. The author does a fantastic job of mixing in detailed accounts of historic fires along with the day to day part of the job. Of course the real heroes are the fireman, a special breed. There are several anecdotes that show they don't want recognition (in one case, a man wanted to pay them \$2000 for saving his mother, but they told him to save his money and buy a smoke detector!), just to do their job. The love of fighting fires comes across in spades as does the work ethic, the humor, the camaraderie and the intense drive of the rescue 2 group. The characters are

unforgettable. I wanted to cry when one of them in particular died (I forgot his name, but he was the gentle, quiet one who would give neighborhood boys free 10 point checks when they came in to get air in their bike tires.). I was left with great sadness that these dedicated men, everyday heroes, are left with very little money for their efforts and most have to struggle by taking second jobs even with their insane hours. We should rise up and honor these men by paying them better salaries and honoring their work. They make our lives possible. By all accounts, this is a riveting book and a great piece of NY/Brooklyn/Queens history.

As an aspiring firefighter applicant, I have tried to grab and read every book, story, article that I can about the "job" as so many call it. I must say that of those I've found, this one has touched me the most. Downey takes you into the private lives of these men and tells you each of their stories to the point that you feel if you saw them somewhere you've known them for years. Being allowed, not formally accepted by these firemen of Rescue 2, to invade their private home away from home behind the closed bay door (with the tribute to one of their fallen brothers that you get to know...no name dropping here) is an amazing feat on its own. But to put you in his place as you read his words and feel the emotions these men felt has left me speechless. There are times when you can almost smell the smoke and feel the heat of the flames flickering above the heads of the men trudging through buildings looking for victims and just as you start to feel that little twinge of fear...you are injected with a bit of sharp humor to lighten your stress but to also show you how these men were able to become known as THE rescue unit the world looks up to. They truly have fun working in the most intense of heat and the darkest of dark (smoke so dark and dense that you can't see your hand that you KNOW is right in front of your mask, but you feel it adding weight to your bunker gear as it rests on your shoulders.). This book is a true testament of the character of a firefighter. I can go on for days about how this book is one of the best I've read and reasons why. But I won't. I'll just tell you to click on the "add to cart" button and see for yourself once you get your copy. Bless those that fall on the job and their families left behind. It takes a lot to be willing to give your life to save a complete stranger that may or may not be there.

Only one other book I've read truly captures the true lives of firefighters and their community to the depth and extent that *The Last Men Out* does. It is called *Braving the Waves - Rockaway Rises... and Rises Again*, by Kevin Boyle. Boyle and Downey ought to get together and write a TV series that would give us the real, funny, tough, tragic, duty-bound stories of New York firefighters. Good job, Tom Downey!

Having been a firefighter for 13 years now, I am always suspicious of new books about firefighting. None seem to ever get the feel, the energy, the smells and tastes of firefighting, especially when the author is an outsider. In Tom Downey's book, he takes us into the heart of Rescue 2, the rescue company which covers Brooklyn. As a frequent traveler to NYC and to work with the FDNY, I have a different view on things than most people, but I believe the non-fire person and fire people (buffs and smoke eaters alike) will enjoy this book. Not only is this a history of R2, but it gives great insight to what it means to join a real brotherhood, the bonds which are made, sacrifices people choose to take so they may serve others and hopefully save lives. Ray Downey, the author's father was a work acquaintance of mine, and I miss him greatly. Turns out I knew little of the man after reading this book. This is an easy read and would be a nice addition to any firefighting library.

I think this is well worth the read. Downey captures a tremendous amount of rich detail about blue collar life in New York. By recording the oral history of a few men, some of them lost on 9-11, Downey captures the cadences, rhythms, foods, and attitudes of working class Brooklyn. It's a mini-history of New York and firefighter lore - told by an author who studied that world before it was shattered by 9-11 and has watched the struggle to rebuild it. It's amazing to think that if Downey hadn't written this book, this oral tradition may have been lost to the rest of us.

I gave this book as a gift to my retired firefighter husband. Preferring political and technical/scientific/discovery magazines, he rarely reads books; however, he couldn't put this book down. Instead of relaxing before the boob tube on his days off, he read! He found it gripping, taking him back to his days at the FDNY, and profound in its personal insights into the lives of the men of Rescue 2. You can feel how the men mobilize, fight and react to horrific fires. The book is a fitting tribute to the men of Rescue 2, their leaders and fallen brothers, and to their struggles post 9/11. It's a must read for civilians and firemen alike.

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