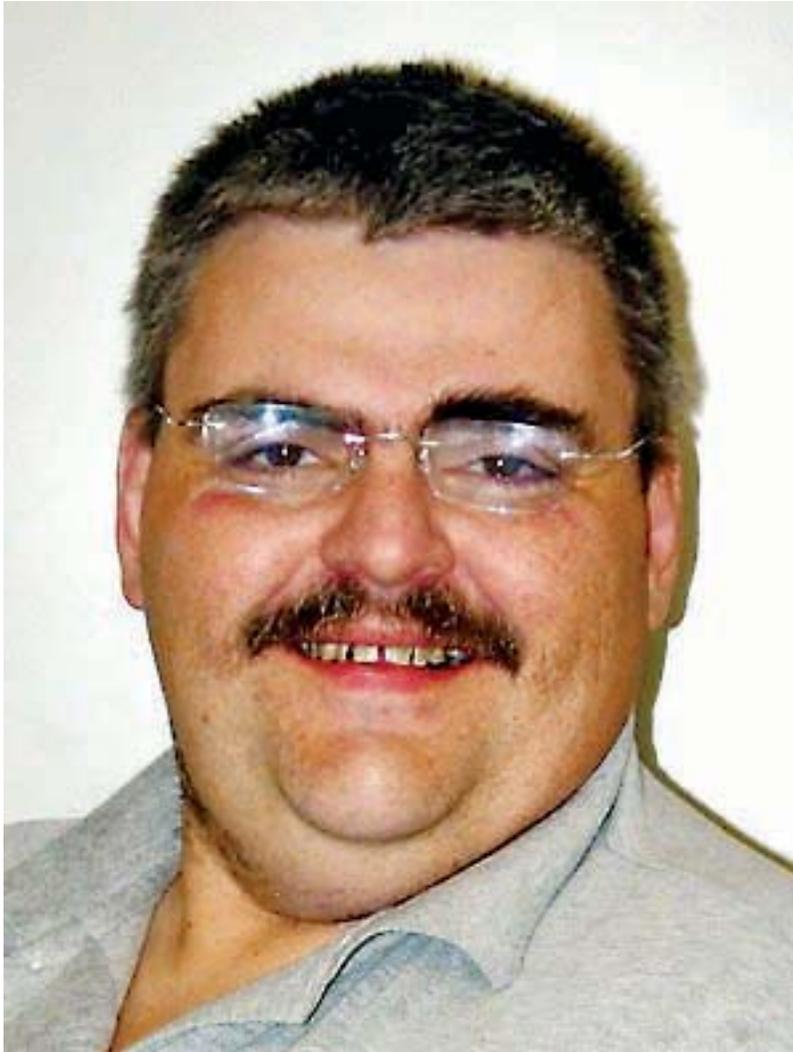


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# The EMS Experience

Saluting those with 20 years or more in EMS

Louis N. Molino Sr., CET/FF/NREMT



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## What was your first day on the job in EMS?

June 17, 1981. That day I joined both the VFD and Ambulance Corp in National Park, New Jersey. However, I had been chasing those same folks sine I was seven years old. I went to a house fire the day after Christmas in 1972, and with that I was hooked. Back then in NJ you could take an EMT-A class at 16. I was placed in a course, and we graduated the

Thursday before Thanksgiving of 1981. At the time the squad had about six EMTs.

## Which services have you worked for over the years?

Well, if I listed all of them it would be an entire issue of the magazine. I've been a member of many volunteer and career organizations, and I've said that I've never had a real job per se. One of the most unique services

was the "Star of Life Flotilla," a volunteer ambulance service on water in Stamford, Connecticut. I had read about it in Emergency Magazine. On the career side, I've gotten to play fire/EMS chief at a major industrial pipeline facility on the Mediterranean Sea in Turkey, as well as help protect service men and women at a major east coast US Air Force base during the days of 9/11. My career has been unique and has literally taken me around the world.

