

Answering The Call:
The History Of The
Port Washington Volunteer Fire Department

Transcript Of Oral History Interview With

Beverly Reese
Fire Medic Company No. 1

conducted in association with the
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Interview with Beverly Reese
pk

by Margaret Dildilian
October 15, 2004

Q: Today is October the 15th, 2004. This is an interview with Beverly Reese of the Fire Medics. My name is Margaret Dildilian, and the interview is taking place at the Port Washington Public Library. Could you please pronounce your full name?

Beverly Reese: Okay. Beverly Ann Angevine Reese.

Q: And which fire company are you associated with?

BR: Fire Medics.

Q: And do you have a nickname?

BR: Bev.

Q: Bev. Can you give us a little background on your growing up?

BR: Okay. I was born in Cooperstown, New York January 4th, 1947. Moved back home about--my parents were both from Port Washington--they went up to help my uncle with a milk farm. So I was born up there, then I moved back here about four and a half years later to Roslyn for a couple of years. Then, to Port, and I've been in Port ever since.

Went through Flower Hill School for elementary, Weber for junior high and Schreiber.
Graduated Schreiber in 1966.

Q: What was it like in Port then when you were growing up?

BR: Amazing.

Q: What were the best parts of growing up here?

BR: Well, it was a close-knit town. There was a lot of wooded areas, and we used to go
blackberry picking, raspberry picking. And it was just a--like a country. Reminded me
of the country.

Q: How old were you when you joined the Fire Medics?

BR: How old am I now? Fifty-eight. So, I'm fifty-eight ...twenty eight... twenty-seven...
about thirty-one. Yeah, about thirty-one.

Q: You were a charter member?

BR: Yeah, uh huh.

Q: How did that come about? How was it organized, and what did you do?

BR: Well, it started in March of '79, and I joined in November of '79. Truthfully, I joined because my husband was so involved in the Fire Department that I figured I might as well join them if I can't beat them. Plus, my little one was always getting hurt, and I figured, well ... I might as well go learn how to take care of myself (laughs).

Q: What do you mean, he was always getting hurt?

BR: Oh, God! He was always falling and getting stitched up. He was stitched up like ten times before he was thirteen. He was clumsy (laughs).

Q: So your--so what happened when you joined? Who was in the Fire Medics?

BR: Well, the first Captain was, first Captain was Joey Teta. Was it Joey Teta or Dennis--it was Joey Teta was the first Captain, or ... Dennis Swiacki... I don't remember now. And Bob Johnson was--Dennis Dermody was the first President when I got in. And ...

Q: And how was it actually organized?

BR: Well, then, they used to have the Fire Department itself used to have a little squad, and the town started to get so big by '79, '80, that in '79 when they founded this, that they

couldn't it. They just couldn't handle the calls and stuff. So, they decided to make a Fire Medic Company with, you know, at the time we had a little Cadillac ambulance, which I loved (laughs).

Q: What did you love about it?

BR: I just was--I enjoyed it. It was great riding, smooth riding. It was hard to work in it, because it was, you know, you couldn't stand up or anything. Then we just got the one big one and another one and another one. Now, we have three, they call them ALS [Advance Life Support] ambulances, or they're the big box ambulances. And two fly cars. [Take home vehicles to respond to day or night calls from home.]

Q: When you say you couldn't stand up in it, could you describe the first Cadillac that was the ambulance, or was it just like what?

BR: A bigger hearse (laughs). Like that. Like a big ...

Q: So how did you work in it, if you couldn't stand in it?

BR: Well, you sat down on the bench, or you kneeled over if you had to work on the patient. You just kneeled over. If you were short, you probably could stand in it, but I'm pretty tall.

Q: So, how did that affect your working on the patients?

BR: Nothing at all. You learn to compromise. You get used to it.

Q: Were there basically more men then, than women, when they organized this in '79?

BR: No, I don't think so. I think it was pretty even.

Q: So how many do you think were in the Department that were men and how many were women?

BR: Oh, in the Department, there was more men, because you had the other three companies that, at the time, didn't allow women. So, but Fire Medics did allow women. The Fire Medics did allow a certain percentage that could live out of town, where the other companies you had to live in town. But that's because Fire Medics, you signed up to take duty to stay there a certain amount of hours and all night. So, if you live out of town, you could come in. The Fire Department, they had to be in town, so that when there's a call, they, you know, they don't sleep there all night, like we do.

Q: So how--what was the schedule for you?

BR: Well, at the time, I used to do mostly days, because the kids were in school and I could go up there all day long and do it. And then when the kids got older, I did nights, slept overnight. And now, I do whatever's needed.

Q: So how long have you been a fire medic, and are you still active?

BR: Yes. I'm the President. I'm the President for the second time around. I was the President for four years, gave it up for two years. Now, I've had it back for the last two years. I finish in January. Finished (laughs).

Q: And what are the duties of a President. We'll get back to the other duties of the fire medic, but what are the duties of the President?

BR: The President oversees all the financial stuff, and runs the meetings and makes sure the building's taken care of. And watches after everything and helps the Captain when she's needed.

Q: Did you become an officer while you were a Fire Medics?

BR: Yes.

Q: And what--did you attain your what?

BR: President. Well, when we moved up on the Boulevard, we started out on the Boulevard where Department headquarters is, in the basement. We had the basement. That's all we had is one big room, and we divided it to make a little kitchen and a couple of bedrooms. And then, the other part where we watch TV and stuff. And started out, we started out up there before we bought the building down on Shore Road. And I was Steward for a couple of years for Fire Medics back in the '80s. And then I did secretarial work for them and corresponded and all that. And then, I think it was--I don't know what year was it?--I have it written (laughs). 1997 to 2000, I was President, and then 2003 and 2004 I was-- been President.

Q: Now, going back to when you first joined, what was your first call like for you?

BR: Well, it's--well, when I first joined, I really didn't have any medical background. So, first, I became a driver, and I learned how to drive the ambulance, and learned where all the equipment was on the ambulance. And then I went to EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] school, became an emergency medical technician. And ...

Q: What did the training involve? What kind of training? Was it hard?

BR: Oh, yeah. Very hard.

Q: Tell us what ...

BR: You had to go two nights a week, three hours each night, for about six months. A lot of reading. You had to take a lot of tests at the Academy and Fire Police Academy--Fire Police over in Nassau County Medical Center. And almost every night was a quiz and then you had two big tests with them, and then at the end of the course you had a practical where you had to show them all the stuff you can do--oxygen therapy, backboarding somebody, putting collars on somebody, putting splints on somebody, traction, mass suit. They had different stations, and you had to go around to all the stations--patient assessment. You had to pass all the stations. And then, that was one night of the final, and then the next week you went back and took a two-hundred question state test. New York State test.

Q: So, did you pass?

BR: They came down from Albany and ...

Q: They come down from Albany here.

BR: They come down from Albany to the Fire Police where we took the class, and you take the State test.

Q: Which part did you really enjoy the most in training?

BR: The hands-on, I think.

Q: What did you do hands-on?

BR: I'm not a big book person.

Q: What did you do hands-on, for instance?

BR: Well, they--they had the room set up and, let's say they had a mannequin there, and you walk in for patient assessment, and they'll say--they'll give you a scenario, like you have a fifty year old woman found face-down, not breathing or whatever they--or head trauma or something. Then you had to tell them what you're going to do from step to step. First survey on down to the second survey. And what your findings are.

Q: Did they have defibrillators back then?

