

Name: Shawn Youngblood  
Position: Paramedic/Firefighter  
Fire Department: Downey, CA  
Email: [shawn.youngblood@downeyfire.org](mailto:shawn.youngblood@downeyfire.org)

- 1) What branch and unit were you in? *Marines, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, 1986-1990.*
- 2) What was your highest rank? *Lance Corporal.*
- 3) Are you still enlisted as a reservist or National Guard? *No.*
- 4) Why did you join the service? *Needed direction, came from small Southern town, didn't have grades to get into college. Job rate there very low, lots of poverty, so wanted to get out of the town. Friend who had joined service suggested looking at what he did, then I spoke to a recruiter and joined.*
- 5) What did you like the most about being in? *Liked camaraderie, the structure, knowing there was a right way to do things. I know I'll keep the friends I made there for the rest of my life.*
- 6) What did you like the least? *Bureaucracy, 'hurry-up-and-wait', people in different countries would play by a different set of rules that seemed counter-intuitive to the mission.*
- 7) What moment most defined your military experience? *Lucky enough to do two West-Pacs, one at Camp Fuji in Japan which allowed me to tour Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which was awe-inspiring from the history, but also seeing the anger from some of the Japanese for American military people. There were protests at the gates to Camp Fuji and it really brought home how fortunate we are to live in the US.*
- 8) What made you choose firefighting as a career? *Once I got out of the military, lots of my buddies went into law-enforcement, but I didn't feel I had the mentality for that, so I'd probably end up getting myself killed. I wanted to have something with the benefits like law-enforcement and a friend of mine was taking fire science classes at a local college. I thought it looked like a pretty good career because you're one of the good guys, I could put my life on the line like I'd done in the military doing something that's important to society. On the fireground, you have to take orders and follow orders, so it's a lot of structure, like the military, but firefighters need to be able to work out a problem, to think on their feet. Being mechanically gifted is definitely a plus.*
- 9) What do you like the most about firefighting? *Camaraderie. Variety, the sense of not knowing what's going to happen in the next minute. Problems will present themselves at different times. Also it's a lot of learning. You're never done learning in this job.*
- 10) What do you like least about firefighting? *Tied down with the same bureaucracy as the military. City Council makes decisions on budgets and they're businessmen during the week or retired and they have no idea of what it takes maintaining a fire department. They balk at firefighter pay sometimes and try to cut pay to save money. We try to educate the council members about this issue, but it's still a hard sell.*