

03-20.

Firefighter Julio Guerrero

Seven members of a southeast Houston family were sleeping-in, this past New Year's Day, when about 9:30 a.m., a 15-year-old boy woke up to find window curtains burning near a stove in the upstairs kitchen. He immediately awakened his mother, two small siblings and other family members sleeping on the first floor.

It was a cold morning, and the family had been using the stove to heat the upstairs area. They attempted to extinguish it, but it quickly became too large and they had to abandon the house they had lived in for 20 years.

District 20, Engines 20, 18, 17, 42, Ladders 20 and 18, Cascade 23 and Rehab responded to the house fire on Avenue I and North Cesar Chavez. As they arrived, Firefighter Julio Guerrero was eager and ready. He had just graduated from fire school, this being his second day on the job, and his first fully involved fire. The firefighters entered the first floor and found light smoke conditions. They then looked for the stairs to the second floor but found none inside. They exited the first floor and found a set of stairs on the outside of the house, going up the stairs to the balcony and gained entrance only to find the floor was totally involved. After about 20 or 30 seconds they backed out, then attempted to re-enter.

While in the second-floor room, Firefighter Guerrero was trapped on his air bottle. He thought the other firefighters were looking for him, and he soon realized the room was becoming too hot. He began to feel his way around for the exit by following the wall. As he attempted to make his way to the balcony, he felt an enormous amount of steam, which had come from a water stream that was being sprayed through the window. He dropped down on his knees and continued to crawl around the room. After what seemed like five to six minutes, he was able to find the door and exited down the stairs.

As a result of the immense heat and steam, Guerrero suffered fairly deep second-degree burns on his arms and back, and was transported to Hermann Hospital code 1. It took two months for the wounds to heal before he was released to go back to work. He then worked in the HFD Records division for four months before he was transferred back to suppression.