

# In Search of a Hero

By G. Mark LaFrancis  
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Newspapers never interested Greg.  
He was always too busy.  
Too busy playing fetch with his dog, Molly.  
Too busy playing Nintendo with his buddy, Mark.  
Too busy with soccer, baseball, basketball, whatever sport  
he could play ...

But newspapers.  
Forget it.  
That meant sitting down and reading words ... long words  
... and many of them.

But one Saturday morning Greg walked to the end of the  
driveway at his Natchez, Mississippi, home, picked up the  
newspaper and ... for some reason he still can't explain ...  
opened it to the front page.

There was a photograph of a firefighter cradling a child in  
his arms ... a girl of two who the fireman had just taken from a  
smoking, flaming building, which appeared in the background  
in the photograph.

“HERO SAVES BABY GIRL,” read the headline.

Greg, whose only interest in the newspaper until then had  
been reading about the local sports coverage, actually read the  
whole story about the firefighter before walking in the front  
door.

“A city firefighter became a hero Friday when he saved  
the life of a two-year-old child who became trapped in an  
apartment fire.

“Firefighter Joe Garrison arrived at the scene of the blaze  
at the Riverbend Apartments shortly after 9 a.m. He was  
among the first firefighters on the scene.

“A woman at a third-story window was screaming, ‘Save  
my baby, save my baby,’ according to police reports.

“The unidentified woman held an infant in her  
outstretched arms, preparing to let the child go.

“Garrison ran to the building, held out his hands and  
caught the child just moments after the woman let the girl go.

“He then gave the baby, which had stopped breathing,  
artificial resuscitation.

“Moments passed, but Garrison never gave up.

“Suddenly, when the baby started wailing, everyone knew  
that Garrison had revived the child.

“Fire Chief Gerry Walburn said, ‘The crowd started yelling, ‘Look, she’s saved ... she’s saved!’

“Walburn said, ‘What a hero! We’re all proud of Joe.’”

When Greg read those words, he became overwhelmed.

“WOW!” he yelled.

He yelled “WOW!” again as he ran back into the house.

“Shhhhh” said his mom, with her finger over her mouth.

“You’ll wake your dad and brother.”

“But Mom ...,” Greg said.

“No ‘But Mom’ me,” she said. “Be QUIET!”

Greg maneuvered in front of her and opened the newspaper’s front page.

“That was a very courageous thing,” said Greg’s mother.

“I wonder if he’ll get a medal.”

“You bet he will,” said Greg. “Cool. Way cool. Way cool. Way, way cool.”

All through breakfast, Greg stared at the front page photograph and read the story aloud over and over, even to the point of being somewhat annoying. By then his father and brother were up because of all the commotion.

“GREGGG! Stop reading,” they ordered in unison.

Although Greg’s mouth was silenced, his mind was a symphony of thoughts. Uppermost in his mind was how he, too, could be like Firefighter Joe and save a life.

That day, and in the days to come, Greg shared his feelings with his family.

“Ya know,” he said. “I always thought I was born to do something great.

“I kept thinkin’ it was to kick three goals in one soccer game ... or to score three touchdowns in one football game ... or to hit three home runs in a baseball game, or ...”

“GREGGGG!” his family said.

“Ya know,” he said. “I think I gotta save a life like Firefighter Joe did.”

“Oh, brother,” his brother said.

“That’s nice,” his parents said.

In a few days, Greg, with his new mission in life ... one he declared was created for him ...embarked on a plan.

He decided that to save a life a life must be in danger.