

Today is May 17, 2007, and this is Adam Groves from the Illinois Fire Service Institute talking to Calvin Plumer and David Tuttle from the Logan-Trivoli Fire Protection District. We are discussing Brian Hauk who died in the line of duty in 1997.

AG: Can you tell me about the history of the Logan-Trivoli Fire Protection District?

DT: The fire protection district, Logan-Trivoli Fire Protection District, was created by referendum in 1948. They, at the time, had fire stations only in Hanna City. In about 1956, they built a fire station in Trivoli, and in 1990 we built a fire station in the Lake Camelot subdivision. We have firefighters that perform obviously firefighter duties, but also emergency medical services, and we range from between forty and fifty-five firefighters at any given time.

AG: Okay. And what was the department like at the time of Brian Hauk's line of duty death?

DT: The department was pretty similar in 1997 as it is in 2007, as far as the stations were the same-- Hanna City, Trivoli, and Lake Camelot. We probably had about forty firefighters or so, maybe forty-five firefighters. We had pretty much the same apparatus in 1997 that we have now, with some exceptions of some newer equipment has replaced some old. The department had a good mix of older volunteers and younger volunteers, and it was pretty similar in 1997 as it is today.

AG: And what can you tell me about Brian Hauk and his career?

CP: Brian got on the department in 1981. He was a co-op student through high school from January through May of that year, the first and only co-op, as far as I know, we've ever had. He was on there, he went through the ranks as a firefighter, a captain, and then at the time of his death he was assistant fire chief. Brian always aspired to be on the fire department, he's the one that's responsible for getting myself on the fire department. I think he was like all the rest of the young guys at that time; we had all grown up watching "Emergency," and it influenced our lives greatly. And when he got on, he wanted to have his friends there as well.

AG: And do you remember any other interesting or unique anecdotes about Brian or his career?

CP: In thinking about that, there's two things that stand out in my mind. One that's purely factual in the sense that he was extremely good at knowing where everything was in the district, map-wise. He rarely looked at a map board. You gave him an address, he knew where to go, didn't have to think about it twice. All the rest of us were scrambling for the map books, trying to find where we're going. And the other thing that I find very interesting, and maybe a little humorous, that would be something neat to remember him by: we still rode tailboard back then. We still rode on tailboard; we used the rope hose tool to secure ourselves to the tailboard. And at that time, at the beginning of his career, we didn't have a station in our farthest part of the district where we now have the Lake

Camelot station. So he'd ride for upwards of ten to fifteen minutes, "Code 1", getting to a fire call out there. And he was known for being able to have his harness on, pushed himself up into the corner of the tailboard, and actually catching an extra 5-10 minutes of sleep while we were going down the road "Code 1" which just astounds everybody because the rest of us are all hanging on. And he was like, "well, we'll get there, it's okay, and I get another 10 minutes of sleep." So, that was kind of unique about him.

DT: One thing that I remember about Brian was his passion for the fire department. He was extremely passionate about the department. Every call that he went on was like his first call. He was just as excited about responding on a call after fifteen years as he was in his first year. And at our officer meetings, which we have every month, Brian would always have the longest list of items that needed to be covered because he wanted to make sure that everything was taken care of as best it could be. He was always there with creative ideas and was always pushing for things to be better, and to move the fire department forward in a positive direction. So, that's what we miss about Brian. We miss the long lists at the meetings. We miss that he was able to push us in the direction that we needed to go.

AG: Okay, now we'll move on to the line of duty death incident. Can you please describe the incident in which Brian died in the line of duty?

CP: On the evening of December 23, 1997, we had responded to a kitchen fire, a gas range fire, in an apartment complex. I was on the first due engine. We got there and basically the fire was out by the time we got there. So, before we could even clear the scene or before we had even finished the paperwork on writing up the incident, we received word of an accident just west of town, just a couple hundred yards outside of town. So, we turned around and headed for that call, and when we arrived on the scene there we saw Brian's truck had been flipped over, and there was a fireman on the scene doing CPR. We were stationed there. I, myself, stayed with the engine. They intentionally kept me back from that; being his best friend they wanted to keep me out of that action as much as possible. Basically, we worked him. LifeFlight was called. They worked him. We didn't fly him. They did everything they could possibly in the field. And they finally decided that they had done all they could do and they pronounced him out in the field. This accident occurred in a little, it was actually a clearing, a little bit of a field that was nothing there at the time. It's now currently the Hanna City car wash.