BR: They didn't have the portable ones they have now. They had the big ones, yeah. You had to be an AMT [Advanced Medical Technician] back then to use them. Now, anybody can use them, if you go for training.

Q: Do they also let you administer any drugs?

BR: I'm not an AMT. Only AMTs and paramedics can administer drugs. I never had the desire to--to me, I'm right here by a hospital. Being an EMT, I can do the primary stuff and ...

Q: So what's the ...

BR: ... if I need an AMT, I can call for one, and most of the time there is an AMT with me, or around that can go. So ...

Q: So can you tell us the differences between an EMT and an AMT?

BR: Yeah, an EMT can do everything except give--push drugs, start an IV and push drugs. An AMT can start an IV and push drugs.

Q: Have you--can you recall your very--the most exciting Fire Medic call that you had when you were ...

BR: Exciting?

Q: Traumatic.

BR: A lot of traumatic--I've been to a lot of traumatic calls, unfortunately. My first traumatic call that was a little kid--a little boy that was in my son's class got hit. He was on a bicycle, and he rode down the hill into a car. That was pretty ...

Q: And you were on that.

BR: Yeah. I was on that. I've been on a lot of kids' calls, unfortunately. There was the one by the Mill Pond where the banana truck hit the two girls skating across the--roller blading across the street. One of them died and one of them we saved. Unfortunate. It's hard when it's kids, you know. An adult, an older person, you know, bothers you, but you look at it in a different perspective, where, you know, they had a full life, they enjoyed life. But a kid, you look at it kind of like it's not fair, it's not, not right.

Q: How do you deal with that emotionally at the scene?

BR: At the scene, you don't. You don't deal with it, because there's family around; there's friends around. So you do it, and your adrenalin is pumping so fast, so you're just concerned with working on the patient and doing what you have to do to get them packaged up and to the hospital. And then, afterwards--and most of the time afterwards, whoever was on the call, we would meet and sit down and talk about it and we would discuss it and put our feelings out, you know, how we feel or what we think we could have done different, or whatever. And if--sometimes some people really have a hard

time, and Nassau County has a stress management team, and they come and they'll have a little group and sit down and talk and try to get you through it. And sometimes-- sometimes you'll just have to back off a little bit and stay away for a week or two, then cope with it. Really, I never had to stay away. I just--I cope with it to myself most of the time. I really don't let things out. I keep it to myself. And I have my own way of just, you know, coping with my family. I talk with my family about it, or especially since they're involved in the Fire Department.

Q: Do you find it comforting to talk to your husband, who's also in the Fire Department?

BR: Absolutely. You know, he's--he's been in a lot of--he was a policeman, too, so he really seen a lot of stuff, you know, being both, and most--a lot of times we're together on a lot of the calls, you know, especially if it's a fire call. We're together.

Q: So what happens when you get a fire call, and he's called and you're called?

BR: He goes his way; I go my way. And my son goes his way (laughs). Him and his father usually go, because they're both in PECO [Protection]. They go that way, and I go that way, because we're right on Bayside Avenue, so (laughs) we just go that way.

Q: So how many members of your family are involved?

BR: Just the three of us. My husband and my son Donald, who is the Captain of Protection right now. And he's my youngest son. My oldest son lives in Albany. He's a teacher. He teaches middle school.

Q: So, all three--have you all three been out at the same fire scene?

BR: Oh, yeah, many. Absolutely. Many of them.

Q: So how do you deal with that when that happens?

BR: You know what? A lot of people ask me that, and I'd rather be there. I'd rather be there and because they both--my little one goes inside the fire all the time. I'd rather be there and keep an eye on them than--I know a couple of times they went to the fire, and I couldn't--not feeling good or whatever. And I'd be home, and I'd be more nervous being home, not knowing what's going on than being there. So I'd rather be there.

Q: What were the major problems then--back then with the Fire Medics, in terms of how to deal with the emergencies? Were there shortages? Were there ...

BR: No. Now, we have shortages. Now it's--you know, most people have to work two jobs to keep--you know, to--let's face it, to live in this town, or any town, you know. You've really got to--both spouses have to work. A lot of times, they work two jobs, and it's hard

to give up--it takes a lot of time to be a fireperson, you know. You go--you have the meeting once a month. You have work night once a week, and then you get called out at all hours and stuff.

Q: Now, do the fire medics stay at the firehouse?

BR: Yes, they do.

Q: Could you explain how that works?

BR: We have shifts from six o'clock in the morning till six o'clock the next morning. We usually like to--we try to break it up into four hour shifts, which is six to ten, ten to two, two to five, five to nine, and then from nine o'clock at night till six o'clock in the morning, we have--we like to have at least two people sleep there.

Q: And who's chosen to sleep there? How do they do that?

BR: You volunteer?

Q: What if you don't have (laughs) volunteers?

BR: Then we start calling people (laughs). "Well, what are you doing tonight?" (Laughs)

Yeah, we call them. But we have a big board down at the firehouse, and you have name tags, and it has each day and the hours, and you put your name up next to the tags.

Q: Have you done all shifts?

BR: Oh, yeah.

Q: And which did you prefer? Are some shifts more accident-prone during certain hours than others?

BR: It varies, you know. Sometimes the season has a lot to do with it. Summer, you get a lot of day calls, with people mowing and overheated. And in the winter, you get people falling--a lot of falls and stuff. And so it varies. Sometimes they're during the day and sometimes they're at night, you know. Sometimes you luck out and you can sleep all night and don't get any (laughs).

Q: So, do you get more calls that are fire-related or more calls that are not fire-related?

BR: No, more calls not fire-related. There's more ambulance calls than fire calls per year.

Q: How many would you say that the Department answers a year?

BR: Twenty-five hundred. With fire and ambulance.

Q: And how many did you have back in '79 when you went in?

BR: Maybe a thousand. Twelve hundred, the most. And it's more than doubled.

Q: So, now, are you--at one point you were a Steward for the--Steward at the Fire Medics Department? You did the cooking there, or not?

BR: Years ago, when I first was a member. Now, I'm the Steward for the whole Department. Whenever there's a Department affair, I take care of it. You know, Department meetings, I take care of. Saturday, I'll be cooking for the--tomorrow, for the--after the parade, they come back. I cook hamburger and hot dogs for them.

Q: When you say all of them, you mean all three companies?

BR: All four companies.

Q: Including Fire Medics?

BR: Yep, uh huh. Each company has their own Steward. We have a Steward, too. And the other three companies has, which takes care of their stuff for their firehouse, like their monthly meetings and if they have a picnic or a Christmas party or a kids' Christmas party, whatever. But I take care if it's something for the Department, like a Department meeting or ex-Chiefs meeting, or Eighth Battalion meeting where all the other Eighth Battalion people come here, and then I take care of that. I make them dinner, and like if there's a fire, I usually get the refreshments and water and soda and stuff.

Q: So how do you, having been doing this for twenty years, how do you prepare all the Chiefs' dinners? How do you ...

BR: Easy. I love it. I love to cook. I used to ...

Q: Tell me your background-- why do you love it?

BR: I used to cook when I was young. And, before I got married, I worked at a restaurant.

Q: What was that like?

BR: I loved it. I love to cook. I like to cook for a lot of people.

Q: How big? How big?

BR: Oh, I've cooked for two hundred. Yeah. A lot of us have. I have a lot of good help, though, you know. I have, you know, five or six people that come there and help me cook, and we have a good time. We laugh. We kid around. We enjoy it, you know.

Q: And how do you do the preparation for these big dinners? Do you ...

