

*Baltimore Morning Herald*  
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***“Investigating” A Life Saver!***

***Unusual Action of Democratic Commissioners***

***Aimed at Mr. Hedges***

***Attempt to Belittle the Heroism of the Fireman***

***Brannan’s Peculiar Ideas***

***District Chief Thought the Substitute Neglected His Duty***

Messrs. Sirich and Parrish, the democratic members of the fireboard, held an “investigation” yesterday afternoon of Substitute William L. Hedges’ rescue of Mr. Millard F. Taylor at a fire at the latter’s home a week ago.

What they learned convinced them that Hedges’ act was not a brave one; that two other firemen helped him and that if he had rescued Mr. Taylor in the manner at first reported he should have been summoned before the board to answer to a charge of neglect of duty!

Mr. Cathcart, though he is the president of the board, was not told that an “investigation” was to be made. This fact he brought up at the beginning of the board meeting.

“A majority of the board ordered it,” said Mr. Sirich, and this was the sum of the explanation offered.

District Chief Frederick Brannan; Capt. E. J. Strahier, of No. 11 truck; Lieut. J.M. Fredericks and Pipeman William Morrow, of No. 19 engine company, and Ladderman Charles Wain and Probationer John Bell, of No. 11 truck company, were the witnesses examined. Hedges was also given a chance to tell his story.

Chief Brennan and captain Strahler, who naively confessed that they did not see the rescue, declared positively that it was not heroic.

“There was no fire near Mr. Taylor,” said Brennan, “and he should have been removed from the house by way of the stairway instead of through the window and down the ladder. If I had seen a fireman risk killing a man on a ladder under similar circumstances I would have ordered him before the board for gross neglect of duty.”

“Mr. Taylor was in no danger,” said Captain Strahler, “He had a rope ladder fire escape in his room and needed no aid. There was little smoke about him,. It is not considered especially brave for a fireman to carry a person down a ladder. Such rescues are common. A man who would use a ladder when a stairway is just as convenient, as in this case, is unfit to be a fireman.”

Lieutenant Fredericks testified that Morrow, and not Hedges, rescued Mr. Taylor, but Morrow, on being called to the stand, denied this.

“There were three of us,” he said. “Wain, Hedges and myself. Mr. Taylor did not want to be carried down the ladder, but we insisted, and he finally consented. The three of us marched together. Wain and Hedges were on a 33-foot extension ladder and I on a truss ladder. We lifted Mr. Taylor out of the window and carried him down.

“The room was full of smoke, and when we found him he was coughing. Later he became ill. We took him out of the window, instead of down the stairs, because the dense smoke made us suppose that there was a fire inside.”

Hedges and Wain corroborated this statement. After all of the witnesses had been heard Messrs. Sirich and Parrish decided that they had won.

“The district chief’s report stands as it is,” said Mr. Sirich. This report made no mention of Hedges.

Later, when Chief McAfee announced that there were two vacancies among the probationers, the democratic commissioners decided that they were not ready to make the promotions.

During the hearing there were many passages at arms between President Cathcart and Messrs Sirich and Parrish.

“Is Mr. Hedges being investigated,” asked the president, “for bringing Mr. Taylor out of a burning building or for committing the offense of being at the top of the eligible list? I have witnessed rescues in the night as well as at other times, and heretofore no criticisms but only words of commendation have been spoken of the party or parties performing the heroic act.”

To this Mr. Sirich replied: “Don’t make grandstand plays.”

Hedges’ good bearing and apparent intelligence made a good impression upon even the democratic commissioners.

“I like his looks,” said Mr. Parrish after the meeting.