

*Today is April 24th, 2013, and this is **David Ehrenhart** from the Illinois Fire Service Institute talking to **Chief Ronald Campbell** from the Granville Fire Department. We are discussing Firefighter Robert Duvall, who died in the line of duty in 1996.*

DE: Can you tell me about the history of the Granville Fire Department?

RC: The Granville Fire Department was formed in 1908 as a volunteer organization. In 1947 it was incorporated into the Granville-Hennepin Fire Protection District, where it remains today. We are still all volunteer. We are not paid per call, strictly volunteer. Beer and pizza is our pay, and gratitude.

DE: What was the department like at the time of Firefighter Duvall's line of duty death?

RC: It was a fairly close-knit group of guys. They were a fun loving group of guys. Robert, Bob, as he was known here, or Duvey, we called him Duvey a lot, he was the leader of the fun. He was serious when he needed to be but he was fun loving when he didn't need to be serious. He had a nature about him that could put people at ease and make people laugh.

DE: What can you tell me about Firefighter Duvall and his career? For example, did he have any special responsibilities with the department?

RC: Yes he did. He was the Second Assistant Chief. At that time we had First Assistant, Second Assistant, Third Assistant, and Fourth. Today that has changed; we just have Assistant Chief, Captains, Lieutenants and so forth. But at the time, he was Second Assistant Chief, third in charge. He was also the site director for the ambulance service that was stationed here in our station at that time. He was a mentor. Being an officer, he liked to take the new guys aside and teach them and to help guide them to keep them safe. He was also a huge leader in our waterfighting fun. He loved to do waterfights. He would make sure guys went to neighboring towns to do waterfights. Back in the late 80's, early 90's, waterfights were huge. Everybody hosted them and Bob was a big instigator in that, getting that started and spreading it. That's the biggest thing I remember about him, is that he liked to have that fun and he made sure that we put on a good waterfight here and that we went and participated in other towns when they hosted waterfights.

DE: Do you remember any interesting or unique anecdotes about Firefighter Duvall?

RC: Yes I do. Shortly after I had joined the department, I had probably been here a year or two and went to a grass fire and I got put with him. We were down in the river bottoms putting out a grass fire and we just kept walking and putting out the leading edge of the fire. Pretty soon, we got to the end of the fire and we turned around and we were about two and a half miles down the levy from where we started. We were alone. It was a long walk back. In those days, gear was given to you and boots, if they didn't have the exact size, you got something close. I remember that night walking back. Duvey being a senior

officer and having been here for nine years, he had boots that fit, I didn't. I had blisters after that night and I remember that night with him. Even then, he was fond of saying "I'm getting too old for this crap." It was that incident; it's embedded in my mind. By the time we got down there it was dark. We're walking back on this burnt levee in the dark. About a quarter mile from command, we were picked up by a pickup truck. I remember that night and I still think of that night. When I became Chief a year later, I learned lessons from that and it became a priority that everyone got gear that fit. That's my fondest memory of Bob.

DE: Can you please describe the residential fire Firefighter Duvall was present at when he suffered the fatal heart attack?

RC: Yes. It was Easter Sunday, April 7, 1996. It was a beautiful spring day. The fire was in Hennepin, which is about six miles down the road from us. We were on automatic aid with them, as we still are today. So when the page came out for residential house fire in Hennepin, we automatically responded with two engines and a tanker. Bob was in the first engine out. I was in the tanker. The fire was at 2:05 pm. I want to correct that, I was wrong. Bob was not in the first engine. Bob was his parents' house in Lostant and having just had a large dinner, was on the couch. When he heard the page, he responded and came to the scene then. So he was a ways behind the rest of us because of the distance away that he was. The house was a single story, single family residential home. If memory serves me correctly, the fire started in the attic. We were into overhaul when everything transpired. This house had tongue in groove ceilings. Trying to punch holes in the ceilings to do overhaul and to ventilate and to look for hotspots to open up a wall or ceiling was very, very physically involved. That is what Bob was doing at the time. He came out of the house; he needed air. He was told to take a break, which he did. It was shortly after that he went down and they rushed to his aid. There were no other injuries that day, civilian or firefighter. His was the only injury and the only death.

DE: What was the on-scene reaction of the other firefighters when Firefighter Duvall was stricken?

RC: Those closest to him immediately went to his aid. Fortunately at that time, as we still do today, we had an ambulance on-scene. That was standard protocol; they came with us. EMTs rushed in. There were a couple of firemen that were also EMTs that rushed in to see what happened, to get him out of his gear and to start administering CPR. A lot of the firefighters such as myself were on the other side of the building. Until we heard the ambulance go screaming away, we didn't know anything had happened. So we were a little bit in the dark on that type of information. As with anything like that, it eventually permeated the entire fireground and everybody's mood changed. [We] continued on with the job, just not with jovial enthusiasm that you would normally have. I think that pretty much sums it up. As volunteers in a small town, we do not go on a lot of fires. That's a

good thing for the community. It's a bad thing for firemen. They need the active calls to keep them interested, to keep them wanting to train, wanting to learn. So, it's a double-edged sword. You hate to see a family lose their home or even have their home damaged by fire but as a fireman you like to see those because it keeps up morale, it keeps interest, and it keeps training going. It keeps the guys coming in for training and... fighting fires is fun. After what transpired with Bob on the scene, it was no longer fun. It was a job now and I think that was the biggest way that his collapsing on-scene affected everyone on-scene.

DE: How did the line of duty death affect individuals within your organization and the community?

