

# John Norman - Episode 774

Wed, Jun 07, 2023 1:35PM 2:42:18

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

firefighter, fire, years, firehouse, job, building, world trade center, department, talk, great, work, fdny, new york city, put, areas, good, lost, called, point, chief

## SPEAKERS

James Geering, John Norman

---

**J** James Geering 00:00

Welcome to the behind the shield podcast. As always, my name is James Geering. And this week, it is my absolute honor to welcome on the show, FDNY legend Chief John Norman. Now, as with so many of my guests, these revered high performers in their space also go to some courageously vulnerable places, and chief Norman is no exception. So we discuss a host of topics from his early childhood and some of the areas that set him up for success not only in fire prevention, but ultimately working as a firefighter, and FDNY some of His notable rescues and incredible insight into the collapse of the World Trade Center, the inability to save his near death experience after service, transition, mental health, firefighter fitness, and so much more. Now, before we get to this incredible conversation, as I say, every week, please just take a moment, go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast, therefore making it easier for others to find. And this is a free library of almost 800 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women's stories. So I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them. So with that being said, I introduce to you, Chief John Norman enjoy. John, I want to start by saying thank you so much for taking the time and coming on the behind the shield podcast today.

**J** John Norman 01:56

My pleasure to be here. Thanks for having me.


**J** James Geering 01:59

So very first question where on planet earth are we finding you this afternoon?

**J** John Norman 02:04

I'm at home. I just drove home from the Adirondacks in upstate New York. So I'm back on Long

Island, which where we've lived for the last 30 years.

 James Geering 02:14

So my first American experience I was a camp counselor on the camp in the Adirondacks for six summers. So whereabouts were you in there?

 02:23

It's called the great second deco Lake town is Edinburg town nobody ever heard of. It's the best kept secret in the Adirondacks. So we just spent the weekend we spend almost every weekend up there. All summer. Every vacation chance we get so

 James Geering 02:42


beautiful. Yeah, I was up top near Tupper Lake High School Long Lake.

 02:47

Yeah. Oh, we know. Well, it's gorgeous country, we usually do a drive up route 3030 runs north and south. And we do it up all the way over and then we'll cut over to the Thruway over by Lake Placid come back down that way or go vice versa. It's just such a relaxing journey, gorgeous country. But Tupper Lake is about six hours from where I live on Long Island, where we are is only four. So that makes it a doable drive. So we drove down this morning.

 James Geering 03:24

Beautiful. Yeah, it's absolutely gorgeous. When people think of New York always think of the sprawling Manhattan or some of the boroughs and they don't realize a couple hours out of the city and you're in this beautiful countryside.

 03:36

Yeah, not even I mean, you go half an hour north in New York City, and you're in some gorgeous territory. So then the further up you go, the better it gets.

 James Geering 03:45

Absolutely. Well, I want to start at the beginning of your journey. But before you do that, I know that your dad has an interesting background. He was a volunteer firefighter, but he was also a world war two veteran with this lens that you have now as someone who spent five decades in

the fire service and obviously been exposed to the physical impacts of the job, the mental impacts of the job. When you look back at your father, what did he carry home from war with him? Oh,



