

Firefighter Name: Bill Heitmann

Position: Captain

Fire Department: Chino Valley Independent Fire District, CA

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- 1) What branch and unit were you in? *US Air Force Firefighter 1977-1981, with 42nd Squadron at Chanute and 62nd Squadron at George AFB.*
- 2) What was your highest rank? *Staff Sgt.*
- 3) Are you still enlisted as a reservist or National Guard? *No.*
- 4) Why did you join the service? *Family tradition. I wanted to go to college, but my family didn't have much money, so I joined the Air Force on my 18th birthday. I wanted to be hired into a civilian fire department, so I would take any classes that crossed over from the Air Force to municipal firefighting (heavy rescue, light rescue, trench rescue, etc).*
- 5) What did you like the most about being in? *Attended Chanute AFB twice for firefighting in the wintertime and found out I loved cold weather, which is kind of surprising considering I live here in Southern California, and also learned lots about firefighting. I was the Range Fire Guard out at Cuttyback Bombing Range when I was at George and really had a lot of fun driving around the range putting out fires. Learning how to handle snakes (George AFB has lots of snakes), so now I use that knowledge to teach snake classes for the fire department. Getting to travel around the US.*
- 6) What did you like the least? *Probably the only thing I disliked was that, after I'd learned everything I needed to get into a municipal fire department, the Air Force held me back for a couple of months before my tour was up, but that was a pretty minor gripe.*
- 7) What moment most defined your military experience? *All the plane crashes. We were still training Iranian pilots at that time and they crashed a lot.*
- 8) What made you choose firefighting as a career? *I was one of those kids who decided to be a firefighter at an early age (5 years old). I lived in Buena Park and the BPFDD came to school with their brand-new snorkel where they did a demo, gave us a Junior Fireman certificate and brass badge, so I decided to become a fireman.*
- 9) What do you like the most about firefighting? *I function on high-order anxiety situations and like to get involved and help people out of their problems. I like crises and can adapt quickly.*
- 10) What do you like least about firefighting? *Paperwork. Every time somebody in any department anywhere in the US gets sued we have more paperwork to do because our lawyers tell us to keep paperwork on all more and more minutiae so WE don't lose a lawsuit.*