## Why did you get into EMS?

Same reason most of those my age (46) did. Johnny and Roy from "Emergency!" I am very glad that since then I've gotten to meet both Jim Page and Randolph Mantooth. In fact, I became friends with Jim Page, and through him I got into writing and was introduced to A. J. Heightman, the editor of JEMS, as well as other "names" from the fire and EMS world.

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

How hasn't it? When I joined in 1981, I was one of nine EMTs on a 30-man VFD/ambulance squad, and we had only one woman on the ambulance squad. We ran a Type I ambulance then. But when I moved to a new town, that VFD had *no* EMTs and was still running a hearse-type Pontiac ambulance. Services now have mostly EMT staffs and are using modern type II boxes. We had ALS even before

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I joined in 1981, but the services used glass IV bottles and were under strict medical control. No AEDs and really a limited number of drugs for a limited number of medical conditions were available. The advent of trauma centers was also new in NJ at about the same time. But, really, the single thing that strikes me the most is how the stretchers have changed! From the Ferno Model 29A I first used to the hydraulic and battery-operated versions at our young medics' disposal today, I think my back notices the most.

**Is there a particular moment or call that stands out?**

Three stand out.

One was actually a few months before I joined the VFD when three young girls slightly older than me were struck by a drunk driver in my home town of National Park. Two were killed instantly the third died about two blocks from the hospital. While I was not a member and had nothing to do with the response, I was on scene nearly at the time of the arrival of the first ambulance and police units (the call was a block from my home). It was very bloody, very ugly and very public as it was a nice Fourth of July night and everyone was going home from the town's fireworks show. The small town was a typical: everyone knew everyone or was a blood relative. The girls were cousins and were also related by marriage to many of the active members of the fire department and ambulance corps. The drunk driver was also from the same town and

the whole incident ripped the town to its core. Everyone was affected; it was not a good night.

The second was about 18 months later. We responded as a mutual aid ambulance to a trailer-park fire. It was a nice fall night, and the trailer was very well involved at the arrival of the first engine. A man of about 60 was pulled from the fire, and his large German Sheppard was also removed from the fire. Both had severe burns over a large portion of their bodies. As we treated the man, using every burn sheet and ounce of sterile water that we had on two ambulances, I heard a sound behind me that at the time I did not recognize. Then I heard a loud explosion. It was a single gunshot as a patrol officer put the dog down. We transported the man, who was barely conscious, and he died about a block shy of the emergency department. We worked the code for 30 minutes in the ambulance and in the ED. While we cleaned up, I couldn't help but think how the humane thing was to shoot the dog. I can still remember the sound of that round being chambered and that unmistakable odor of burnt flesh.

The last memorable event was on 9/11. I was on my normal 24-hour tour as the battalion chief for a private EMS service that was staffing civilian EMTs at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. When the first plane hit, we stood in awe as we watched it replayed on the news. Then I saw the second plane hit, and, well, the next 12 hours are a bit

of a blur but it was a very surreal experience. The world had changed in a matter of moments.

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

The people, patients and providers I've met and or worked with since day one. Long before I joined, some of the folks I was watching from my bike at the curb in National Park started teaching me about the world of fire and EMS. I still talk to many of them via Facebook.

I met my wife of 18 years thanks to a job in EMS and we had four kids in those 18 years. When she died in a car wreck, the EMS community rallied behind me and my children. After that event I moved to Texas to work in the weapons of mass destruction program at Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX). Texans and Texas EMS have embraced me and I've made many new friends.

Of all of my friends that I consider my closest in the world are fire and EMS folks. They've been with me 110 percent of my life since I was 16.

Some of the folks I transported were very interesting people from various backgrounds and cultures, and I've had the pleasure of meeting folks from every corner of the planet who shared an interest and a passion for the arts and sciences of fire and emergency services response, and all of them left me with something.

Passion counts in EMS.