

Name: Rick Mullen

Position: Firefighter/Paramedic

Fire Department: Los Angeles County

- 1) What branch and unit were you in? *Marine Corps, currently the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing (Reserves) going around doing 2-day Navy/Marine Corps seminars for evaluation of units; former squadron commander for HMMH 769 out of Edwards AFB (H-53 squadron).*
- 2) What was your highest rank? *Colonel.*
- 3) Are you still enlisted as a reservist or National Guard? *Reserves.*
- 4) Why did you join the service? *A combination of James Bond and Johnny Quest; I wanted to be a part of history and experience adventure, like in the Odyssey. It was a young man's thing, to be a part of the unfolding history of our times.*
- 5) What did you like the most about what you are doing right now in the military? *Nowadays I do two-day safety seminars, so I like the fact that I can bring a wealth of experience to the seminars we conduct after my 23 years of service in military squadrons to the good of others who are now in military squadrons. I'm still an avid reader of what's happening in Iraq and I'm champing at the bit to go over there again. I think that actions of people and leaders over time can really be decisive in the courts of history, whether it be devising the Trojan Horse or the Inchon landing or what General Petraeus is doing in Baghdad right now, decisive action intelligently directed at the proper time can make a difference. Right now I'm pursuing my Master's Degree in Air Warfare and looking back at how the visionaries of air power forecast the future, or hoped it would be. If you look at what's going on in Iraq, we don't need better bombs, we need better intelligence information on how to attack the real enemy hiding in the population. I liked being a military pilot, the camaraderie with the guys, going places to do stuff, I almost hated it when the ship got home because I wanted to go out again. I purposely waited to get married until I was older because I didn't want to keep leaving them behind. Being in the Reserves while being married is much better.*
- 6) What did you like the least? *Nothing really.*
- 7) What moment most defined your military experience? *Being in a task force surrounded by thirty ships that are named for all the places Marines have gone and kicked butt, like Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, etc. It made me think 'hey this is just like the old Greeks sailing off to Troy'. I always look at things like that with a romantic eye, unlike some of the guys complaining about being stuck on a ship, no private TV, washing machine, etc.*
- 8) What made you choose firefighting as a career? *A neighbor of mine who was a member of LAFD talked to me about it when I was a photojournalist, but I was already 33 years old and thought that might be a problem. Years later I heard on the radio that LA County Fire was hiring, so I gave it a shot and, along with the ten Veteran's Points, lo and behold, got hired at age 39! I'm the luckiest guy on the planet in terms of getting hired by the fire department. Some guys apply for years and years and don't get in (one guy was on the list for 11 years without getting in); I tried it once and got right in. I'm an example of the fact that nepotism plays no part in the hiring process at LACoFD.*
- 9) What do you like the most about firefighting? *Camaraderie. What we do is less deliberate than the military. It's more like "strip alert". When the bell goes off, it is the mystery tour and you have to think on the spot, as opposed to plan it out ahead like in the military. We train for a wide variety of things from a big, gnarly fire to some kind of medical scenario. One call we had was for a car that had gone off of a cliff out in Malibu and ended up in a tree upside down. There were people inside the car and it was dark, so the operation really became the old 'adapt, improvise, and overcome' scenario that is prevalent with both jobs (military and fire/emergency). Being respected by the community, who really embrace you as a firefighter. What I do here carries over into my military career as well. Even though I'm a colonel there, I still swab the decks and clean the toilets just like the troops, which causes my 'gunny' to come by and say 'Sir, don't do this!'*
- 10) What do you like least about firefighting? *Nothing really.*