

Medals of Valor

Sergeant Mike Folse

On Jan. 27, 1999, deputies were called to a house fire on Megan Street in Luling. It was just after 1 p.m. when the call went out. Lt. Dwayne LaGrange of the Special Services Dept. was nearby and was the first to reach the scene. Cpl. Johnny Champagne of the Traffic Division shortly joined him at the house with Patrol Division Deputy Laura Foman, Sgt. Boyd Frickey, and others responding also. Firefighters and EMS units were dispatched due to reports that an elderly man was trapped inside.

Deputies arrived to see a man standing in the front doorway spraying a water hose on a heavily involved fire inside the house. Deputies tried to enter the front door, but were pushed back by the incredible amount of smoke pouring out of the house. They ran around to the rear of the house to try and locate the elderly man and make entry.

They yelled inside the house, but received no reply. They were trying to climb through the window when (then Corporal) Michael Folse advised them it was too dangerous to make entry at that location.

Cpl. Folse ran to the front of the house and entered the house with two firefighters through the billowing black smoke. He made his way, blinded by the heat and smoke, through the house until he located the man, William Halfrich - 76 years old - laying unconscious on the bathroom floor. Cpl. Folse yelled to the firefighters that he had found the man and made his way, carrying Mr. Halfrich towards the front door. He couldn't get out due to a burning sofa that was being removed by the firemen. He was running out of air and time. He lowered Mr. Halfrich, climbed over the sofa to the doorway, grabbed a deep breath of fresh air and went back inside the house. He grabbed Mr. Halfrich and carried him outside. He then began to assist the other deputies in providing CPR on Mr. Halfrich.

Mr. Halfrich had suffered severe burns to his head, face, eyes, and hands and was placed in a hospital Critical Care Unit on a respirator. He later died from his injuries, after a few days.

EMT's arrived and relieved Cpl. Folse. He then began to help firefighters who were giving oxygen to Mr. Halfrich's dog who had been overcome by smoke in the house. Folse picked up the dog, put it in his police car and took it to Destrehan Animal Hospital for treatment.

It was only after being ordered by supervisors that Cpl. Folse went to the hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation.

All the deputies involved nominated Cpl. Folse for this award. His sergeant wrote, "Courage is the quality or state of mind and spirit enabling one to face danger or hardship with confidence and resolution." Undoubtedly, all involved, firefighters, EMT's and other deputies acted with distinction, but one went "beyond the call of duty."

Sgt. Michael J. Folse is the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office's Deputy of the Year for 1999 and the recipient of the department's Medal for Valor.