BR: Oh, go shopping and get the stuff. We go up there--a bunch of us--and we prepare it, and then I have a couple of girls--a couple of female members--that come up and help serve and help, and then all of us clean up afterwards.

Q: What is the general menu, let's say, for a fire Chiefs' ...

BR: In Eighth Battalion?

Q: Yes.

BR: Different. Sometimes I'll make stuffed chicken breast or wine and pork, they like. They like meat loaf.

Q: Meat loaf for two hundred would be an awful lot of work.

BR: Yeah. Well, no, the Eighth Battalion and the ex-Chiefs is usually about forty, fifty. It's about forty, fifty. The Department dinner is usually--Department meeting, which is once a year in March--that's usually around two hundred. And what I do is I have each company make something so I ...

Q: What do you mean, each company makes something?

BR: Like, my husband's company, I'll tell them to make some kind of steak. Atlantics always makes the sausage and peppers. Fire Medics always makes the either baked ziti or some kind of pasta. And Flower Hill usually makes the kielbasa and kraut. And then, I'll pick up the cold cuts and cheese and bread, and all that stuff, and my husband, I make him do the beer and soda, because I hate that job. In fact, he's got to do that tomorrow. I didn't tell him yet (laughs).

Q: So, have you planned all this for tomorrow?

BR: Yeah. Everything's ordered. We just got to go pick it up in the morning.

Q: This is Pride in Port Day.

BR: Yeah, Pride in Port and ...

Q: Where do you go to eat this?

BR: Back at Protection and Atlantics. They have a little picnic area back there or a barbecue area. Nice barbecue. Then, we'll throw the hamburgers and hot dogs on, you know.

They've got potato salad and macaroni salad. And some pickles. I'll put out some pickles and some cookies and fruit, and that's it. They're eating light tomorrow (laughs).

Q: So how many are you expecting tomorrow?

BR: I'm planning for fifty. I don't know how many.

Q: It's difficult. How do you know how many?

BR: Well, what happens, if I see there's a lot more there than fifty while they're marching, well whoever stays back to help me, we'll run up to Trunz [market] and get some more hamburger and hot dogs. Not a big deal.

Q: How did you become chef at a restaurant?

BR: Well, when I was young, I was a waitress in a pizza place, and he just--every time I went there and it wasn't busy, he would teach me how to make pizzas, then teach me how to make Italian stuff. And I just learned, and then when he wanted to go out, I would stay

there and cook. And then, I don't know if you remember with Mike Demars was on the Boulevard across from the old Carvel. It was called Mike Demars. Well, a guy Cal bought it, and I worked for him for years, and then he bought another place in Williston Park, and I--he took me there with him. And then I gave it up. I worked for catering people, and then I kind of gave it up because, with the kids, it was hard because it's a lot of long hours. So, I gave it up and I went to work for the school district. And been there nineteen years.

Q: And what do you do for the school district?

BR: Right now, I was an educational assistant. I worked with the kids. Now, for the last five years, I guess, I do the security. I sit at the front desk and don't let anybody in.

Q: Well, how does that work now, with the security. What do you do?

BR: If a parent comes in, they have to come to me and they have to sign in. And I see what they want or where they're going. And usually, if they want to go to a classroom, it's not allowed. And then sometimes some of them have to come pick their kids up early, so I'll get the kids for them and--and just make sure that everybody has a badge on that belongs. You know, has a reason to be there.

Q: Did you happen to meet your husband while you were a chef?

BR: Yes, I did.

Q: Could you tell me about that?

BR: I met him at Cal's Place on the Boulevard. He used to come in with Bobby Jones. He was a cop at the time, but during the day, he--Bobby Jones owned the plumbing place, and my husband worked part-time with him. And they used to come in for lunch. And I met him, and I said to my girlfriend, "I'm going to marry that guy someday." And she looked at me like I was crazy. And, then we started going out, and then ...we didn't go out long. I met him in--well, June, July...got engaged Mischief Night. And got married the following March. So, six months, seven months--something like that. And we've been married thirty-five years.

Q: And you've shared the Fire Department for thirty-five years.

BR: Well, I ...

Q: Practically.

BR: Well, I was in the Auxiliary about two months after we got married. Hey, I wrote it down (laughs). I need Frank Pavlak to look it up. I joined the Ladies Auxiliary--I got

married March 2nd in 1969, and I joined the Auxiliary June 4th, 1969. I was President from '79--in '79 and '80. And then I was a Trustee from '81 to '86.

Q: What made you join the Ladies Auxiliary?

BR: I was a lot younger than--I'm seven years younger than my husband. So I thought it'd be a nice way to meet some of his friends and get to know the people in the Fire Department. And ...

Q: So what ...

BR: ... anything I could help them do as far--because before we had the Department Steward, the Ladies Auxiliary used to go out to fires and make coffee and sandwiches and stuff for the guys.

Q: Can you describe what you used to do when you were in the Ladies Auxiliary? for instance, if the horn blew, what did you do?

BR: Well, if--the Chief would call us out if they needed the Auxiliary. And if it was a bad fire and they needed coffee and water and stuff, then they would call for the Ladies Auxiliary. And we used to always go to the firehouse--like I would go to PECO, because that's where I was from. And sometimes we'd all meet at one firehouse, and we would make

coffee, make soup. If it was in the wintertime, we'd make soup and coffee. The summertime, we'd make sure they had plenty of water and stuff and sandwiches, and whatever they felt they needed. And then we used to, you know, help with the kids' Christmas party, because every year they have the kids' Christmas party and stuff. And ... we helped them all out in anything they needed.

Q: What was the best part of being in the Ladies Auxiliary, for you?

BR: Meeting a lot of great people. I met a lot of my close friends in the Ladies Auxiliary.

Q: Is it functioning now?

BR: Not--PECO's, not really, no. Not that much anymore.

Q: Why is that, do you think?

BR: I'm not sure, really. I think a lot of people have busy lives and just didn't have the time and it just dribbled down and down and down. But it was fun. We had a lot of good times.

Q: So, basically, it was social, aside from helping with the ...

BR: Well, part of it was social, and then, you know, we were there for the men when they needed us. And some of it was social, absolutely.

Q: Were you women ever at the fire yourselves with all of the food, or did they ...

BR: Yeah. You know, they used to have to take it down, or I would--whoever the President was at the time would like assign, okay, you make the soup, you make the sandwiches. You're going to be the runner to take it back and forth, or whatever. Now, I do it.

Q: Now, you were holding a day job, as well, at the time when you were in the Fire Medics?

BR: Uh huh.

Q: How did you juggle your responsibilities?

BR: Well, obviously, during the day, I couldn't--once I got a steady day job, then I had to do nights and weekends. So, then somebody else had to take days. If I was off on vacation or holiday or something, then I would go hang out during the day. But, same as now. I do mostly nights and weekends. I'm there mostly nights and weekends, because I work during the day.

Q: When do you get time to rest (laughs)?

BR: Not often (laughs). In between.

Q: What makes you so giving to the community?

BR: I just love people. I love doing for people. And I enjoy it. I get a lot of reward to myself to see somebody happy and doing all right. And then I let myself go and do it for somebody else.

Q: Have you witnessed any unusual Fire Medics calls? Have you had any baby births or ...

BR: No, I never delivered a baby in the twenty-five years I've been there. Almost--one night we--I was on night duty with some friends, and a call came over in the Park Section for a man had a stroke. And after--not even two minutes later, a call comes over for a woman in labor. But, since we were on duty, we had to take the first one, and then two other people that came to the firehouse to take the second one from their home got to deliver the baby (laughs). So ...

