

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF SOFA SUPER STORE FIRE

JUNE 18, 2008

ADDRESS BY

**MAYOR JOSEPH P. RILEY, JR.
CITY OF CHARLESTON**

Today as we come together in memory, we vow to never
forget

Captain Michael Benke

Captain Billy Hutchinson

Captain Louis Mulkey

Engineer Brad Baity

Engineer Mark Kelsey

Assistant Engineer Michael French

Firefighter Melvin Champaign

Firefighter Earl Drayton

Firefighter Brandon Thompson

One year ago tonight, they heard the bell, they responded to
the call. It was their chosen honored profession, a brave,

courageous one, to fight fire, to extinguish the flames, to save lives, to protect their community. These brave men rushed into a burning building and entered the pages of history of the City of Charleston.

We will never forget -- how will we remember?

We will remember

- by caring for and loving their families, remembering birthdays, graduations, weddings, by phone calls, letters, visits and daily prayers,
- by making the site of this fire a sacred, beautiful and inspirational place,
- by making this proud and historic Fire Department, that has protected and preserved this old and historic city for generations, by making it a national leader in firefighting best practices and firefighter safety so that a legacy of this fire is that fire departments from across our land will look to Charleston for the best examples,

the best techniques in firefighting and firefighter safety.

Yes, we remember them by the hard and positive work of moving forward.

And we will remember them, our heroes, by becoming heroes too. We all should try to be, not firefighters, few of us have that ability, skill or courage, but we can be heroes in many other ways and in doing so honor these brave men and heroic men. We can remember them with our heroic acts of kindness and forgiveness, heroic acts of hard work and striving to do better. We can remember them by heroic acts of service, volunteering, helping children, mentoring, through our heroic acts of generosity. Even when we are feeling down, we can be heroes by offering a heroic smile, lifting someone up, cheering them on, giving a helping hand.

You see, these men had something special in common. In addition to being members of the brotherhood of firefighters, they

were good guys, people you wanted as your friends, would want living next door, sharing a pew in church. They were football coaches, volunteers, the friendly, considerate neighbor, the person who always had time to help, to show interest, to give that smile, to pick you up.

So that is how we will remember -- their fellow firefighters remembering them through their continued hard work and search for excellence in their profession, and we, the rest of us, will remember them as we strive to be heroes too.

A wise person once said that life gives us the opportunity to be nice to people and to leave our world a better place. That is what they did, these fine and brave men, and we best remember them by doing that too. Let's all strive to be heroes as we remember and vow to never forget.