

# Newark Fire Fighter earns law degree

By Neal Stoffers, Newark Fire Department

*Editor's Note: The following article was written before Dennis Caufield took his bar exam. We are pleased to announce that since that time he has passed the exam and is currently seeking employment in his new profession.*

Firehouse lawyers, we all know a few. Every firehouse has at least one. They sit at the kitchen table in the morning; hugging a cup of coffee and lecturing on the ramifications of the latest legal issues in the news. Some of us are lucky and listen to an informed exchange of opinions between two of these men before we start our daily routine. The men of Local 1846 who maintain the miles of cable that constitute the pull box alarm system in Newark, N.J. are the most fortunate of all. The lawyer in their firehouse on Springfield Avenue and Hunterdon Street just took the New Jersey Bar Exam.

The Fire Fighter in question, Dennis Caufield, graduated from Seton Hall Law School this past May. A lineman in Newark for the past ten years, Caufield earned both his BA and his law degree while on the job. It was not easy. "You have to stay very regimented", Caufield said. He had to regiment his life for a long period. His undergraduate work took six years to complete because he worked straight days and had to attend night classes. The law degree took an additional four years.

Caufield's regime for law studies began at 7:15 every morning. He would leave home by 7:30 and not return again until 10:30 at night. There was always a book within easy reach if a free moment arose during the work day. Caufield spent the time between the end of work and the start of class studying research in the law library, and then it was off to Seton Hall for his evening classes. He concluded his day at home with a dinner saved for him by his mother, and maybe a little television before bed. This grind continued Monday through Thursday. Thursday



**Newark, New Jersey.** Left to right, The late Senator and Fire Department Director John P. Caufield and his son Dennis. Dennis, a Newark Fire Fighter, recently became distinguished for graduating from the Seton Hall Law School, and for passing his bar exam. He currently is looking for employment in his new profession, but harbors the hope that he can stay in contact with the fire service of which he has been a part.

nights after class, Caufield and his schoolmates would go to a tavern for "stress release" and discussions about school. Friday nights were reserved for library research before taking a much needed rest. During this period, Caufield developed a "strong distaste for wasting time".

The linemen in Newark were not the least bit intimidated by the young law student among them. Their camaraderie and banter continued as before. If Caufield hit his hand with a hammer, his colleagues would comment "you hammer just like a lawyer". On-the-job injuries suffered by others were followed by "It's a good thing you're going to law school". Then the speculation about workmen's compensation would begin. The teasing ended, however, when it counted. It was replaced by encouragement. The support from his family, friends and colleagues gave Caufield the extra boost he needed to get through the law program.

What of the future? Caufield will know the results of his bar exam by

early December. However, he does not feel any pressure to seek immediate employment in his new field. The position he holds with the fire department gives him a peace of mind that is the envy of other law students. The Newark Fire Department has, after all, provided employment for two previous generations of the Caufield family. The younger Caufield's father was Newark's Fire Director for 24 years. His grandfather was a Newark Fire Fighter around the turn of the century.

An interest in criminal law may eventually draw Caufield to the Prosecutor's Office, but he feels Seton Hall has prepared him for practice in any field of the legal profession. Leaving the fire department will not be as easy as people outside the fire service may believe. He has already inquired about the possibility of being hired on as an attorney by the department. If and when he does leave the department, he will take with him the best wishes of all of the Newark Fire Fighters who have worked with him over the past few years. □