

Marines in the Fire Service

Michael Archer | September 14, 2007

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Oftentimes, people may think about Air Force firefighters at an airbase foaming the runway prior to a risky landing, or Navy firefighters handling a shipboard fire. But mention firefighting as a Marine MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) and most people give you an incredulous look. Marines as firefighters?

Aggressive Firefighting

So what makes Marines unique as firefighters? Let's start with how they handle fires while still in the service. "One Air Force airbase in Kuwait really showed the huge difference between Air Force firefighting and how we did it in the Marines," said LA County Firefighter/Paramedic Robert Reardon, a former Lance Corporal with MWSS 373.

"The Air Force [who managed the base] would watch hot brakes on an aircraft for about 18 minutes to make sure they didn't catch fire, then have the aircraft taxi back to the line. We were much more aggressive. We would jump out, chock and pin the aircraft, and use fans to cool the brakes off for five minutes or so, then let it taxi back to the line. That was our SOP (Standard Operating Procedure)," Reardon added.

Staying Current

The stereotype of a Marine is someone who is all brawn and no brain. But there are several "leathernecks" that love academics and excel outside of physical activities. "I'm addicted to training and continuing to learn, to building construction, the blood borne pathogens threat, multi-victim incidents, wildland fire behavior and, the science behind the predictable enemy of fire," said Battalion Chief Bob Doyle of Glendale Fire Department, a former Corporal in 2nd Marine Recon. "I credit the training and experience I gained in the Marine Corps with my success now."

Ordinary Firefighters?

Additionally, the Marine mentality is to be willing to lead, but be content to serve as well. Just ask Marine Reserve Colonel Rick Mullen, a Firefighter/Paramedic with LA County Fire Department: "Even though I'm a Colonel there, I still swab the decks and clean the toilets just like the troops, which causes my 'gunny' to come by and say 'Sir, don't do this!'" For those still in the Marines, imagine seeing the Gunnery Sergeant standing guard in the latrine doorway so that new boots don't see the Colonel in there scrubbing happily away.

ABOUT MICHAEL ARCHER



Michael Archer is a wildfire consultant and writer. He has written articles for *Home and Fire Magazine*, *Wildland Firefighter Magazine*, and other publications, lectured to many groups about fire issues, been quoted by Associated Press and USA Today reporters, and also appeared on cable and network TV discussing wildfire issues. Currently, he is acting as webmaster and technical consultant to Wildfire Research Network (www.wildfireresearch.org), a Los Angeles-based citizens' action group that promotes firefighting issues involving the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

His "Firebombers Incorporated" series of novels gives readers an intriguing "what-if" scenario on how 21st century technology could modernize the wildland firefighting force. His novel "Firestorm," received excellent reviews from *Writers Digest*, *The Nashville News*, *The VVA Veteran* (Vietnam Veterans of America's magazine) and firefighting professionals across the United States. His company, Firebomber Publications, donates 50 percent of net profits to organizations that support the families of injured and fallen firefighters.



You can visit his website at: www.firebomberpublications.com

Firestorm can be purchased at Amazon.com

Comments can be sent to: marcher47@firebomberpublications.com

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Semper Fi!

One recurring theme throughout interviews with Marines is the lifelong devotion they have to the Corps. One former Marine Sergeant Major, Bill Staples, also known to his buddies in the Los Angeles Fire Department as "Sergeant Major Staples," probably exemplifies this credo: "Camaraderie, the brotherhood that all Marines have with each other, the esprit de corps, and of course having the title of United States Marine. The Marines teach you core values like honor, courage, and commitment, and that's instilled in all of us, to be true to yourself, to the man on your left and the man on your right." When asked what message he would like to convey to fellow Marines, past and present, he replied proudly, "Semper Fi! Ooh-rah, Leathernecks!"

For Further Reading

For readers who enjoyed these stories and would like to read more about the adventures of Marines in the fire service, visit the Firefighter Interviews webpage www.firebomberpublications.com/Interviews.htm at Firebomber Publications and read interview notes from lots of folks who have served this country in two exciting careers. It will be entertaining time well spent.

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