04:13

he was an amazing just an amazing man. You know, I am so grateful to have had him. I wish I had recognized earlier what he had done and what he meant to us his stories, you know, he told some amazing stories he didn't share a lot. You know the trauma but I'll never forget the name Ballack PAP and Borneo. He told me and all my brothers will say the same thing if I hear another story about Ballack PAP and Bonnie how many people have ever heard of it nevertheless been there? Yeah. But he was right out of high school join the Navy is right and for 43 At the height of the war for us, and was on convoy duty, actually it was they were they did convoy duty first, but then they went to a Hunter Killer group trying to attack submarines that were picking off the convoys. So they had an escort carrier and a group of destroyer destroyer escorts. And somehow the monitor submarines got inside the screen and torpedoed them. And they were amazingly lucky. I mean, these were, you know, cheaply built escort carriers, they weren't the big fleet carriers. They were just enough to carry you know, three dozen planes and provide a landing pad so they could go out over the, with the big gap between the air coverage from Europe or from the United States, and provide convoy protection. And this thing took two German torpedoes and only six guys were killed on the ship. More people were killed. The aircrew, I believe lost eight members of the air crew there were up in the air when torpedo struck, and ran out of fuel before they can make land. So they lost eight people in the air crew. They picked the crew up pretty much intact. All the escorts managed to pick up everybody off the sinking carrier before I went down, and basically put them back on another ship gave it the same name. And now Europe was winding down at that point, it was that was late 44. And they gave me a 30 day survivor leave for being sunk. And now they had a new ship going out and they went out to the Pacific. And he was actually partaking in the Okinawa landings, and then they ended up going to Borneo after the Okinawa landings. And, you know, his world experience was just amazing. And his view of the world, he, you know, brought back to all of us and instilled in all of I have three brothers and a sister. And our whole life was one of service, you know, you do good things for other people. It's what you're supposed to do. I think you may have heard the story about his mother is his mother burned to death, while he was in high school, in our home, her home. And, you know, that gave him a great desire to be a firefighter. And he came back and he did it. You know, as an active firefighter for over 50 years. He was still drive the first dual engine, because he lived around the corner from the firehouse about 200 yards in the firehouse. And he would drive that first two engine well into his 60s. So that was just what he did. You know, when he got to the point where running to the firehouse was too much for him. You know, he would walk over leisurely, and he'd make coffee for the guys when he got back. But he would still be that, you know, and always sharing his experience his point of view, it's certainly not shy about making his point of view known. And people respected him for it. And I didn't always agree with what he had to say, but they respected him because he would tell it like it is. And I think that, you know, sunk into all of us.



James Geering 08:47

So talk to me about your childhood then. Firstly, what do you what were you doing as far as athletics and sports?



08:56

Nothing. I was we grew up in a rather poor setting. There was a football club in town, the Inwood Buccaneers, that costs money to join. We didn't have money for that. I went to Catholic school, and they didn't have an athletic program. So what we did was we made our own fun. I mean, I was doing some of my experiences today compared to what I did in high school junior high, like, set the stage for what I became. I was doing confined space entries crawling into storm drains. At 12 years old. Yeah, we were not supposed to be here. But we used to torment some of the older kids, they would chase us and we'd scoot into this 16 inch diameter, storm drain and go 100 to 200 yards underground and they couldn't follow us. Of course, we had no idea how dangerous any of it was, you know, I grew up in the shadow of John F. Kennedy Airport, in Jamaica Bay was our home. So we'd be out swimming in Jamaica Bay. That was our recreation, climbing towers, the there was an electrical transmission tower. We climbed it and put a rope swing up and we'd swing off of it into the water. Which today, if people did it, you know, their parents would be arrested for child abuse. My parents didn't have anything to do with it. This is they'd say, Okay, be home before the streetlights. Come on. That's it. And we did and you took care of each other. We had a group of friends and everybody looked out for each other. And we got home in one piece.



James Geering 11:02

Yeah, I had a similar upbringing. So I grew up on a farm. And it was kind of the latchkey kids, you know, you just got home and you fed yourself. And I mean, we had great meals around the dining room table. So when we got together, it was very much like a firehouse. But there was a lot of time where you were left to your own devices. And I look back now and wonder how I didn't die 20 times.



