Mario. Contreras

 The Owings Mills firefighter department has 75 volunteer firefighters and 18 career firefighters but hardly 10 show up. The Owings Mills firefighters are always in a good mood, so alive and making people laugh, there may be a time when you accidentally leave a comrade behind, and make him wait over 2 hours to come pick him up. In the fire department, every firefighter knows each other even if there from different counties like Owings Mills is station 31 their neighbors would be Franklin station 56, Chest Nut Ridge station 50. When a call is made they communicate from the dispatcher each station provides one vehicle, could be a fire truck, fire engine or even a paramedic. The life of a firefighter so unique, it’s unpredictable to know what’s going to happen.

 Entering for the first in the Owings Mills fire station, it can’t be helped to notice that the living room is full of trophies, pictures on the wall, and in the corner a flat screen TV. When I took it all in, to notice everything, I smelled something so weird. In my mind I was thinking “Jesus Christ…what is that smell, get some Febreze or light some candles”. I met Rudy the first time I came to observe, who seemed to be in his 50’s; he used to be a regular firefighter but he switched to just driving the vehicles and helping out. Since no calls were being made at the moment, Rudy gave me a rundown of how things worked. Rudy started with vehicles, He asked me “what’s the difference between a fire truck and a fire engine?” and my response was “one has a ladder.” Rudy just looked at me with a straight face and said “you have lots to learn”. He told me that the fire engine was for putting out fires but first they needed the water hoses to fill up the tank, he also mentioned that the fire engine had other tools like fire extinguishers, chainsaws, fans and more. When Rudy told me about the fire truck, I saw it as a vehicle that has ladders to get up houses and more equipment tools.

Since there was no calls the first time I went, I went again Tuesday at 2 pm to see if maybe I could catch a call and ride along. When I arrived, I saw Josh, Brian, Coleman and another person about to leave for a Fire drill at the Owings Mills elementary, I joined them. On the way there I asked Brian “what is the purpose of the fire drill anyways?” Brian explained “just to see how fast they can evacuate”. I’ve observed and tested it myself, got my phone’s stop watch and timed it. 8 minutes and 20 seconds was the time they fully got out, I was thinking “if there’s a real fire, no way are they walking in straight line in an orderly fashion, I would run for my life.” We got back to the station, 2 hours passed by, Josh and 3 more firefighters left, Rudy and another firefighter came in. Around 5pm they got a call about a car crash in an intersection, the alarm went off, waking up Coleman who was sleeping on the couch and in 2 minutes we were gone. We arrived at the scene and I saw 3 cars. The call said 4 car collision but it turned out it was 2 cars involving 2 elderly people, 1 male 1 female. Rudy told me “come on out and stick to the sidewalk.” I saw Coleman aid the elderly woman, another guy who I didn’t know his name aiding the elderly man, Rudy and Brian cleaning the scene that was covered with glass and liquid which they put absorbent clay rocks to soak up the liquid so no cars would slip off. The scene made traffic. Rudy looked at me said “people like this piss me off because they want to be noisy and see what happened making more traffic and possibly make another accident.” I watched the cars stop for a brief moment to just watch and see what happened. “ traffic can cause a self-reinforcing chain reaction: one car brakes slightly, and the ones behind it brake just a bit more to avoid hitting it, with the braking eventually amplifying until it produces a wave of stopped or slowed traffic.” ("Why do traffic jams sometimes form for no reason?" 2016). We left the scene and arrived back at the station, in seconds we got a call about a man having a seizure in an apartment. An EMT firefighter called another EMT that was at the station to come with. We arrive at the apartments at grand central, EMTs go in with Brian and Coleman. Rudy and I stayed outside, moments later paramedics came to take the man to the hospital, we followed them to pick up one of the EMT’s that went with them then went back to the station. I decide to leave it was getting dark and I had to walk home.

Besides seeing the events I saw, I noticed that the feelings behind everything they did, made their life more meaningful. These firefighters were similar to teenagers, constantly joking around and laughing at each other. During one of the observation days, Josh wanted to put in a ceiling fan. Josh looked at me and said “this is how a man put’s in a ceiling fan”, then Brian quickly respond with “this is how a man die’s from putting in a ceiling fan but don’t worry Josh I’ll nurture your wife and until she forgets about you”. I couldn’t stop myself from laughing. I was sitting back watching Brian and a lieutenant who also I get to know his name, help Josh put in the ceiling fan. They constantly making jokes how Josh was going to electrocuted because they didn’t which turned off the power. The same joking positive atmosphere was there during the ride along and events that happened. The bond between each firefighter makes their job easier, trusting each other to get the job done.

The life of a firefighter is unpredictable, unique, and meaningful. Some people will try to understand the life of a firefighter but it’s different from actually going in and seeing it up front. Watching a TV series about firefighters wouldn’t tell a person what the station smells like, kind of smelled weird in my perspective. They are normal people who willing to serve when someone gets injured from a car crash, seizure while maintaining personal jobs and lives. What no matter where a firefighter might be stationed, bringing in a positive atmosphere, will make the life their lives much easier.

Stromberg, Joseph. “Why Do Traffic Jams Sometimes Form for No Reason?” Vox, Vox, 12 Aug. 2016, https://www.vox.com/2014/11/24/7276027/traffic-jam.

Feedback

# Grade: 36/50

Cut your opinions. Simply show us the station, fire fighters, and their work.

One paragraph for each scene/event:

1) the station

2) the trucks and equipment

3) the drill at the elementary school

4) the accident

5) the seizure

6) back at the station with the ceiling fan (this is the best paragraph in this draft)

You goal is clarity. Be crystal clear and accurate. No commentary. Just the facts for this essay.

Your secondary source works for this essay, but I wonder whether that is really going to help your final paper. Stick to articles that explain the equipment and the staffing and other things you discuss here.

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