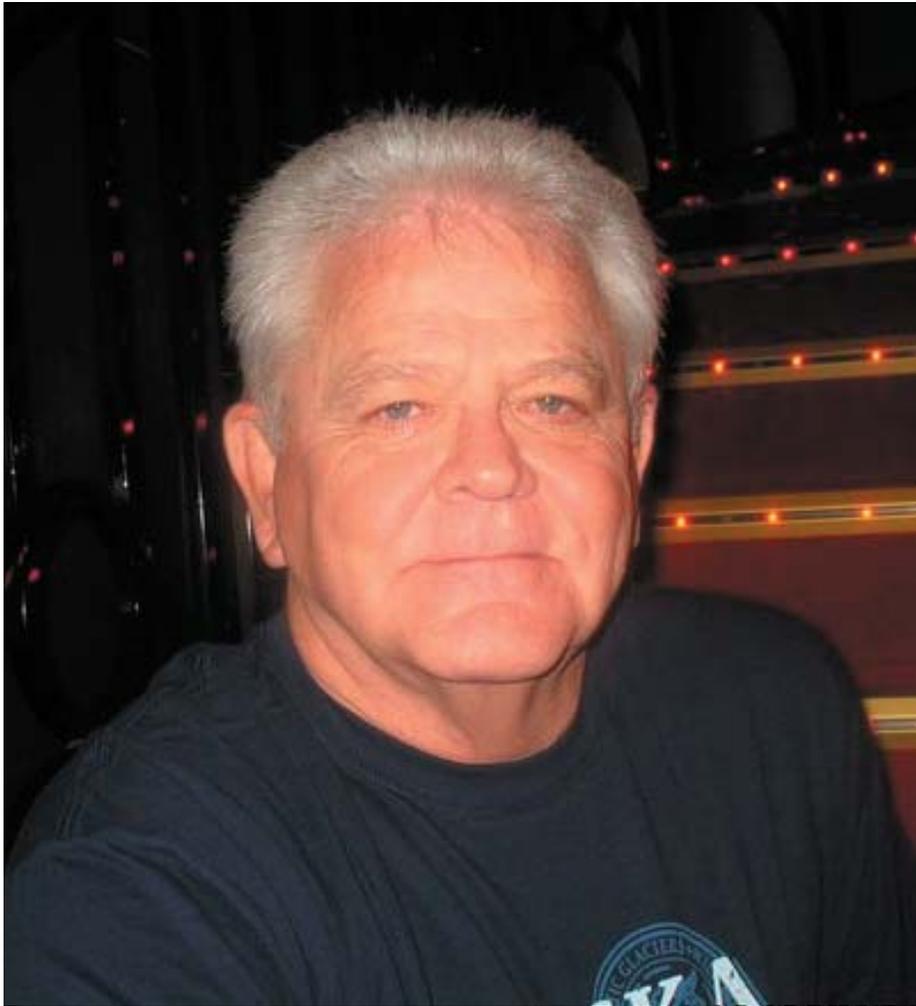

The EMS Experience

Saluting those with 20 years or more in EMS

Richard “Dick” Adams, LP, Advanced Coordinator



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What was your first day on the job in EMS?

Actually, I started in EMS in 1970, working for Donnelly Colonial Funeral Home in Irving, Texas. I remember that you had to have Advanced First Aid to work on the ambulance. My first call was a male who “had fallen and couldn’t get up.” He was about 300 pounds and was in an upper-level apartment in Irving. We had to get the Irving police to help us carry him down the stairs to the ambulance.

Which services have you worked for over the years?

I was on the Harker Heights Volunteer Fire Department for a couple of years in the late 1960s. In 1968 I moved from Harker Heights to Dallas to accept employment with the Dallas County Sheriff’s Department as a deputy sheriff. I spent about eight years with the Sheriff’s Department and the Addison Police Department before I accepted employment with the DFW Airport Department of Public Safety. You had to be triple certified—police, fire and EMS—to work there.

I was already a police officer so they sent me to the fire academy and ECA school. I worked on the police side of the department for four years, but eventually I indicated my interest in transferring to the EMS Division. In 1990 the EMS Captain called me and asked if I was still interested in transferring to EMS, and I told him, “Yes.” That was on a Friday and I was told that I would start paramedic school on the following Monday. YIKES!! I attended and completed paramedic training at UT Southwest Medical School in Dallas. I worked in EMS at DFW from 1990 to 1999.

In 1999 I was offered employment with Tyler Junior College as an Instructor in the EMS Department, which I accepted. I worked at Tyler Junior College for approximately four years, rising to the position of department chair. In 2002 I was offered employment as education manager with Champion EMS in Longview, which I accepted. I worked at Champion for six years, retiring in 2008.

I didn’t stay retired very long. One week after retiring from Champion I was offered a position as EMS Instructor for PERCOM Online, a computer-based EMS education company. I have now been working for PERCOM for approximately four years. The interesting thing about this position is that while at Tyler Junior College, Gene Gandy, Jane Hill Dinsmore and I worked as a team. We all three left TJC and, after about six years, we are all back together at PERCOM. It has been a great relationship.

I have also served as a member and chief of the Flint-Gresham Fire Department, a first responder organization.

Why did you get into EMS?

