



**Joseph T. Zager**  
**Died in the line of duty on January 19, 1940**

**Description of Act**

Joseph T. Zager of 12 Alpine Court died on Friday, January 19, 1940 due to a tragic accident which occurred the evening before while returning from extinguishing a fire at the home of Clarence Davis at 114 Magnolia Avenue. Captain Louis A. Francis of 102 Prospect Street was driving the Combination A kit, with Zager riding alongside. Firefighter Joseph Vieira, 50 years old, of 35 Eastern Avenue, and Prescott Dagle, 17 years old (a "spark"), of 16 Haskell Street riding were the rear platform.

The kit was approaching the railroad overpass on Magnolia Avenue, coming down the hill and around the curve, when it went into a skid. Over a distance of about 150 feet, it slew back and forth and then turned a complete somersault, throwing out three of its occupants. Vieira and Dagle were thrown from the rear platform onto the road, while Zager was thrown clear of the front cab to the side of the road. The rescue squad rushed all three to the Addison Gilbert Hospital where Zager was immediately placed on the danger list. He had received a fractured skull and a concussion of the brain; he never regained consciousness.

Vieira's metal helmet was badly bent and was believed to have saved him from more serious injuries when he fell on his head. The kit was wrecked, with extension ladders smashed into kindling and wreckage strewn all over the road.

## **Background**

Joseph T. Zager was born in Manistee, Michigan on June 9, 1893, son of Frank and Mary Thomas Zager, and came to Gloucester around 1910 or 1911 at the age of 17 with some of the pioneers in gill netting who came here from the Great Lakes region. In his youth he served in the old Company G, 8th Regiment, Massachusetts National Guards. His association with the Fire Department began when he was appointed a provisional call man on May 9, 1924. Firefighter Zager was of a quiet, retiring disposition, but conscientious in his work and a thoughtful, generous individual whose friends were legion. Fire Chief Homer R. Marchant said, "Joe was an ideal firefighter, a real man who always did his work and did it well."

Joseph T. Zager was survived by his wife, Ruth K. (Garvey) Zager and four sons: Joseph, Philip, Robert H., and Donald G. Zager; and four daughters: Barbara J., Priscilla M., Frances M., and Ruth N. Zager, all of Gloucester. He also left five brothers: Michael and Louis of Chicago, Illinois; George of Hammond, Indiana; James of Detroit, Michigan; and John R. Zager of this City; and a sister, Anna, Mrs. Harry Retenly of Chicago, Illinois.

## **Postscript**

As Joseph T. Zager's body was lowered into the grave at Calvary Cemetery, the all-out signal, two blows, was sounded on the fire alarm.

## **References**

*Gloucester Daily Times*, January 19, 1940 and January 22, 1940.