Q: Was that a disappointment for you?

BR: No, no. You know, the man with the stroke needed us just as much as the woman with the baby. And he was a very nice man and very happy that we were there. So, yeah.

Q: When you witness a death, how do you deal with the relatives that may be on the scene that are hysterical?

BR: Well, you try to keep one person that can talk to the family and keep them calm, and, you know, tell them that you're going to do everything that you can for them, and, you know, to get somebody to drive them over to the hospital and meet you over there. Not to follow the ambulance. That's very important because sometimes we have to stop, pull over if we're doing some kind of medicine or something, and you don't want them going through red lights because we--we do, we can. You don't want them trying to ...

Q: How do you go through the red lights? Do you have a siren?

BR: Well, we don't really go through the red lights. We have to stop at a red light, and then, if there's nobody around, with the sirens and the lights on, you can slowly go through. And you don't want a family following behind you, because you don't want nothing to happen to them.

Q: What's the procedure, then, at the hospital when you arrive there, when you're a fire medic?

BR: We take the patient into the emergency room, and they have a little triage center where you go and you tell them what your finding is of the patient. And then, they'll take the

blood pressure and stuff, and then they'll tell you where to put him, what bed to put him in. And you put him in the bed, and then you--they sign the back of your sheet, and then you're done. You go back to the firehouse.

Q: Do you wait for the relatives, or is that ...

BR: Oh, no. Not necessary. Usually the relatives are there. And, you know, most of the time, if there is a family person there, they'll go up to him and tell him good luck and ...

Q: Now, how does the Captain go through the records for awards at the Fire Medics?

BR: For fireperson of the year?

Q: Yes.

BR: Well, we have what we call Captain bars. And at the end of--for our dinner, our dinner is usually new officers go in January and usually have a dinner in March to welcome--swear in the new officers. And the Captain from the previous years goes through her records, and she usually will pick out two or three calls that really stand out. Usually ones that were life-threatening and the patient was saved or brought back or lived. And then, the people that were on that crew gets a Captain's bar--badge.

Q: And what's that badge look like?

BR: It's just a little badge that are white in the middle, blue on both sides.

Q: Have you ever been at those scenes?

BR: I have five Captain's--six Captain's bars.

Q: You have six Captain's bars?

BR: Yeah, uh huh. Through the years. Six or seven. I can't remember.

Q: Do you recall some of those that were traumatic that you got those for?

BR: One was a burn victim.

Q: What was the--where was this, at a fire?

BR: On Willowdale. No, he was doing something in his business, and it went up and flashed him, and we wrapped him up and they started IV on him. And we took him to Weber School and a helicopter took him to Nassau County Medical Center. And his nephew became one of the Fire Medics (laughs).

Q: Because of that incident?

BR: Part of it, I think, maybe, yeah. He was impressed and everything.

Q: What do you do for a burn victim? Do you have certain liquid bandages?

BR: We have a bandage. It's called a burn gel-like, and it's cloth, and you put over it. And you've got to keep--keep him from going into shock. Because burns, it's very easy to go into shock.

Q: And how do you do that?

BR: Just keep them calm and keep them warm. And sometimes you have to elevate the legs, if they start to--and then, of course, an AMT will start IV right away, because you want to keep fluids in the body of a burn victim.

Q: So you call for an AMT if you don't have one?

BR: I call if we don't have one. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Q: And what were some of the others?

BR: We had a deck collapse. They had four or five people got hurt on it. Well, one was on the Boulevard. A guy was--they were cutting up the road. Who was it? It was--I don't know if it was Verizon or gas or phone. But, I think it was phone company cutting up the wire. And the guy had the big saw--the K2 saw--cutting the thing. And it jumped back and cut his jugular vein. He was a very lucky man.

Q: You were called out on that?

BR: There was about six of us, and ...

Q: And how did you deal with him?

BR: First thing you do is stop the bleeding, and then the other--one of the other girls ...Christina [Alexander] ... she got IV in him right away, and we had police escort to get us right over to North Shore, and they got him right up in the operating room, and he made it. So we each got a bar for that.

Q: How do you stop a jugular vein? That's pretty ...

BR: A lot of pressure.

Q: And how ...

BR: You just got to--sometimes you've got to just take your hand and put it right in and get the vein and stop it--artery. We just held it in. A lot of bandages, and put them in the hole and hold it. And then she was pushing IVs and liquids and stuff.

Q: And how do you not go into shock?

BR: You don't think about it, really. You know, your adrenalin is pumping so fast that you're just thinking about this person that you've got to help him, and you put your everything aside. And then everybody works together and does what they have to do.

Q: And what were--do you remember any of the others that were outstanding?

BR: No, I don't. I really don't.

Q: And the judgment. Who makes the judgment on these outstanding performances?

BR: The Captain. The Captain. She goes over all the--she looks over all the PCRs [Patient Critical Reports] for that year and reads what they were and ...

Q: What's a PCR?

BR: PCR is a sheet that we fill out with the patient's name and their address, their doctor, their vital signs. What their chief complaint is. How you found them when you got there. And all their medical history and what you did for them. And what hospital you took them to. And then, copy goes to the hospital, copy goes to the State, and we have a copy for our records.

Q: What's the burnout factor for the fire medics? How many years can you do this?

BR: Well, it all depends on the individual, really. Some people burn out. Some people can handle it and go on. And sometimes you burn out. I think we all eventually have a burnout. Then, you try to just sit back for a while, and then, ninety percent of the time, they come back active.

Q: How active are you now?

BR: I'm the President (laughs). I'm pretty active.

Q: So it's not just the paperwork. You're still going out to the calls.

BR: I go out to the calls, but not as much as I would like to. I hurt my knee, so that keeps me back a little bit. But, I also--I let some of the younger guys go, if they're there. If there's

nobody there, then I will--I will go out. Absolutely. But, otherwise, I try to stay around, do the paperwork, and make sure everything's taken care of.

Q: Do you always have your pager on ... [PAGER GOES OFF] ...

BR: Yep. There it goes (laughs). There is goes. Oh, general alarm.

Q: What do you see on your pager?

BR: It tells you what kind of alarm it is and the address. It's a general alarm. House. 23 Soundview Drive.

Q: How many men are there now and how many women? Are they basically all women now in the Fire Medics?

BR: No, no. It's--I would say about even. Sometimes you get a few more men than women, and sometimes you have more women than men. I think it's pretty much equal, pretty close to equal right now.

Q: How do you recruit for new people?

BR: Well, we have put ads in the paper. Your best recruitment is word of mouth. You know, you bring your friends in and family, like my son joined because of his father and I. And we put advertising in *Port Washington News*. We go up to the school and recruit through there. We have the Explorers Program, which I was in charge of for a year, so--and I gave it up because it was just too much for me. And then, a lot of times, most of the Explorers go on to join one of the companies when they become seventeen. Explorer can be from thirteen to seventeen. And most of them do end up joining the company.

Q: Your son is the Captain in Protection.

BR: Uh huh.

Q: Did he come in as a fire medic first and then ...

BR: No. No, no. He followed his daddy.

Q: Did you ever want to become a firefighter rather than a fire medic?

BR: I went through some of the schools. No. I never wanted to be a firefighter. I go to the fires. I go to most of the fires, if I'm around. But no, I went to fire school. I went to--I just got finished going to a railroad school.

Q: What is that?