I loved being a police officer. That is what I had always wanted to do. I got interested in becoming a paramedic while answering EMS calls as a first responder with DFW Airport. I thought it took great ability and skills to treat a person who was totally unconscious and unresponsive, give them some D-50, and five minutes later they were talking to you. I also thought it was fantastic to be able to take a person in cardiac arrest and, in some instances, treat the patient and get a return of spontaneous circulation!

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

There have been many changes. Equipment has changed. Education has changed. Rapid sequence intubation is something done today which you would never have thought of doing when I started. Code Stemi has revolutionized the care of cardiac patients and saved many lives. The ability to do 12-lead ECGs in the field is fantastic. All of these things have improved the profession and also the patient care and survival.

Is there a particular moment or call that stands out?

Actually, there are two. The first incident was Valentine's Day, 1997. It was on a cool day and about 4:00 pm. The day had been a slow one. All of a sudden a voice came across the radio and said, "Help. We need paramedics. A police officer has just wrecked his motorcycle."

My partner and I arrived on the scene to find one of our fellow DFW police officers lying on the ground following the accident. He was in cardiac arrest. We worked the code. It went just like the textbook says it should. IV on first stick. Intubation on first attempt. All just like it was supposed to. He was flown to Methodist Hospital in Dallas where he was pronounced dead. The cause of

death was a severed brain stem. This was a very trying and emotional call, working on one of your co-workers.

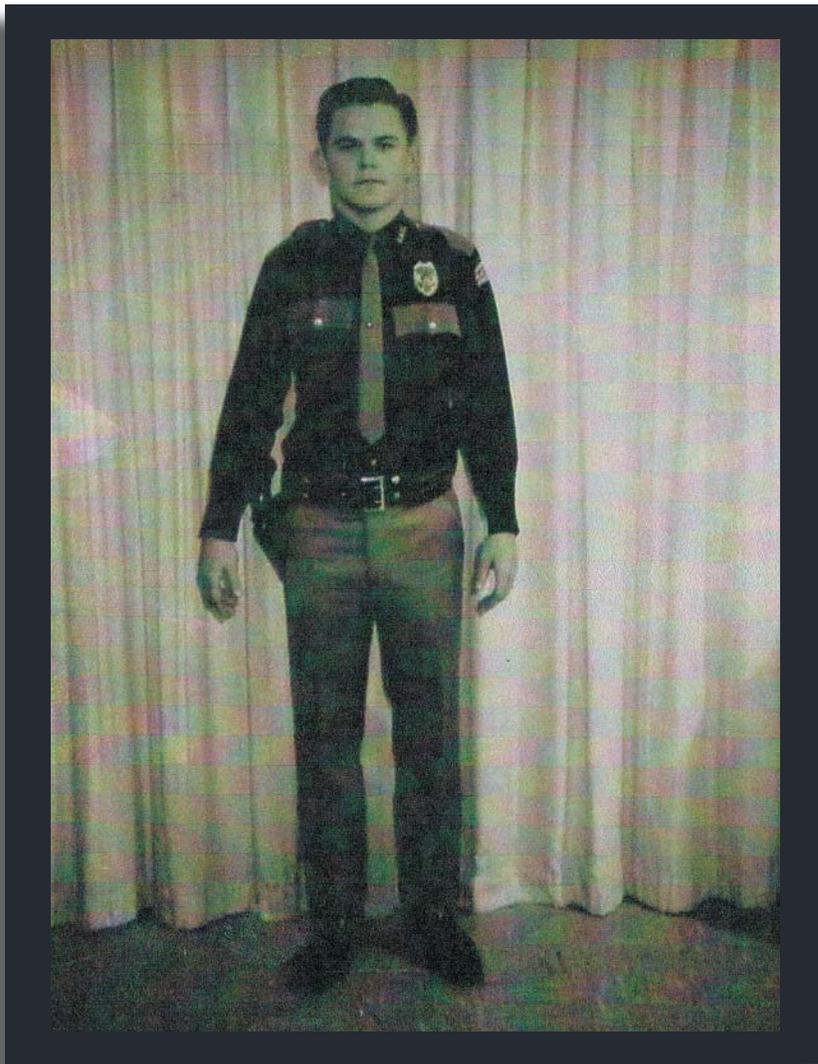
The second memorable call was exactly four years earlier, Valentine's day, 1994. A middle-aged lady was in line to catch a flight and dropped to the floor in cardiac arrest. A female nurse was standing behind her and immediately began CPR. One of the police officers assigned to the terminal assisted in CPR. My partner and I got there and set about to do our job: attempt to save lives. We worked her for a total of 37 minutes. On the 37th minute I defibrillated her for the umpteenth time and got a pulse. We transported her to Baylor Irving Hospital. She made a full recovery. She had no neurological deficit. This was a great day in her life and also a

great day for us as EMS providers. We actually got Valentine's cards from her for several years.

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

I believe my favorite thing in EMS is training first responders or EMTs. It is my opinion that you cannot have good paramedics unless you have good EMTs. This has been my goal in EMS education. I want to help prepare people for a career as a good, capable, EMS provider.

I have now been involved in EMS for 26 years. I have served as an ECA, EMT, licensed paramedic, instructor and advance coordinator. I enjoy EMS and hope I have many more years of service left.



Richard "Dick" Adams circa 1966