



**Boy In A Box: A personal journey about
overcoming life's obstacles, from a father's
abandonment to a catastrophic injury, and the
powers of ... and leadership to cultivate positive
change**

John Joseph Cagno Jr., Paul Lonardo

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This book is an autobiographical account of the lessons I learned about life and how I was able to apply them to inspire, motivate and empower others in my own work as a firefighter, as well in my daily life as a husband, a father and a man. When I was five years-old, my father abandoned my mother and three sisters, beginning a whole new life when he started another family. I never saw him again. This presented me with many challenges growing up, but even this heartache was overshadowed by debilitating injuries I sustained as an 18 year-old call firefighter. On January 13, 1980, while performing a training exercise at a vacant mill, my left hand passed through an induction field of a live 35,000 volt transmission line. Approximately 14,000 volts of electricity surged through my body as I ascended a fire department aerial ladder. While I was fortunate that the current did not instantly kill me, or fall to my death, the injuries to both my hands and right leg were catastrophic, altering the path of my life and shaping me in many ways. At times the pain and severity of my injuries were too much to bear and made me pray to God to take me. With the love and support of many people, however, I found an inner strength that exists in all of us, and I made it out of the hospital after a harrowing five month journey. Through years of grueling rehabilitation and dozens of operations, I remained determined to fulfill my life-long ambition of becoming a firefighter. I have always said my life is an open book, and in BOY IN A BOX, I am brutally honest about these, and many other personal adversities, including a battle with prescription pain killers and incidents of brutal bullying experienced by my own son. Even before my accident, I have been a student of leadership and inspiration. While I have read countless books on the subjects and attended numerous conferences and seminars, not a single author or speaker was a “regular” person. That is why I wrote BOY IN A BOX. I feel that I have a mission to complete, or better still, a responsibility, to give back for having been so fortunate in life despite having it groomed by hardship. Now, I have written about my journey, with its ups and downs, accomplishments and adversities, mistakes and failures, the few wins and many losses. I believe that people are basically all the same, and that what differentiates us is how we deal with our problems. I also believe that storytelling can be the best medicine in helping us get through life’s many challenges. Those of us who are willing to share our journey in an honest and candid way can help alleviate someone else’s suffering and sorrows. I want to inspire, motivate, and empower the ordinary person, so that they might be able to realize their full potential.

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