BR: They teach you how to recognize the third rail and how to open the doors if you have to open them from the outside. Then, they teach you safety and all the other things...I have it here (laughs). And all the other stuff. And I went through the HAZMAT [Hazardous Materials] classes. I--I try to go through--if they offer the classes, I go through them, just--just in case I do need to know something. You know, HAZMAT is good to know if we do get on a call, to recognize ... [END OF SIDE A; BEGIN SIDE B] ...

Q: This is Side B. And you were talking about the HAZMAT is good to recognize. Do you want to complete your thought on that?

BR: Well, it's just--the school's just good to know. And, you know, if you can go to them, it's--you know, they're always offering different kinds of schools. So, then if I'm able to go, I like to attend them.

Q: Have you ever driven the Fire Medic truck?

BR: The ambulances?

Q: Yes.

BR: Oh, yeah. I like driving.

Q: How did that feel?

BR: It's--it's exciting, you know. You just got to know what you're doing and be careful, but it's ...

Q: What do you need to know to drive a fire medic truck?

BR: Oh, you got to go through training. You have to know how to back it up, and you've got to know how to get into different places and turn it around. And there's some houses we have, have different round driveways and stuff, and you have to learn how to--you have to know where all the equipment is on it. You have to know how to use all the radios. If one of the Chiefs or something or somebody's calling for aid, you've got to know which radio it is and how to answer it. You know, you can't--it's not like getting in your car and turn it on and drive. You've got to know where everything is.

Q: What's the difference in the fire trucks today compared to when you first went in? How much bigger are they? How much more do you have to know compared to back ...

BR: Well, as far as the fire trucks, I really--I don't ...

Q: I mean the fire medic ...

BR: Oh, the ambulances?

Q: Yes.

BR: Well, like I said, we started out with a Cadillac that's pretty amazing.

Q: How long was that one compared to what they are today?

BR: Well, not much--I don't think there's really that much difference. I guess a few feet. But, you know, a Cadillac is shorter. This is--this is very tall. And so, it's got to be eight feet tall. Maybe seven feet tall.

Q: What do those trucks cost? The fire medic trucks? Do you know?

BR: I would say around eighty. Maybe eighty, give or take.

Q: Have you ever had a breakdown on one of the trucks while trying to go to answer a call?

BR: Had a fire (laughs).

Q: At a fire?

BR: Had a fire (laughs).

Q: You had a fire?

BR: Yeah.

Q: Where?

BR: The brakes--the brakes. I was sitting there filling out the paperwork at a call--at a fire call down in Sands Point Preserve. And all of a sudden, I looked down and the smoke is coming up around me (laughs). My son was hysterical. He was like, "Oh, no!" I jumped out. I said, "Ah! The truck's on fire."

Q: What happened?

BR: It was the brakes ...

Q: And how does that ...

BR: ... overheated. I guess they overheated or something.

Q: So did you call the Fire Department (laughs)?

BR: They were there (laughs). They were there.

Q: And what did they do?

BR: Huh?

Q: What did they do? They can't put water on it.

BR: No, they--I think they put foam or something. I don't even remember. I just jumped out and went on the side (laughs). It was funny, though. They didn't let me live that one down for a while (laughs).

Q: What was the impact of, let's say 9/11, on your group?

BR: I think that was an impact on everybody, and then we had a lot of friends.

Q: The fire medics, in particular.

BR: Fire Medics lost an exempt member that was a City fireman. Marty Demeo. He was killed in 9/11. In fact, we just went to a memorial for him last weekend up at the high school. It was rough, you know.

Q: Where was he? In the building?

BR: You know, I'm not sure. Well, he's a City fireman. He was a City fireman, too. So, that's how he got killed.

Q: How did you build--going back to the early years--how did you build your confidence in becoming a fire medic?

BR: Oh, I--a lot of the members that was in a few months before me and that--I looked up to them, especially Joey Teta. He was like my--Joey Teta, Craig--Marty--Marty Demeo, and we were all very close. And we helped each other, and they guided me along. And I learned a lot from Joey Teta.

Q: Who was Joey Teta?

BR: Joey Teta was one of the original members that started this up. He used to belong to Protection, and he helped start the Fire Medics up. And he was a Port policeman with my husband. And he was killed in a freak house accident, at his house. He was trying to dig

a rock out of the basement, and it rolled on top of him and killed him. So, he was a big impact.

Q: Were you at that as a fire medic?

BR: No, I was not. I was--in fact, I had talked to him the day before, because I had just had surgery so I couldn't go. But my husband was there. And Joey was one of his best friends.

Q: So ...

BR: ...he was on the police force.

Q: ... can you explain what happened, or do you remember?

BR: He was digging a big boulder/rock out of his basement, because he wanted to make the basement bigger. He wanted to bury this rock so that he could finish off his basement. And he was down in the hole digging it, and the rock rolled over on top and squished him.

Q: Was the Fire Department there to help?

BR: Yeah. They called the Fire Department, and they had to get air bags and stuff to get the rock off him, but he didn't make it.

Q: Is there a buddy system in the Fire Medics. When you go on call, is there a protocol that you have a certain number of people or ...

BR: Oh, we like--well, we like four people on the rig, but the rig can't leave the building unless it has at least a driver and a technician. So, unless the technician calls that they're at the scene and calls you and said "Bring the ambulance down; I'm at the scene." But it's better if you have four people. You know, you can always call for more people, but it's nice to have four people on the rig. But we can go with two--the driver and a technician.

Q: And if you don't have four people, they come then from their homes?

BR: Oh, some people will come from their homes and show up and stuff. That's why we have those beepers, so--like if I'm uptown, I can go--if the call is right up where I am, I can go there and start helping the patient, and then the ambulance can come and finish up.

Q: Now ...

BR: I mean, but most of us that are technicians have a first aid kit in our cars.

Q: What else do you carry in your cars besides a first aid kit?

BR: Well, usually a jacket or a sweatshirt or something that has "Fire Medics" on it, so that, you know...if I walk into a house looking like this, they're probably like, you know, "Who are you?" This way, I can put a shirt on and it'll say "Fire Medics," and they know that you're with the ambulance.

Q: Do you ever carry any other equipment, like the firefighters?

BR: No.

Q: Like an ax or ...

BR: No. No. That I leave to my husband and son. That's it. I was, in fact, I was just made an honorary member of my last--I do a lot for Protection because it is my husband and son. So I, you know, try to help out when I can. And they surprised me at their dinner last March and made me an honorary member. First time anybody from another company, and a female, was made an honorary member.

Q: How did that make you feel?

BR: Oh!

Q: Can you explain?

BR: I could've killed them all (laughs). I was shocked. I was, you know--and it was nice, because my son gave me the badge, too. You know, he was the one. And he kept it a secret for--they knew what they were going to do for two months, two or three months. And he kept it a secret. And I was shocked that he kept a secret (laughs). It was a honor. It was really a great honor.

Q: So, now you can go to Protection firehouse just as well as your husband and your son.

BR: Oh, yeah. I could, as a Fire Medic. We all go to each other's firehouses. We don't--you're a member--it's four company, but it's one Department. So ...

Q: So what was it that they gave you as an honorary ...

BR: A badge. One of their badges. And it was nice; it was great.

Q: And was--did you make dinner for that?

BR: No, no. That was at a catering hall. That was--it was at Jericho Terrace. Jericho Terrace, yeah. So ...

Q: Congratulations.

BR: Thank you.

Q: Has anyone ever saved your life in the Fire Medics?

BR: No. No.

