

Firefighter Name: Art Organista
Position: Fireman/Paramedic
Fire Department: Chino Hills, CA
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- 1) What branch and unit were you in? *Navy 1981-1987 assigned to USS Belleau Wood (LHA-3) as an Aviation Boatswains Mate Aircraft Handler and Crash & Rescue for my first three years, then acted as an Air-Traffic Controller for the next three years.*
- 2) What was your highest rank? *Second Class Petty Officer.*
- 3) Are you still enlisted as a reservist or National Guard? *No.*
- 4) Why did you join the service? *Wanted to be a fireman and, after seeing the movie 'The Final Countdown', I talked to Navy recruiters and they told me there was a special program for people who wanted to be firefighters. There were thousands of guys testing for four jobs at municipal fire departments and my experience in the military was my leg up on these guys. Even though I had the same certifications as the other job seekers when I got out, when I mentioned that I'd been a firefighter in the Navy, boom, I got three job offers.*
- 5) What did you like the most about being in? *Learned how to stand on my own two feet and do it myself, basically gaining maturity and discipline. Got to see the world.*
- 6) What did you like the least? *Lack of vacation time. Everything was by the Navy's schedule. Also the low pay.*
- 7) What moment most defined your military experience? *A fire in the print shop on-board ship. It was something different from aircraft fires. Fighting a fire in an enclosed area, basically a dark hole inside the ship and the adrenaline rush doing that job, really got me hooked on firefighting. In three years as an air-traffic controller, I never got that kind of a rush.*
- 8) What made you choose firefighting as a career? *I'd always wanted to be a fireman.*
- 9) What do you like the most about firefighting? *The rewards in the community that it brings, you're always involved in Christmas toy drives, golf events, and other things, we're held up as the good guys.*
- 10) What do you like least about firefighting? *Time away from the family.*