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- 1) What branch and unit were you in? *Air Force combat survival trainer for pilots 1997 to 2003 (arctic survival, water survival, basic land survival; and also how to inspect parachutes, life rafts, and all the survival gear that goes on an aircraft). Did same job as a reservist under Civil Service. Considered becoming a pilot since I worked so closely with them anyway and they're treated better.*
- 2) What was your highest rank? *Staff Sergeant.*
- 3) Are you still enlisted as a reservist or National Guard? *No because there was no such thing as being in the Reserves after 9/11 (everybody was now active-duty) and I didn't want to be deployed. I know guys who have been overseas on up to six rotations.*
- 4) Why did you join the service? *Girlfriend's father was a reservist (Chief Master Sergeant) and had a full-time job as an engineer with LA City Fire. Also, I wasn't serious about going straight into college at that time. My dad was ex-Navy, so there was a family connection with the military. I knew about the benefits, the GI Bill and so forth, which was a plus. Also, I was making good money (\$19-\$20 per hour) doing the job. Having the VA benefits is great, too.*
- 5) What did you like the most about being in? *The friendships, the camaraderie, maturing.*
- 6) What did you like the least? *Training at that time, but looking back on it, I loved the training. Even the POW training (although not at the time!) For a lot of people now, the military is not an attractive option. For our parents' generation, they felt it was a good thing to go in and mature, become a man, after that, when you got out you got your life started. Nowadays, we're not raised to go into the military, which is kind of hurting our country, in a way.*
- 7) What moment most defined your military experience? *9/11, just seeing what happened after that tragedy, seeing the Marines preparing for combat at Camp Pendleton when I was staying near there.*
- 8) What made you choose firefighting as a career? *I saw what it was like for my girlfriend's father when I was in High School. My brother-in-law was also a firefighter and I saw the lifestyle, the brotherhood, and it was an appealing, exciting occupation that I love doing every day. I was always in sports in school and being outdoors there and in the military, so I didn't really want a job pushing paper. Got hired for the LA County hand crews when I was 23, joined Culver City when I was 26.*
- 9) What do you like the most about firefighting? *It's hard to explain. The whole occupation is very enjoyable. Working with the guys, the fun we have around the station, being active and being outdoors. The variety is exciting, helping people is one of the best things. At Christmas we have a toy drive, this one guy brings by \$10,000 worth of gifts for the kids, seeing the kids' faces, the joy there, it's just something you wouldn't get at any other job. Helping an 80-year-old grandmother who's having heart palpitations is great. The camaraderie. The adrenaline rush of going out to an emergency.*
- 10) What do you like least about firefighting? *Multiple wake-up calls at night. One or two isn't bad, but getting three or four after midnight is a drag. It ruins your next day off. 'Frequent flyer' people who call once a week after midnight.*