

# "FACES OF FIRE"



**NAME:** Jo Brinkley-Chaudoir  
**DATE OF FIRE:** August 13, 2006  
**LOCATION:** Green Bay, Wis.  
**INJURY:** A few burns, rib fracture and broken hip at time of incident. Partner, Arnie Wolff died

*"It was a very expensive home, a very, very expensive home. It wouldn't have cost them hardly anything, maybe a few thousand dollars, to sprinkle that house. And that would have saved the entire house, and more importantly, it would have saved Arnie's life."*

It has been four years, but the terrifying memories of August 13, 2006, are still clear to Jo Brinkley-Chaudoir. Jo was working as a firefighter/paramedic for the Green Bay Fire Department, when a call came into the station about a house fire. Her team was among the first to respond, and by the looks of the outside, the fire didn't seem too bad.

"When we got there, we just saw a little wisp of gray smoke coming out the back of the house. We thought it was just a barbecue grill or something," Jo recalls.

Jo and her 13-year partner in the department, Arnie Wolff, were instructed to enter the home to search for residents. As they entered, the home was filled with static smoke. Arnie was first in and told Jo which direction to go. They dropped to their knees and crawled only a few feet when the floor collapsed into a basement engulfed in flames.

The heat from the basement had burned through the floor joists. The oxygen released from the floor collapse caused a flash-over Arnie and Jo plunged more than 10 feet when the floor collapsed.

"The flames were just pounding on my helmet, and they were pounding on my body. They were all around me. I couldn't get away," Jo says. "Then I remembered Arnie. I started screaming for Arnie and hollering for him, and I was digging through the burning debris looking for him. I couldn't hear anything over the roar of the fire."

As the fire intensified, Jo kept pushing. As the fire darkened a bit, she was able to crawl up through what she believes to have been the door to the room into which they fell.

Arnie wasn't so lucky. He remained trapped under debris for 14 hours while his team fought desperately through the intense heat and flames to save him. But they could not.

# “FACES OF FIRE”

There were no residents in the home that day. The house was completely lost to the fire.

“I think I knew before I left the scene. I knew he wasn’t going to get out of there. I was praying the whole time that they’d find him and that they could get to him.”

If the home had just ONE sprinkler, Jo believes that Arnie would have made it.

## **ABOUT “FACES OF FIRE”**

“Faces of Fire” is a project of the National Fire Protection Association funded by a Federal Emergency Management Agency Fire Prevention and Safety Grant. The campaign is a tool to help people and groups across the country promote the use of automatic fire sprinklers in one- and two-family homes. By containing fires before they spread, home fire sprinklers protect lives and property. The personal stories told through the Faces of Fire campaign show the experiences of those who escaped or lost loved ones in home fires and those whose lives and property were protected by home fire sprinklers.