Q: Your husband? Your son?

BR: No. No. Not that I know of. You never know with them. They don't tell mommy everything.

Q: Do they ever talk about what's happened at the fire scenes, when they come home?

BR: Well, sometimes we do, but not always. Sometimes I'll--my little one, he went into the City on 9/11, and he don't--he don't talk about it. He always says it's not the way it's portrayed on TV. So, but I don't question him about it, because it's his privacy, you know. If he don't want to talk about it, that's like people that's been in war, they don't want to talk about it. And you have to honor them for that.

Q: Did your husband--was he in the service at any time?

BR: No. He went--graduated high school, went right on the police force. My oldest son was in the service--the one that lives in Albany. He graduated high school in '89 and he went right into the service. He did his boot camp in Kentucky, and then he went down south to learn to fly helicopters. And then, he went to Korea. I was very upset that his whole class got sent upstate to Watertown, except for four. Two went to Germany, two went to Korea, and one went--I don't remember where the other one went. Germany maybe. And not even a month after he was sent to Korea, Kuwait, Kuwait War broke out. And the first troop they sent over there was the one from Watertown. So, I was glad he was in Korea (laughs). But, he was in Korea for fifteen months. And he flew the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone], part of the DMZ over there.

Q: Have you ever been personally thanked by the people that you've helped with the Fire Medics, when you're ...

BR: Yeah, I've gotten a lot of good letters. There was one call from Roslyn West Shore Road where my husband and I just happened to be riding by and a bad accident, and I helped the cop with the people, and I got an award from the Town for that.

Q: What was the award?

BR: Life saving award for helping out.

Q: What sustains you? Is it faith when you're in these situations with the Fire Medics you're dealing with bleeding, death, or ...

BR: Well, like I said, the adrenalin gets working, and, you know, you've got to help the person. Then you put all your feelings aside and then just think about the patient and do what you need to do to help them and save them and make them better. And get them to the hospital.

Q: Have you ever taken lucky charms with you to these things? Or does your husband ever wear a lucky charm when he goes into a fire? Or your son?

BR: I don't think so, no. I don't. Whatever God hands me is what he hands me. You can't-- He's the boss, you know. I just pray everybody comes home safe and pray all my Fire Medics get out safe and all my other brothers and sisters in the other companies, and that everybody goes home safe.

Q: Have you ever been abused on a fire scene by people who are hysterical?

BR: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

Q: What happens? Can you tell us one brief description?

BR: Well, they just--we had one person that, you know, on a bad accident, that kept grabbing at me "Help my friend! Help my friend!" You know, we kept saying, just stand aside. We are helping your friend. But, you know, they're--they can't help it. They're upset and everything. So, you just talk to them and calm them down. You know, you get them away from the scene. If you're busy working on the patient, you get somebody else that can take them away from scene and talk to them, and calm them down.

Q: Anything worse than verbal abuse?

BR: No. Guy drunk one night pushed me. But you deal with it. They don't realize what they're doing. As long as they don't really hurt you, then--then you get over it. You know, you may get angry at first, but you get over it, and you realize, you know, stressful situation.

Q: Does anything in particular ever haunt you about your experiences? Do you dream of them?

BR: No. Sometimes, when they first happen, you do a little bit. You know, like the little boy down there, that bothered me for a while. Then, you just keep going and going, and eventually it gets better, you know. You try to think of the good things more than the bad things. The good things you're doing. The good. You're helping out people, and, you know, you're always going to have one bad, you know. But most of the time, they all

work out to be good, so then that--that's what you've got to think about, you know.

You're doing good for the people in your town.

Q: What do you think makes a good fire medic? What qualities do you think they have to have to do what you do?

BR: Everybody has their own qualities, I think. You've got to want to do it. You've got to enjoy working with people. And--but everybody has their own great qualities in them, and they always come out when you need it.

Q: Do you march with the Fire Medics at parades?

BR: Absolutely. I love it. And I can't tomorrow, because I've got to cook. But ...

Q: So, how do you--when you have to cook, then ...

BR: I know.

Q: ... what happens?

BR: I cook (laughs). But, usually, all the tournaments, I parade. The racing tournaments. And they always have a parade afterwards, and I parade in all of them. And whatever parade I can parade, I parade.

Q: Do you take part in the tournament?

BR: No, my son does. He's a maniac.

Q: Why do the children love you so much in the parades, and they all yell, "Mrs. Reese! Mrs. Reese!"

BR: Who told you that (laughs). Well, I work with them. I work at the school for twenty years, so I know them all. So, they're all my kids in there. Everybody's yelling, "What is this? Mrs. Reese is ..." all my other fire medics and my son and, "What is this? A Mrs. Reese parade or a Fire Department parade?" (laughs). But I think they get a big kick, you know. A lot of them don't realize that I have another life outside the school. And then when they see me in a uniform, or even the other--where was I the other day? I ran into one of my little kids in the grocery store. And they're like, "What are you doing here?" I'm like, "Well, we do eat" (laughs). They don't see you outside of where you are in the school, you know. You're there seven hours with me, and they don't realize, and then when they see me in a uniform, they're like, "Mrs. Reese!" (laughs). They get excited.

Q: And how does that make you fee?

BR: I love it. I love kids. Love them. Love working with them. I do with one of the social workers--not social workers, guidance counselor--I do a mentors' program with her. And I love it.

Q: What's the program about? What do you mentor?

BR: I mentor kids. We have like twenty-five teachers, and we each pick a child that you feel needs a little extra help or, you know, a little extra care. And you meet with that child once a week, and then once a month we meet as a group, and we go someplace. And last year was my first year at being in charge with Jennifer Biblowitz who is the guidance counselor. And I said to her, because we had somebody else do it a couple of years before that, but she left the school to have a baby. So we weren't going to have it because Jen couldn't do it alone. And I said, "You know what? These kids need it. So, I'll do it with you." So once a month, we meet as a group--all forty, fifty of us, whatever it is--and we take them someplace. Like one time, one month, we took them to my son's firehouse, and him and a bunch of guys came there and showed them the truck and taught them a little bit about what they should do. And they put on all their equipment, so that they could see, "When you see us like this, don't be scared, because we've just got to wear this to go in the fire," and stuff. And one time we took them to my firehouse. Another time,

we took them to Sands Point Preserve. We did a lot of community stuff with them. And then we have--give them a snack and stuff, and they love it. They love it. I love it.

Q: How old were these?

BR: Anywhere from first grade to fifth grade.

Q: Now, you say that you parade at the tournaments.

BR: Uh huh.

Q: So, when they have their drills, you have the parades when?

BR: After. Drills are usually over four, five o'clock, and then six o'clock, you parade.

Q: And you parade on the grounds that the ...

BR: No, no, no. You parade in the town of whoever's hosting the tournament.

Q: And do fire medics take part in the tournaments? Do they ever take part in, in terms of running the drills.

BR: No, no. What it is, it's a racing team. They jump off of fire trucks (laughs).

Q: Tell me what they do.

BR: It's a racing team, and they have--they have two trucks. A B truck and a C truck. And they're on a truck and they have to race the truck down, pull the ladder up, run up the ladder onto the arch, and then, like all Nassau County, every fire--most firehouse has a team, and they compete against each other. And, let's say Hicksville always hosts Labor Day tournament. On Labor Day, they have a tournament. But, usually, Labor Day, they have the parade the day before, on Sunday, because it's usually very big. But, well ... [??] ... who had a tournament this year. Central Islip had one. And then the tournament starts at nine o'clock in the morning. And it usually lasts till four or five. Then, you change into your uniform and you go parade.

