

# A fireman from Engine 13 dies bravely

By Bob Olmstead

When they found fire fighter Walter Watroba, only his head was visible at first, nestled in the corner formed by the roof of the burning Commonwealth Edison building and the jutting top of the rear brick wall.

The rest of his body was out of sight below the roof, lying in an 18-inch-wide crevice slit open when tons of collapsing concrete and steel from a fiery overhead coal conveyor belt fell during the fire Sunday night at Edison's Fisk generating plant. Watroba was hit as he stood holding a hose.

Much of the plummeting concrete had fallen through the roof, leaving nothing to the left

of Watroba but 86 feet of space to the floor below.

The seven-hour drama ended when Dr. Joseph A. Cari, the Fire Department physician, leaned head down across Watroba — next to the yawning hole — and amputated Watroba's pinned right leg. Cari was unable to see the leg in the tight, black space, and performed the operation entirely by sense of touch.

Dr. Cari described the futile rescue attempt in an interview in the Mercy Hospital emergency room, where Watroba's 41, had died of shock and massive injuries.

Cari said Watroba hadn't fallen through the hole in the roof only because a huge "V" of

steel girders had hit him across both thighs, pinning him against the brick wall on his right.

The flames were within a foot and a half of Watroba when his fellow fire fighters were led to him by the frantic blinking of his electric torch.

Cari—who worked as a doctor on Normandy Beach in France in World War II — said the ordeal of trying to save Watroba was the hardest he had ever experienced.

"I kidded with him, talking about the weather, the Chicago Bears losing — every-



WALTER WATROBA



DR. JOSEPH A. CARI

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