

Name: Michael Matheson  
Position: Firefighter  
Fire Department: Norco Fire Department  
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- 1) What branch and unit were you in? *Marines MWSS 374 based out of Tustin, CA from 1988-1992. Reserves until 1996. Aircraft Firefighting specialty.*
- 2) What was your highest rank? *Corporal.*
- 3) Are you still enlisted as a reservist or National Guard? *No.*
- 4) Why did you join the service? *To become a firefighter and also to prove to myself that I could serve in a physically-demanding service.*
- 5) What did you like the most about being in? *Liked the location in Orange County, 24-hour shifts, and time off, but most of all being allowed to attend the fire academy in Santa Ana for 2 ½ months full time. Base fire station was really nice.*
- 6) What did you like the least? *Hard to be away from home (Denver) at first, but mostly the 'hurry up and wait' routine in the run-up to Desert Storm. Putting people in charge based more on years of service rather than qualifications.*
- 7) What moment most defined your military experience? *The most defining moment was in Desert Storm. I was an aircraft firefighter until about 3 months before the air campaign when I was chosen to lead a squad of marines as a "Rear area security platoon". Basically we were to fight the Iraqi army coming over the border to allow the other marines inside the airbase and give them time to escape aboard aircraft, meaning we were the sacrificial lambs for that airbase.*
- 8) What made you choose firefighting as a career? *In high school, Marine recruiters encouraged to sign up for firefighting training.*
- 9) What do you like the most about firefighting? *The thing I like the most is that we do this job for the gratification of bringing some normalcy out of chaos in people's lives. Trying to help out people in an emergency. It helps to clarify things when the alarm goes off at 2 AM.*
- 10) What do you like least about firefighting? *There's really not a lot of bad things. Some people will talk about the time away from family, especially during the holidays. But our families are allowed to come down to the fire station to have Thanksgiving or Christmas with us if we're on duty. It's the smaller things we miss like children's birthdays, missing anniversaries, things like that.*