Q: And are you ...

BR: It's usually--it's got to be around a two-mile parade to be a competition. You parade two miles.

Q: Two mile parade in Hicksville?

BR: Yeah. Whatever town it's in. Whatever town it's in. My son can tell you all about it, because he's been on the racing team for a long time. He loves it.

Q: How big ...

BR: ... [??] ...

Q: ... an event. How many people show up for this?

BR: Well, there's usually twenty-five, thirty teams that race. And there's usually twenty people on a team. And then, you know, all the family--your whole family, you know, goes. My husband and I go. If my son is down, he goes. And each member has all their friends and family there, so the Labor Day tournament, probably five, six hundred people just watching it and stuff.

Q: So you were--or you go and you parade in your uniform.

BR: Uh huh.

Q: But you don't cook for that event.

BR: For the tournaments? Yeah, I help. I help barbecuing. Usually Johnny Salerno--we call him "Bubba"--he organizes it all and I go and help him cook and stuff. Last few years.

Q: And where do you--you still come back here for the cook-out?

BR: No, we do it right there at the tournament. Everybody has a little section. They set up their tent and their barbecues. It's like tailgate (laughs).

Q: So, how large is this ground?

BR: Oh, it--different--pretty big. They have to be pretty big. Hicksville is--where is it? I can't think of the name of the street.

Q: So but it could handle ...

BR: But it's pretty ...

Q: ... four companies--the three companies, plus the Fire Medics.

BR: Oh, no, that's not--it's one team. Like it's called the Road Runners. It's one team.

Q: Yeah, but when you said they sent up tents.

BR: No, they set up one tent--the Road Runners. But like there's maybe four or five members of Flower Hill on the team, some members from PECO on the team. Different--Fire Medics don't have anybody that really races. We don't...they go and support it, but they don't race. And we don't--not at this time. I don't remember if we ever did.

Q: Now, did you ever have to be trained to deal with things like transmittable diseases as a-- when you were in the Fire Medics, like AIDS. Today, we have AIDS, where back then, maybe we had ...

BR: Yeah, they have schools on that. They teach you how, you know, to wear your mask, and if you have to put on the like a paper gown and stuff. That's--what do they call that? I can't think of the name they call it. Can't think of the name of it. But they give classes on all that stuff.

Q: Is there anything you'd like to talk about the Fire Medics that perhaps I haven't covered that you would really like to talk about?

BR: It's just I think it's a wonderful organization. Not only do we help people, but I've made a lot of great friends over the twenty years, and we're like a big family. The whole Department is like a big family, you know. If, God forbid, if something happens in their family, it's like it happens to us, and we're there to help and support you. And, you know,

we have a member right now that his little daughter is very sick, and we're doing a big fundraiser for them to help them out on November 6th. So ...

Q: What's wrong with their child?

BR: Cancer. And it happens to be my niece, so--but, you know, and a lot of members have mothers or fathers that's sick or pass away and stuff. And we're always there to help. And we go to the--I try, personally, to go to all the funerals I can attend. Unfortunately, I've been to three this month. And ...

Q: Who are the three?

BR: Charley Lang's wife. Matero. His dad. And George Mahoney. And they were all in just the last three weeks. Sometimes you get them; sometimes you go a long time without having one, thank God. But we're always there for each other, and that's--that's a good part, you know. And we have to be--you know, do what we have to do to help people we do. But we are still there to help each other, too. It's rewarding. Like I said, I've made a lot of good friends.

Q: The funeral rituals are very impressive.

BR: Sad. And impressive.

Q: Do you have to, as a Steward, cook for them after funerals, or cook for the ...

BR: Sometimes I do. It all depends on like George Mahoney's, Frank Pavlak took care of it, you know. I was working; I couldn't take off. If I could have taken off, of course I would have helped Frank. But ...

Q: What happens after a funeral?

BR: Oh, if the family wants, if it's a member of like he's a member of PECO, so they had the family come back and served them food afterward. It's up to the family. Some families don't want that. They just want to have something light at home. It's up to the individual family what they--we offer it to them, or the company they're from offers it to them. So, like we just had, after Christmas last year, Dick Borelli who was an engineer with my company for like twelve years, and he passed away. And our firehouse, we don't have no elevator or nothing; we don't have a kitchen or anything upstairs. So, Atlantic's, we laid him out at Atlantic's firehouse, and there was a big funeral. He was very much loved by the whole Department.

Q: Who was it?

BR: Dick Borelli. Pops. Pops Borelli. But that's another thing I forgot to--I had an ambulance dedicated to me, too, Fire Medics. And they ...

Q: How do they do that?

BR: Well, when we get a new ambulance--every six, seven years, we get a new ambulance. And they always dedicate it to somebody that--in the Fire Medics that they feel deserves it, done a lot, or whatever. And another thing they surprised me with, I wanted to kill them. I don't like being honored, and I don't like to be rewarded for what I do. I just do it because I enjoy doing it. But they yell at me all the time: "You deserve it!" But, you know, what. Everybody deserves it. Everybody that gives their time and their heart and soul to helping people. So, you know ...

Q: So what did--did they name the ambulance after you?

BR: There's a plaque on the side of the ambulance that says, "Dedicated to Beverly Reese."

Q: How did that make you feel?

BR: Oh, it's great. It feels great. But, I just--I get embarrassed. I don't like being center of attention.

Q: So how many ambulance trucks do they have in the Department?

BR: Three.

Q: Three.

BR: We have three.

Q: And one of them is named for you.

BR: And one is named for Dick Borelli, and who's the other one right now. I don't remember who--Frank O'Grady, I think the other one is. And then, like when Dick's ambulance is time to be retired and get a new one, then we take that plaque off and put it in our showcase. Then, whoever the new ambulance--whoever we dedicate that to--will get a plaque on the side of that ambulance.

Q: So does the Fire Medics have the showcase in their building?

BR: Uh huh, sure. Absolutely.

Q: And who keeps the history, then, of your Fire Department?

BR: Les Kent. He's my publicity guy. He is great at it. Like Frank Pavlak, Les Kent.

Q: Les Kent.

BR: Frank Pavlak knows everything. He's amazing, that guy. I was thinking about--I couldn't remember when I joined. I called him up last night, I said, "Frank, I need you to look up something, or do you remember ..." He said, "I'll call you back in a few minutes. Not even ten minutes later, he called me back with all the information. Like, oh, my God. He is great. My son adores Frank Pavlak. You know Frank?"

Q: Yes.

BR: My son adores him. Adores him. My son's a big boy. He's six-one, two hundred and fifty pounds, and he's like a big teddy bear, and he thinks the whole world goes around Frank Pavlak. He teases Frank all the time.

Q: Tell me about the humor in the Department?

BR: Well, you know, you have a lot of fun times. You have a lot of sad times. But--and you try to have good times, too, because you need to. You need to enjoy it to want to stay in it and stuff, you have to enjoy it a little bit, too. You can't always be on the down side. So we're a family; we really are.

Q: Who's the big prankster in the Fire Medics?

BR: Well, my son's one of them. Oh, in the Fire Medics?

Q: Or in--even in Protection. Who's the big prankster? You said your son.

BR: Well, my son and his friend Donald Alexander.

Q: How--what kind of pranks do they play?

