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- 1) What branch and unit were you in? *Army 1988-1992 at Fort Bragg, Fort Ord, and Korea as part of 82nd Airborne, 2nd Infantry and 7th Infantry.*
- 2) What was your highest rank? *Specialist-4 (E-4).*
- 3) Are you still enlisted as a reservist or National Guard? *No.*
- 4) Why did you join the service? *My Dad is still in, my grandfathers were in the Service. I wanted to take advantage of the GI Bill for school.*
- 5) What did you like the most about being in? *Loved being at Fort Bragg and jumping out of planes back then (I wouldn't do it now though!) Ranger School was the only other place you could do that and they don't take recruits straight out of Infantry School. I liked working as a team. I wasn't in sports in school, so working as a team with a small group of guys where you're only as strong as the weakest link. Working as a squad or as a platoon to accomplish a common goal was excellent. Gave me the drive, the motivation to take environment tests and to go through interviews. It gave me better people skills and more confidence. It also affects the way I am at my station. Whenever I see an officer I always call him 'sir', it's just a natural habit. Some people say, 'I'm not that old!' and I tell them, no, it's not your age, it's your position'.*
- 6) What did you like the least? *The food. When I first got to Korea, I didn't like being there at all, but after a while I got used to it. I didn't really want to leave Fort Bragg, but finally just accepted it.*
- 7) What moment most defined your military experience? *Operation Just Cause in 1989 (Panama). Definitely a defining experience. We jumped in about an hour after the Rangers did. All that training and drilling they threw at you all kind of came together at that moment and a lot of stuff that hadn't made sense suddenly did. For instance, when you're in the barracks a sergeant will yell 'get down and give me some pushups' and you just do it without questioning it. In Panama, there was some fighting and if you were told to get down, but questioned it instead of just reacting, you might not have come back.*
- 8) What made you choose firefighting as a career? *Before I went into the Army, I had a strong desire to be a firefighter. When I was, like, 5 years old in the '70's, whatever I was doing I would just drop everything to go watch Emergency! on TV. When we were living in Huntington Beach in the '70's, I remember seeing a fire truck race past with the sirens blaring and firefighters standing on the running boards (which we don't do anymore, of course), I just stood there shocked. We walked down the street and there was a house on fire, which we stood there and watched for, like, 20 minutes and I was just, like, WOW! I still remember that even to this day. After that, whenever I would hear sirens in the distance I would run to the street corner just to watch them go by. When I was getting ready to process out of the Army, there were these fliers that cities and counties were handing out about becoming a firefighter and I figured, 'Hey, I'll just go and apply to be a fireman and they'll hire me right on the spot!' I had no clue how hard it really was and, when you turned your app in, there are thousands of other people applying. I had no clue on that entire process. One thing I found out is that you don't necessarily need to have a Fire Science degree, but it's best if you're working towards a degree. All most fire departments care about is that you have a degree, they don't care if it's a Fire Science degree or what have you. When I first hired on as a firefighter, many of the municipal fire departments up in northern and central California required everything you could think of, which makes sense because they're so small that they can't afford to send you to EMT or send them to paramedic [school]. It's more cost-effective for them to hire someone who has all these qualifications, someone who paid for them themselves, basically, versus the city paying for them. The first two places I worked, I had to have the qualifications before I got hired. I had a friend who went to college while I went into the Army. When we both applied to LA County Fire Department, he didn't feel it was fair that I got the 10 Veterans Points*

for having been in the Army. He thought they were punishing him, but I said, 'Hey, they're not punishing you. With your degree you're going to look a lot better, especially with the smaller departments. You chose to go to school, which I couldn't do, so I went into the military'.

- 9) *What do you like the most about firefighting? We work as a team, we have a goal, we're going to fix whatever's wrong at that call. It's a lot like it was at Fort Bragg. Sometimes, months after we've helped people out at a car crash they'll come by the station to say 'thanks' and that's pretty great. The respect in the community.*
- 10) *What do you like least about firefighting? People using the 911 system for things that it wasn't intended to handle, like people with colds or flu who call us because they think they'll get through the emergency room faster. We have to race through traffic, putting everybody at risk, just to get someone through ER processing quicker when they've had a problem for days and could have just gone to the ER on their own days before. Also crank calls from pay phones at 2 AM, where you arrive and there's nobody there. It's just part of the job.*