RC: Within the organization, it had a drastic effect. Within a year after his death, every officer on the department had been replaced, had retired and we had new officers. I think that was...His death brought a reality to the job, that this can be dangerous and it can be strenuous. Bob wasn't that old. He was only 39. A lot of our officers were older than that and I think it struck a realization with them that "That could easily happen to me." Even though we may only go on one fire a year. I think that is how it affected some members of the department. Other members of the department, it struck them that this is serious and we need to be more serious, but we need to have fun with it. But we need better training. It helped to evolve our training requirements, our training regimen. We still don't expect the volunteers to be trained as highly as a paid department, right or wrong. There's people that would argue both ways on that. Volunteers, they only have so much time to give between family, work, and fire department. To send someone to a 400 hour Firefighter II class, it's just not going to happen, except with the exception of some exceptional people that have done it.

I think that is how it affected some. I think it affected some of the firemen's families more than it did the firemen. It put a scare into the wife, girlfriend, kids at home. I think some guys blew that off. Some guys took it seriously and retired. The couple of years following his death we had quite a large turnover in firemen. As I said earlier, every officer position changed. They all retired. Beyond that, the effect was varying. It put a ding in the department in that a lot of new people came on. A lot of experience left, a lot of leadership left and a lot of knowledge left. I think that's probably the biggest change it had to the department. To the community, I think it gave a new found respect and appreciation to the volunteers that do what we do for nothing more than a thank you, beer, and pizza and knowing in your own mind and heart that you're doing good for others.

DE: Thank you. How did your organization or community memorialize Firefighter Duvall, and also could you describe the funeral?

RC: We contacted the Illinois Fire Chief's Association. We went and worked with them. They sent a team here to help put together, I can't remember the numbers, but I believe that this was a level three funeral service. I think level three is the highest. I might have that backwards. Maybe level one is the highest. He had the highest honors that were available to him at the time. The Illinois Fire Chief's Association sent us representatives and taught us how to do an honor guard, taught us how to put bunting on the trucks, provided the bunting. They arranged to have the two ladder trucks at the cemetery that day. They provided the bell, taught us how to ring the bell. They provided complete assistance to us and it was a huge help to us at the time. They taught us how to fold a flag for the cemetery ceremony, presenting the flag to the parents. They put us through the paces of how they wanted us to walk as pallbearers and how they wanted us to load the casket on to the back of the fire engine. That was our way of memorializing him.

The funeral, it was hard. It was very hard to do an honor guard. The honor guard, at least from my perspective, I was standing by the end of the casket, at attention, and his father was sitting right in front of me. And as much as you're not supposed to look around, it's hard not to see the grieving father right in front of you. That was probably the hardest part of the whole three or four day ordeal that we went through with him. It was a very dry spring. We had a grass fire in the middle of his funeral. We had a garage fire in the middle of his funeral. I think we had a grass fire the night before during the visitation and everyone just kept saying "It's Duvey keeping us on our toes, not letting us forget." I remember that and the walk-through. I remember doing the walk-through. It was the right thing to do to make sure he received those honors that was due him. I can't think of the proper words of the aerals crossed at the entrance to the cemetery with a big flag hanging. That might have been perhaps the most impressive part of the whole ceremony. It was very dignified. It gave honor and recognition to a man that deserved it and I was proud to be a part of it even just as a fireman at the time. The tradition was carried on in the way that it should be and that's probably the best way that I can describe it.

DE: Thank you. Is there anything from this incident that would be helpful to today's firefighters?

RC: Yes, physical fitness. It was something that was never thought of at the time and I'm sure at the time it wasn't thought of in paid departments, paid on call, career, volunteers, anywhere. A statistic that I've learned since then, health issues, heart attack, stroke, are the number one killer of firemen, particularly volunteers. Since then, are we one hundred percent improved in our regimen? No we're not. But we are improved here, at least in this department. It is something that we don't have the facilities to offer a gym or workout equipment to the volunteers. But it is something that we try to stress to them that "You need to be cognizant of this and you need to be aware that it is dangerous and these are things that you can do." The department requires physicals now. All new members are required to get one after their probationary period. We want to make sure that they're

going to stick around before we invest a couple hundred dollars in a physical in them. We're not a wealthy fire district or fire department. We require a physical every other year from all firemen. We have used that, I think it's been, ten years since we started that. It took a while to evolve, but it did come around. I think that's what we've learned from it. I think the firefighting brotherhood as a whole has learned that, and not just purely from this incident but because heart attacks are such a big killer of firefighters. In the United States, I think it has become a higher priority.

DE: Is there anything else that you would like to share about firefighter Duvall or the Granville Fire Department that we did not cover during this interview?

RC: The only other thing that I would like to share is just to reiterate Duvey was fun. Duvey was a good leader and a good teacher. He was here for the right reasons and as Chief, and I've been Chief since '97, I've always tried to strive to make sure that the members we put on, and we don't just take anybody and everybody, they need to be here for the right reasons. If you're here to stroke your ego, or for attention, you're not here for the right reasons. Duvey was here for the right reasons. He enjoyed the company. He enjoyed the brotherhood. He wanted to have fun with his fellow firefighters and he wanted to give to the community. He just wanted to help people and that's the biggest reason there is to become a firefighter, or paramedic, or EMT, even a police officer, that I can think of and it's the number one criteria that I look at in applicants before I put them on the department. Today the department as a whole, we have a very close-knit group, probably closer than we did then. I have preached during my tenure, our only pay is beer, pizza, and fun. We try to make it as much fun as we can. We work hard. We play harder. We're better equipped today. We're better trained today. But I think we have the same amount of fun as we always have.

DE: Thank you.