
The EMS Experience

Saluting those with 20 years or more in EMS

Carol Miller, LP, and James F. Cravens, EMT



Cypress Creek EMS celebrates two 20+ year dino-medics. This photo of a rearview mirror emphasizes the classic reverse paint trick.

Carol Miller, LP

What was your first day on the job in EMS?

I must admit I have no recollection of my first day with Cypress Creek EMS. Back then we had a fairly extensive volunteer/probationary period, and because I started as a non-med driver, my first encounters involved learning how to drive an ambulance and finding my way around the territory. Patient care was provided by other volunteer crew members and on occasion, a dreaded paid paramedic. It wasn't long before I realized I really wanted to be a part of the EMS family, and I found myself devoting every free minute to learning about prehospital

patient care. I quickly earned my EMT certification and then my Special Skills patch. I volunteered at every opportunity. When I was not attending class I would be volunteering on the ambulance.

How has the field changed since you've been in it?

EMS was a very young profession when I was introduced to it twenty-five years ago. It was not found in many college curriculums and most care providers were trained in basic first aid and fire-fighting techniques. Today prehospital care providers are highly trained professionals. They have the opportunity to pursue continuing education and advanced training in various aspects of emergency medical care.

Monitoring devices and emergency medications are readily available and are becoming standard of care for most EMS services. EMS is now a very respected and accepted profession.

Which services have you worked for over the years?

My entire EMS career has been with CCEMS. During my volunteer years I did work part time for Gold Star and Harris County Emergency Corps. My first paid position with Cypress Creek was working in administration, writing protocols, designing patient care reports and numerous other forms that were necessary to track our growth and development. Rules and regulations were changing, and as EMS became more in vogue, litigation



Cypress Creek EMS pairs with Lifeflight, above in 1980 and on the left in 1975.

Carol Miller, LP, in the red uniform, cares for a patient early in her career.

became an issue. Providing the highest quality care became our mantra and everything we did was directed toward our goal of becoming the best prehospital care provider in the nation. We wanted everyone to know that when seconds count they could count on us. It became increasingly more difficult for volunteer medics to maintain their skills and keep up with new medications and procedures, and many decided to become full time employees, giving up their other jobs. I decided biochemistry and cancer research were no longer the right career path for me and applied for a full-time paramedic position with Cypress Creek.

Is there a particular moment or call that stands out?

Every shift is different, each one having its ups and downs. There are many calls that come to mind, but not any one in particular that I could classify as the one that stands out from the rest. I have learned that calls involving children



provide the greatest grief and greatest joy. I have learned that the elderly have chronic problems that often can be remedied with just a little bit of tender loving care. I have learned that some families come together in times of stress and others fall apart. I have learned not to judge “books by their covers” . . . what one is wearing does not always reflect what is inside. But the most

important thing I have learned is that people in any emergency situation do not care how much you know, they want to know how much you care.

What has been your favorite part of your career in EMS?

My most favorite part of my EMS career is having the opportunity to say, “Hi my name is Carol, may I help you?”



James F. Cravens, EMT

James F. Cravens, EMT

What was your first day on the job?

I started in August 1976. FM 1960 was a two-lane road, and the nearest shopping center was five to ten miles away. “Dining out” meant a 20-mile trip into Houston. Fortunately a new local hospital was built and staffed, providing the growing population a wide range

of medical services closer to home. The Wall Street Journal called the “1960 area” the fastest growing residential community in America.

Thousands of people continued to move into the quiet, wooded area during Houston’s energy and aerospace population boom. The availability of prompt high quality emergency medical care had been overlooked. Response times when ambulances responded to medical emergencies sometimes exceeded one hour.

In 1975, a single event provided the impetus for action by concerned volunteer citizens to provide local emergency medical service. A man had a heart attack, anxious family members called for help and they waited in vain for ambulance service. There was no emergency medical team to come to his aid, and the man died in the arms of his wife. His needless death provided major concern and stimulus for providing local EMS; first on the street where he lived, then in his subdivision; then throughout northwest Harris County.

Which services have you worked for over the years?

I have been with CCEMS the entire time. We were affiliated with Harris County Emergency Corps for a few years in the beginning.

Why did you get into EMS?

I got into EMS because my wife signed me up for an ECA class to keep me busy. I’ve always felt a desire to put something back into the community, aside from just living in it and paying my taxes. At that time, I lived only six blocks from the ambulance station, which was a small trailer on a lot across from the hospital. I was a senior geophysicist by day and volunteer ambulance attendant by night.

How has the field changed since you’ve been in it?

The improvement and changes have been fantastic. Medics can do so many more procedures than they could 35 years ago. The improvement in equipment has greatly aided in saving lives. I remember when we started,



Cypress Creek EMS was awarded Public/Private Provider of the Year at the 2011 Texas EMS Conference. James Cravens is pictured second from the right.

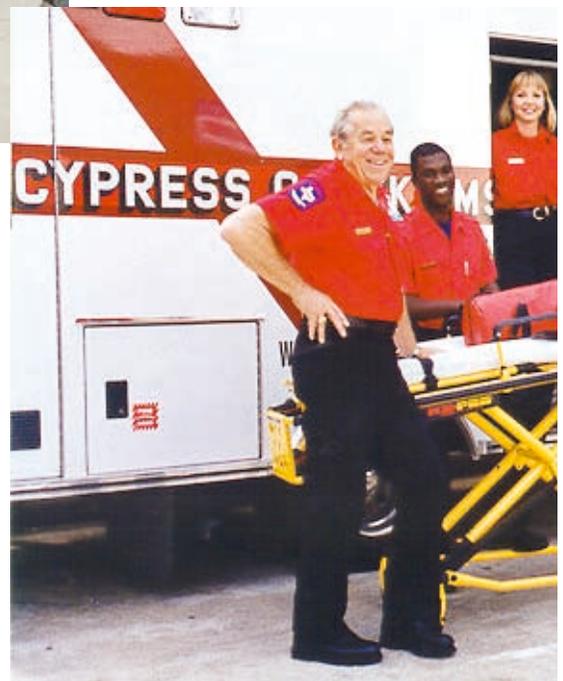
our first ambulance was a used (with 80,000 miles) Maryland Coffee panel truck. There was no 9-1-1 number or system, we had a red phone with a service number people could call if they needed an ambulance. We kept a note pad next to the phone, took down the information, and then drove to the scene. We had an answering service that would pick up if the phone rang more than three times and they would radio the information to us. There were many times I would be the only one at the station during the night; if there was a call, I would drive to the incident and be met by first responders. If we had to take the patient to the hospital, we would all jump in the ambulance to go, and I would bring everyone back to their vehicles afterwards. We were not much more advanced than the days when the morgue would pick up the injured and load them in the back and pray they make it to the hospital. We were certified as

ECAs providing first aid and a lot of TLC.

Is there a particular moment or call that stands out?

A call that stands out was the first baby I delivered. I was so excited I called my wife at five in the morning. I still, to this day, remember the family's name and have a picture of the baby the mother sent me hanging on my wall. It was one of the greatest feelings!

A funny moment I remember was back in 1977 when our first female crew went into service. We were not allowed to have a mixed crew at night, so they implemented the "night flight" female crew. They were scheduled to stay all night so everyone else could go home. Only one member had full faith in them on their first night shift alone, and went home to sleep. Everyone else followed them



James F. Cravens, EMT

in their personal vehicles, rescue trucks and spare ambulances. The ladies effectively handled several critical runs and were never shadowed again!

What has been your favorite part of your career in EMS?

My favorite part is the people I have worked with and their excellence and enthusiasm for EMS.