BR: In the summertime, on Memorial Day, for like the whole month of May, everybody's at their firehouse shining up their trucks and their building and everything. And PECO's always come down to Fire Medics, and they'll squirt us with the hose or something. And you get that all around. It's--you know, you enjoy it, because it's a lot of work to get all these trucks shipshape, and, you know, you wax them and you shine them. So you have a little fun, and then we usually get together and barbecue or something.

Q: And people are called by their nicknames at ...

BR: Yeah.

Q: Are there some unusual nicknames in the company?

BR: Well, you've got "Bubba." You've got--they call my son "Doc."

Q: Why?

BR: Because his initials are D.R., so they call him "Doc." And you've got "Mugsey," "Bonesy." He's a tall, skinny kid. We had one kid that was called "Shadow," (whispers) because he followed you around all the time.

Q: I didn't hear that.

BR: Because he followed you around all the time, so they called him "Shadow." "Woody."

Q: What does "Woody" stand for?

BR: Richard. I don't know why they call him Woody. Dicky Woods. Do you know Dicky Woods? They call him Woody. Probably because his last name is Woods (laughs). And what are some of the other ones.

Q: Do you--you don't have an endearing nickname?

BR: I'm not going to say (laughs).

Q: Oh, come on (laughs).

BR: You aren't going to put it in the book, I hope. They call me "Bubble Butt" (laughs).

"Bubbles," "Bubble Butt," whatever. So it's fun. We all have a good time. I can't think of some of the other ones. They give everybody nicknames, you know, they love it.

Q: What about the language. Do the women end up using the rough language like the men do?

BR: Yes, sometimes (laughs).

Q: Is it fun to kind of let go?

BR: Well, you know, you have to once in a while. Yeah, once in a while, you've got to let your hair down and just, you know ...

Q: Would you like to tell us what some of the language is?

BR: No (laughs). You can imagine (laughs).

Q: Do the men feel, when the women joined the firefighters, did the men feel that they're not free to speak their rough language?

BR: Well, I'm sure, at first they, you know, they weren't happy that women were coming in the Fire Department. Then, some of the older ones were, you know. But it became a very--I don't think that a lot of them--most of them, I would say ninety percent of them, don't feel that way anymore. They've all welcomed the women in, very open heartily. And maybe at first they did, but now, you know, I think it depends on the woman. If they know they can say a few things around some of them, they--but they're pretty good about it. They, you know, especially very--our Fire Department is very family oriented. We do a lot of things as family, you know, involve the kids and stuff, all the picnics and stuff. Like tomorrow, all the wives will come with the kids to watch the parade and come back for a hamburger. So, you know, they're careful around it, you know, they're not--I smack them if--I give them a smack if I hear them cursing in front of the kids or something. Smack them by the side of the head. My son, I grab by the ear.

Q: This is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fire Medics.

BR: Yes, it is. We're twenty-five years old this year.

Q: Your--what's your part in that anniversary? Is there--have you already celebrated or ...

BR: We had a dinner in March. We had a big dinner. And for Fire Medics members and their guests. November 13th, we're having a cocktail party for the whole Department, and

we're inviting every fireman in Port Washington and all the Village mayors and stuff for a big cocktail party at the Polish Hall.

Q: And you're doing the cooking for this?

BR: No, no, no. Huh uh. This is the Polish Hall. Jimmy Contino's catering it.

Q: They have a surveillance camera now in the Fire Departments?

BR: No, not us. I don't know about the other companies. But I hope I can trust my brother firemen. Be pretty sad if I couldn't.

Q: Can you recall anything extremely humorous happening, either as a cook, as a Steward ...

BR: (Laughs). Yep, not long ago, a few months ago (laughs), I had just bought my brand new pair of glasses--a hundred and ninety dollars. And I was up in Atlantic's kitchen, and we're cooking, and I had the deep fryer going. And I'm deep frying eggplants to make eggplant parmigiana, and I bent over, my glasses fell off my head right into the deep fryer. I was like, "Oh, no!" So, I got the fork, and I quick picked them out, and there's this--I wish that you could see them.

Q: Describe how it looked.

BR: Well, the frame, they looked like a snake skin. They were all melted up. The lenses was gone. We emptied the deep fryer after we let it cool down, emptied it, and there's the lenses in the bottom. And I took it up to Katims, and I took him the frames, and he couldn't believe it. He was like--we were hysterical. So, made me new ones (laughs).

Q: How did the eggplant parmigiana turn out (laughs)?

BR: I had just finished frying the last pieces, thank God. So, no, turned out great.

Q: Do you have a good recipe for eggplant parmigiana.

BR: Well, eggplant parmigiana is easy. Just spread your eggplant. Deep fry it, or you fry it, and then put it in--a little sauce in the bottom. A layer of sauce, cheese, and keep building it up.

Q: What other good recipes do you have that you've cooked in the past?

BR: Oh, I cook all kinds of stuff.

Q: What is your ethnic background that you're such a good cook?

BR: What am I? I'm French, Irish, and German (laughs).

Q: But your cuisine leans toward which?

BR: I cook a lot of Italian. Like I said, the people in the little Italian place taught me a lot of Italian. I like Italian, so ...

Q: And your husband is also ...

BR: Oh, he's Dutch and, I don't know. Dutch, Indian, and something else. Our kids like—our kids asked when they were little about our ancestors. I said "Heinz 57" (laughs), so you've got a little of everything.

Q: What happens when you hear that horn blow, inside of you?

BR: Well now? Earlier, you got real excited. Or, you know, you'd be on duty, and you used to say, "Come on. We want the big one. We want the big one!" you know. But now that I've been there twenty-five years, you know, it's, you know, I guess you'd say routine. I don't get excited. I get excited, but I don't. I don't know if you understand, but not like when you first become a fire medic or a fireman. It's a thrill, you know. Or not a thrill, but it's exciting, and you're always looking for your first call, you know. And then, as you get older and you're more mature, it's--it's rewarding. It's more rewarding than anything.

Q: What do you love the most about this?

BR: Just knowing that there's somebody out there that I helped or we helped. And there is somebody--as far as my husband and son and the rest of the firemen--somebody's home they saved or business or whatever. You know, that's the rewarding part. And then to--and couple of times I, you know, went on a call and then six months or so down the road, I would run into them on the street, and they were like, "You were at my house." And I'm like, "Yeah?" And they would tell me what it was, and I'd say, "Oh, yeah, right. Yeah." And then some of them remember you--remember your face. And that's--that's amazing. That's rewarding.

Q: Do you think your grandchildren will be ...

BR: I don't think I'll ever have grandchildren, the way my two sons are going. They're thirty-one and thirty-three, and neither one of them--they have girlfriends, but, well, who knows.

Q: What's the future for volunteer fire medics?

BR: Hopefully forever. I'd like to see it stay in the Fire Department. I really wouldn't want to see it paid, because it's not--not the same.

Q: What do you think would be different if it was paid?

BR: It's--I think it's more a job then, you know. This is something you really--you know, you can love your job, but not everybody, you know, not to a hundred percent. This is something you love, you want to do, and you enjoy doing, and you enjoy seeing the rewards of the people that you helped out of it. And I think a lot of that would be lost ...
[INTERRUPTION] ... And the other thing in terms of ...

Q: Wait. What do you think is the worth of this oral history project?

BR: I think it's a wonderful project, and I think it's wonderful of you and whoever's helping you do this to take this on. And I think it's--I think a lot of people that don't realize what we do or what we stand for, to know what--what some of us've been through and what some of us have seen and done and learned, and how it becomes part of your life. And how a lot of us, it becomes a family thing.

Q: Well, thank you very, very much.