

The EMS experience

Saluting those with 20 years or more in EMS

Capt. Bill Miller

Carrollton Fire Department

What was your first day on the job? My first day on the job was October 1, 1971, at Fire Station No. 1.

Who have you worked for over the years? I have worked for four fire chiefs in my 35 years. The first was F.J. Douglas, who hired me at 18, five months out of high school. I had no formal fire training and was pretty wet behind the ears. Chief Douglas did take it upon himself to set me up with a roommate who would keep an eye on me. Don Wignall, my roommate, and I started work the same day and lived in the same apartment that was right across the street from the station.

My second chief was Harold K. Bessire, who came up through the ranks and was hired as chief when Chief Douglas retired. Chief Bessire retired in 1990. The third chief was Bruce Varner, who hailed from Phoenix Fire Department under the supervision of the famous Alan Brunacini. Chief Varner retired with 10 years of service with the city. The current chief is John Murphy, who hails from

Arlington Fire Department and has been here a little over two years.

Why did you get into EMS?

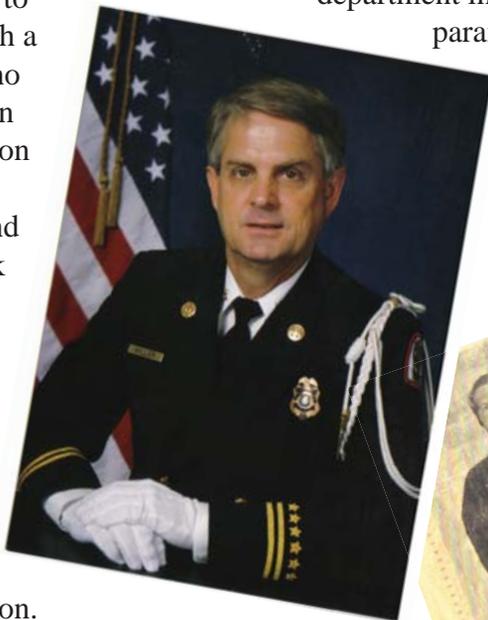
I got into EMS because that was what we did after we inherited the ambulance service from Rhoton Funeral Service, the local funeral home. The ambulance that they gave us was a 1969 Chevy Suburban that was white with gold letters that read CARROLLTON FIRE DEPT. We were the first fire department in Dallas County to go

paramedic in 1975, and our medics were trained through the UTSW and the Biotel system. We are still in that system

today. Eighty percent of our calls/runs are EMS, so that has been our bread and butter since the mid-1970s.

How has the field changed since you've been in it? When I was an EMT in the 1970s our patient care consisted of O2, bandaging/splinting and CPR. There were times that the medic riding in the back of ambulance did CPR by themselves while the other guy drove to the hospital. Carrollton Fire now sends an engine or a truck on every EMS call, with at least three paramedics on every call, so the margin for error is very low.

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Miller



Three Carrollton firemen graduated recently from emergency medical technician training at Brookhaven General Hospital. The three EMTs are shown above with Fire Chief F. J. Douglas (right). They are, left to right, David Tucker, Bill Miller and Mack Curtis.

Bill Miller graduated as an EMT in 1974 from a program run by Brookhaven General Hospital. From left, EMTs David Tucker, Bill Miller and Mack Curtis. At right is Fire Chief F.J. Douglas. When Miller graduated, there was only a state registry of EMTs at the Texas Department of Health.

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Was there a particular moment or call that stands out? There were several calls that stand out during my career, and those dealt with very close friends that did not make it to the hospital alive.

What was your favorite part of your career in EMS? My favorite part of my EMS career was the saves. I think everyone works hard on all the calls, but the reward comes when you make a call on someone who is not breathing, and has PEA, and you get those people back to breathing on their own, and have a sinus rhythm.

Any plans for retirement? At the end, I did throw myself a retirement party, and about 260 people attended. My wife planned a program with speakers, great food and a band. We had a great time. We used my retirement party also as a benefit for the Parkland Burn Foundation. Our guests donated to the fund and it was a success. The memories of that night will remain with us forever. My wife, Patty, and I hope to continue helping with the annual Parkland Burn Camp. Additionally, I will make myself available to the department to go back and continue to help in any way I can. That is how much I enjoyed my job!

Do you know someone who has been in EMS or trauma systems for 20 years or more? Let *Texas EMS Magazine* profile them. Email Kelly Harrell at kelly.harrell@dshs.state.tx.us for more information.

Office of EMS/Trauma Systems Coordination
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