DT: I don't really have a tremendous amount to add to that other than I remember responding to the scene. I was actually attending a Christmas gathering east of Peoria and responded from there in my personal vehicle to the scene. And at that time I was an assistant fire chief, basically a counterpart to Brian. Our chief at the time was David Clark. And I responded and remember seeing Brian deceased in the back of one of our rescue vehicles, and they had by that time they had already attempted to revive him and such. And it was a pretty somber situation at the time, and was very difficult for our firefighters. So, but the cause of death appeared at the time and as I understand it was confirmed to be traumatic injuries. And there was tremendous damage to vehicle and as Calvin stated it rolled over and that sort of thing. So.

AG: Okay. And what was the on-scene reaction of the other firefighters after they responded to this vehicle accident?

CP: Well, the firefighter that responded to the scene directly, immediately started CPR and was trying to do his best for Brian while he was waiting for the rest of us to get there and make more initial calls. As far as all of us on the actual rig itself or at the scene itself, I guess you would describe it as disbelief. For lack of better term, shell shocked, in a sense. We're just kinda walking around just in total amazement that something like this happened. I myself, like I said, stayed with the engine at the request of the chief at the time. I finally did meander over to the back of the rig where Brian was at. Then there was couple other of us that had grown up with him and so we all just were kind of just beyond words. Didn't know what to say, didn't know what to do, didn't know how to act. Firefighting up to that point had been something we all thoroughly enjoyed, and, don't get me wrong, we still enjoy it today, but it had been something we did that we didn't think a whole lot about consequences. And I think consequences set in really hard that night.

AG: Sure, and Brian's accident, it didn't have any immediate effect on the emergency response operations at the original fire?

CP: No, it didn't. I mean, we were gonna clear that scene anyway because there was no fire there and the paperwork, obviously we just told them we would be back to do the paperwork. We didn't finish up, if I remember correctly. As far as, what effects did his injuries or his accident have on the rest of us as firefighters beyond that, we, I think, for the next several months, everybody was just kind of in limbo. I mean, it was very hard to get engaged. Some of us, I can speak for myself mostly; I mean it was very hard for me to get engaged for two or three months after that. Extremely difficult to walk past an empty locker. Extremely difficult to come back from call and not have the camaraderie you had before. So, it was trying.

DT: It was a difficult time. Also, the time of the year complicated it tremendously. As Calvin stated earlier, this happened on December 23rd. So Christmas Eve was the next day and Christmas was the day after, of course. So the following day is when we actually got together for the funeral, but our department really was unprepared for a line of duty death. We had, our uniforms were basically non-existent, we had good gear, good firefighting equipment, but really had no formal uniforms or anything. So, right after his accident, we got together at the Hanna City fire station, those people that were on the call, and we called in the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing team. We also called our board of trustees, which are the administrative portion of our department, and we basically communicated and tried to take care of the people issues at the time. Our chief at the time, then made a lot of phone calls, worked with the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association to be able to deal with the funeral arrangements in order to be able to properly do that. We had a minister in town, Robert Skinner from the United Methodist Church, who stepped up to the plate and helped us not only with the funeral but also a year later with the memorial service. So having clergy support was tremendous, that

really helped us as a department, also. But there were a lot of things that had to happen over the Christmas holiday very quickly. For fitting uniforms, I think the fire department purchased ten sets of uniforms so that we, people, at least the pallbearers would be outfitted properly. So there were a lot of issues that had to happen very quickly. So not only did the firefighters deal with the line of duty death, but they were also dealing with the Christmas-time and what that is supposed to bring for the family.

AG: Sure. And, did the line of duty death have any other effect on the individuals within your organization? You've described some of those points. Or was there, did you notice an effect within the community?

CP: We had good community support. I mean, the community was behind us a lot. There were signs posted at all the signs that you could put up on businesses in remembrance of Brian. There was times of people calling on all the firefighters. I think that was the case in my case, where people would call and see how you were doing, what they could do, or how they could help. We had great response from the neighboring departments. They were all there for us for part of the funeral procession. They made sure they filled our stations while we were doing this. The true sense of brotherhood came through at that time. Everybody backed us up as best as possible.

AG: How did your organization and community memorialize Brian? Can you describe the funeral?

