

# The EMS Experience

Saluting those with 20 years or more in EMS

**Kim Roger Morris, FF/NREMT-P**



*Kim Morris, FF/NREMT-P, is a paramedic with American Medical Response in Collin County and chief of the Farmersville Volunteer Fire Department.*

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

I started in EMS in April 1973.

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

I started my career with the McKinney Fire Department and became one of the first EMTs for the city. Several years later, I had the opportunity to enlist in the U.S. Navy and work in helicopter rescue. I returned to Texas and went back into EMS. Collin County was then using private contract services to cover many of the more rural towns. Although I have never left my present station, I have had the opportunity to work for several services who were awarded the Collin County EMS contract, including East Texas Medical Services, Life-Tech, Med-life,

Life-Guard and for the last six years American Medical Response. I have also worked with the Farmersville Volunteer Fire Department since 1997, where I have served as FF/EMT, EMS coordinator and presently as chief.

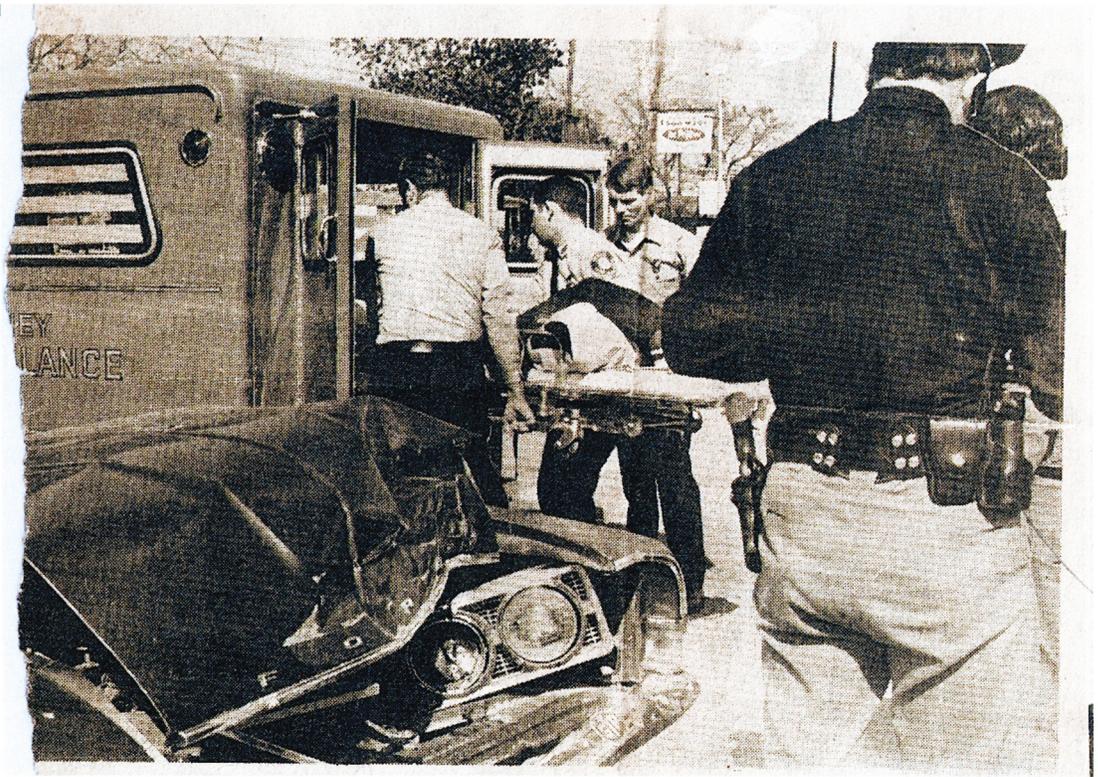
## **Why did you get into EMS?**

My original passion was to become a firefighter. My father used to be a police officer and volunteer firefighter, and I always loved seeing the trucks and station as a child. When I was hired by McKinney Fire Department, all of the staff were ECAs. The department had taken over ambulance service from the funeral homes only a short time before. EMTs were the latest thing, and paramedic designations were on the horizon. So two other rookies and I were the first to go through the training. Our chief

demanded that we be one of the top services, and EMS training was an every-shift occurrence. My favorite part of the training, however, was his requirement that we watch the ever-popular television series *Emergency*. It might not have been medically correct at times, but it motivated us and paved the way for paramedic programs by educating the public about the need. It didn't take long for EMS to become my preference in the fire service and later to become my primary career.

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

I've often told new EMTs and paramedics that they don't realize how lucky they are to have all the training, equipment and support that's available to them now. My first EMT course was 80 hours, and my partner was usually an ECA. We still had the same types of calls as today, such as heart attacks, motor vehicle accidents, major trauma and medical calls, and the public expected us to be able to "fix it." But back then we were armed with only limited training, bandages, oxygen and a hydraulic porta-power. We couldn't contact the hospital we were going to, so we would just show up with whatever we had. Some nurses were helpful, but many had the attitude that we were trying to consider our training equal with theirs. Doctors more than once would let us know that we were firefighters and that our responsibility was to just get the patient on the cot and bring him in. I saw more than one pneumatic air splint (quite expensive at the time) get removed by a doctor by way of a scalpel. I don't think any of us thought of ourselves as more than what we were—we were simply trying to do



Kim Morris (third from left) works a crash with the McKinney Fire Department in 1975.

the best we could to give that patient a chance to survive!

Sometimes I look around at the equipment and drugs now available to me, not to mention a hospital staff happy to see us and a doctor that's just a phone call away, and I wonder, "How did we ever do it?" We are no longer viewed as a three-headed monster when we come into the emergency room, but rather as an important part of the EMS team. Some of the faces of patients you've lost just never leave you, and when I look back I wonder if a certain drug or skill that I did not have at the time but do now would have changed the outcome. I can't even imagine how much more it will all change over the next 39 years, and I wonder how future EMTs and paramedics will view how we operate now.

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

Just like anyone else who has been in this field any length of time,

I have seen my share of tragedies and human suffering. But I learned early in my career that you can't dwell on those situations. You must have a compassionate heart, do the best you can and move on. Instead of the calls, I often think of co-workers who are no longer with us, and I especially remember firehouse humor. I recall a time shortly after I was made a lieutenant over the EMS crews at the fire department when I sent an EMT out with a senior firefighter. When they returned to the station, the EMT stormed into my office saying that he refused to work with the firefighter again. The firefighter stepped into the office behind my EMT, and I asked what the problem was. The firefighter said, "Dadgum, he was turning off lights, skinning her eyeballs back and tickling her feet" to which the EMT snapped back, "that's Babinski's reflex!" It did make life easier for everyone involved once we reached the point where both crewmen had the same training.

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

Most anybody who knows me will tell you that I enjoy a good practical joke. I love working a 24-hour 9-1-1 truck because we learn to laugh with one another. And we can often plan something "special" for another crew. There's enough in this job that can really drag you down if you allow it, and it's so very important to laugh and enjoy friendships and bonds that develop between yourself and various partners. I love it that I don't know how my day will go or what I will be doing at a certain time of day or the challenges I will have to face. What else can I say? I love it all, and I don't think there's any other career I'd rather have.

*Do you have 20 years or more in EMS? Do you answer to dino-medic? We're looking for a profile of you! If you are interested, please write Kelly Harrell at [kelly.harrell@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:kelly.harrell@dshs.state.tx.us)*