



# Instructor's Dispatch

A Newsletter of the Commission on Fire Prevention & Control

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## Introduction to the Fire Service Graduation Class 25



**Introduction to the Fire Service Cadet 25**

*Picture taken by Program Manager Jim Carroll*

On July 10th the Connecticut Fire Academy held a graduation ceremony for the Introduction to the Fire Service Summer Cadet Camp. Thirty-three Cadets from 23 Fire Departments graduated. Allison Mendola of the Windsor Fire Dept who served as the class Public Information Officer spoke on behalf of the Cadets. This was the twenty-fifth time that the Connecticut Fire Academy has offered this program to youths who are Juniors/Explorers or members of their local Fire Department.

The delivery was open to youth ages 14-15 and introduces them to the fire service. A special thanks goes out to Program Manager Bill Trisler and to all instructors for a job well done with the Cadet program.

“Smart IC’s  
practice  
“chocolate chip  
management” —  
when the troops  
do good, give ‘em  
a cookie”  
By Alan V.  
Brunacini



## Promotion



*Rescue Program Coordinator  
Albert Bassett*

Albert Bassett was promoted to Captain on July 1, 2009 with the Norwalk F.D. The Connecticut Fire Academy staff wishes Albert great success in his new job.

## Recognizing Members of Our Staff

*Letter from Michael P. Couture, Sr., Battalion Chief of Bureau of Instruction and Training, Waterbury Fire Department*

The Waterbury Fire Department had recently concluded a Rescue Company Candidate Training program that was designed to both train and prepare some of their regular members for an assignment to their Rescue/HazMat Company. At the close of training, 16 department members had attended and received 256 hours of training related to Hazardous Material Technician and Technical Rescue disciplines.

Michael P. Couture, Sr., Battalion Chief of Waterbury Fire Department wrote thanking Deputy Director of Training Mark Lewandowski, Program Managers Eric Munsell and Jim Carroll for their outstanding efforts and for maintaining an incredible persona of professionalism. He also recognize the members of the Certification Division Director of Certification Tom McGowan, Practical Skills Coordinator Ed O’Hurley, Certification Registrar Denice Fortin and the instructors that were assigned for the Rescue Company Candidate Training.



*“Unless the walls are falling, don’t yell or run...neither reflects cleverness or composure (the “out-of-control twins” are running and yelling)”.*

*By Alan V. Brunacini*

## Potatoes and the Decision-Making Process

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Somewhere in the late sixties, shortly after my torturous stint in the military (I had served—during the Vietnam War Era—in the US Army Security Agency as a Russian linguist), and seven or eight years after my disastrous first bout with college (I had flunked out of St. Mary’s University in San Antonio while on a four-year, full-ride scholarship), and during the riotous age of the Civil Rights Movement (in which I did not participate), I was in a class on American history being given by one of my favorite professors, Ed Maguire. Ed was the type of prof that came in and said things like, “Today we’re going to talk about blankety-blank. Who’d like to start?” One day, somehow, we came to a point in time precisely when students were “taking over” the building that we were discussing leadership principles and decision-making skills. Who knows how we got there? Who knows how we got anywhere in Ed’s classes? (My own class attendees often wonder the same thing, right?) “Well,” Ed said, hearing the commotion in the hallway, “it’s all about potatoes.”

We knew, of course, that we were about to get an “Maguirism,” and that this would be another good day in history class. Some profs outlined on the board, with ABCs and 123s, exactly what topic was to be discussed that day and how it would be discussed. Ed’s teaching technique was story telling, each story emphasizing something important in history, something important in life, something worth remembering. We all were thinking the same thing: This must be important, since when student radicals are running through the halls, Dr. Maguire says it’s about potatoes! (Ed was not always right, but he was always sure. The day before this particular class, he had his hair cut into a buzz cut, saying, “When the war starts, I just want them to know which side I’m on.”)

Most people spend most of their time, waste most of their energy, and feel most of their frustration, when dealing with medium-sized potatoes. He stood there moving his outstretched hands alternately up and down, like Lady Justice with her scales. We all sat and waited, mesmerized by his bizarre analogy.

*Continued on page 4*



*“Good leadership  
requires you to  
surround yourself  
with people of  
diverse perspectives  
who can disagree  
with you without  
fear of retaliation”.*

*Doris Kearns  
Goodwin*



## Potatoes and the Decision-Making Process

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*Continued from page 3*

“During the war I was a swabbie, and my outgoing personality often landed me on KP—that stands for Kitchen Police, which means I pissed someone off and had to work in the kitchen.” All the while continued to do the scale thing with his hands. “One day the Chief told me to peel potatoes and to put the big potatoes in the pot on my left and the little potatoes in the pot on my right.” More hand alternation. “I spent most of my time trying to decide what to do with what I perceived to be medium-sized potatoes.”

Laughs all around. We all understood the principle, but couldn’t readily apply the concept to history, leaders, and life—or to the impending riot? “Great leaders make quick decisions on minimal data. If they’re wrong, they make other ones. Most of us, however, are too indecisive. It’s obvious what we should do with big potatoes. And, well, for the small ones, we even have a relevant cultural saying, ‘That’s small potatoes.’ Poor leaders—like me on KP—get stuck on medium-sized potatoes. We wince, we waiver, we over think, we dilly-dally, we get mired in what some fruitcake philosopher recently called ‘existential neurosis,’ what ever the hell that means.” Ed then increased the rate at which he alternated his hands, to emphasize the ensuing chaos.

Ed leaned toward the class. “Keep your eyes on the big potatoes. Everything in life that is not a big potato is a small potato. There are no medium-sized potatoes. The Chief was right. I was wrong.” And when a very agitated big potato walked in the room, Ed calmly said, “Class dismissed.”

I think the point he was trying to make regarded a big potato, so I decided to pass this story on to you.

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**We're on the web at: [www.ct.gov/cfpc](http://www.ct.gov/cfpc)**

### **Agency Mission**

To prevent or mitigate the effects of fire and disasters, either natural or manmade, on the citizens of the State of Connecticut. This objective shall be accomplished through the development and delivery of state-of-the-art educational programs designed to meet nationally recognized standards, certification of individuals to such standards and maintenance of up-to-date resources for use by fire service personnel, public educators and other first responders.