CP: Okay. The funeral, well, the visitation was at Elmwood Funeral Parlor. I don't know the name of it right off hand. Then the next day for the actual funeral itself we had a viewing right before the funeral procession at the United Methodist Church. And then, we had a crowd of firefighters there that we were actually out into the parking lot, if I remember correctly. Then we drove the procession from Hanna City through Trivoli through to the edge of Farmington and up Route 78 to Elmwood and he's buried at Elmwood. And as they were going through Elmwood there was two aerals, one from Peoria fire, or Chillicothe fire, sorry about that, and one from Canton. And they had those crossed with a flag draped between them. And they went through, we went under that into the cemetery.

AG: And, do you remember anything else about the funeral, or can you describe any efforts within the community or your organization for memorializing Brian?

CP: As far as memorializing it, we actually put up a flagpole with a plaque at the base of the flagpole, and it's a planter, actually, with a plaque on it. So there's flowers at the base of the flagpole and then there's the plaque that states his service dates and that he died in the line of duty. That sits there now in between the car wash and the gas station in our town. And that's the actual scene of the accident.

DT: We also then have some plaques and pictures at the fire station in Hanna City which memorialize Brian, and we have one item that's lit that again memorializes Brian. So, it's important that our firefighters, and again, as times change and people get on the fire

department and people get off the fire department we're finding that as many as fifty percent of our firefighters today were not on in 1997 so they have no, other than knowing about the accident possibly, that is really their only remembrance is what is posted on the walls. And then, I'll let Calvin go into a little bit more about our new engine rescue, and what we've done with that.

CP: And, before I touch on that too, also, the, our Hanna City Fire Department has what we call a corporation. And that's what we do our fundraisers with. And at the beginning of every monthly corporation meeting we have a moment of silence in honor of Brian. So, he's thought of for a few seconds every month of every year. As far as the new engine, we've received a new engine from Pierce. It's a rescue engine, heavy duty rescue engine. Brian always wanted a custom piece of apparatus and up until that point we had never gotten a custom piece of apparatus, and we just received that in the year 2006, in December. And on the back passenger doors, 'cause it is a four door cab and it's an eight man cab, on the back passenger doors right above it in what would be considered a transom, is a glass that says "In memory of Brian T. Hauk," and then it gives the dates 1965 to 1977, 1997, excuse me.

AG: And can you describe any changes within your organization as a whole following this line of duty death?

DT: I would say that people were more cautious, they were more conscious of potentially wearing their seatbelts while responding to the fire station. Like Calvin stated earlier, you kind of become complacent in what you do, you really don't think that the so-called bad is going to happen, but firefighting is a dangerous thing. From just leaving your house trying not to trip over toys as you're responding to your vehicle or making sure that your vehicle is accessible and then getting in your vehicle, you also, of course, need to remember to wear your seatbelt. And, that, I think, is probably something that a lot of our firefighters, after this incident, realized that they need to take that extra five seconds and wear their seatbelt as they're responding from their home to the station, because really that can be as dangerous as responding in the fire apparatus.

AG: And is there anything else from this incident that would be helpful to today's firefighters?

CP: No, I think David stated everything quite well. I think, just to keep in mind response to the station and the response from the station, and to remember that even though it is a job we all enjoy doing, that it's something that has its risks, and we need to remember that and keep that in the back of our heads at all times. Line of duty deaths today are still recording in the astronomical number of firefighters from being killed from not wearing their seatbelts whether it's in personal vehicles or apparatus. So that mindset still needs to change.

DT: The old adage is if we don't get to the scene, we're not going to do anybody any good if we ourselves are not able to get to the station, get the apparatus, and get safely to the scene. So, we're not going to be able to help anybody if we can't do that safely. And,

the other thing is, I think the public has some ownership in this issue also. They need to be aware of the firefighters that are responding from their homes with their blue courtesy light. They need to understand what that is. They need to understand what lights and sirens means that they need to move over to the other lane, and I know Scott's law has helped a little with that, but it's still amazing the number of people that do not yield to fire engines and rescue vehicles as they are responding to emergency calls, because people are in such a hurry to get to the grocery store or to their friend's house that they don't think it is important enough for them to move over for that emergency equipment to be responding. So, I think the public, as with Brian's incident, the public has some ownership here also. People need to be cautious of what is out there and need to look for those items that can potentially cause injury.