11:24

Yeah, we did some silly stuff. We had a gasoline storage tank farm in town, right, when I lived down near the bay, and the tank trucks would come and they had to make a stop at a stop sign. And we took to hitching a ride on the back of the tank trucks, these tank truck drivers would come to the stop there. And we'd run up and climb up the ladder onto the back of a truck. And then we hope that they would click the red light at the next intersection. Otherwise, they were off onto a highway and we might not, you know, get a stop where we could get off for quite a while. And I never forget one day, three of us go to run out there myself, my brother Warren, Warren, and this guy, Tommy current. Then we go to run out and something stopped me. I don't know why I stopped. I didn't get on the truck. My brother Warren was the only one that got on a truck. As the truck pulls out of the stop sign and pulls forward. There is my father hanging out the window of a car who's giving him a ride home from work, screaming at my brother war. Oh, man. Like I said, fortunately for me, you know, I just didn't get on that one. For some reason. Something made me stop. I don't know why. But yeah, the things that we did, could have gotten us in serious, serious trouble at some point. Fortunately, we made it through.



James Geering 12:59

Well that's actually a good a good time to just put in a tangent quickly. One of the crazy things

well, that's actually a good a good time to just put in a tangent quickly. One of the crazy things that I've witnessed in the fire service only spent 14 years before I transitioned out to focus on this, but I ended up working for four departments because my journey took me from the East Coast out to the West Coast, and then back to the east. And so you get to see four different hiring practices. The very, very first time I ever put any sort of app in after Fire Academy was down south and they did a kind of communal testing, where they'd send all the results to all the fire departments around there was a guy from Miami Beach that was putting taking preamps. So I put it all there. And I was a little bit older. I was think I was 27 when I graduated. And so I'm like, Well, I'm going to be very honest. Yes, sir. Back in the day, I've tried a couple of things that were perceived as naughty, but I'm sure honesty is more important than anything else. Anyway, that was screwed up and thrown back in my face. So I realized that you kind of have to lie to really make it through some of these testing procedures. And with all your experience now, what is your perception of some of the kind of faux choirboy standards that we set that actually most of us that are good at this job have probably done some things in our past that, you know, would possibly irritate the law enforcement community.



14:20

Yeah, I grew up straight and narrow. So, you know, I did I do stupid stuff, like, you know, playing on the back of a truck. Yeah. But I wasn't into I didn't even drink until it was legal. I mean, I was 18 years old in New York state when it became legal. But when I at that time, it was still legal to drink at 18. Several years later, about four or five years later, they raised the age of 18. I just, my father wouldn't tolerate it. You know, you didn't do drugs you didn't drink. Okay, when it's legal when you're legal, you could do whatever you want. But I I was not that way. And I kind of, yeah, I was on the straight and narrow. I understand you know, you do stupid things, you get speeding tickets, you do parking, you know, violations. But if you're, you know, out, sticking up old ladies, I'm sorry, I don't care if you were 18 or 16, or whatever it was, you know that that's wrong. I'm one of those kind of guys that you got to know right from wrong. And people let us into our, into their homes. And they expect us to be trustworthy. So that's important to us. I'm not saying you know, I wouldn't maybe fudged a speeding ticket or something like that. But I say anything more serious than that? You got to own that. And yeah, do you get a second chance? Yeah, sometimes. But if you want something badly enough, and here's, here's the thing. You know, those rules were all known in life, you know, you want something don't screw up.



James Geering 16:11

Yeah, that was interesting. Because, I mean, I think obviously, there is a spectrum. And if you're an arsonist, maybe the fire service isn't for you, you know, if you've done God forbid anything with children or your serial thief, then yeah, we'll be interested. But as you said, speeding tickets and some even you know, some people that did things in the past that we're in legal and now realizing have huge medicinal benefits. There are some some of our laws that are not not ridiculous, but as you said, there's there's a misdemeanor, and then there's a, you know, a federal crime. And there's there's quite a long spectrum. And what I've seen is almost like a zero, anything in your past, which I think excludes some very, very good candidates, she weaned them out through the severity of whatever they had been caught up with when they were younger. But I think being around some of that, especially if you grew up in, you know, a

less enlightening or lifting community tolerant neighborhood. Yeah, you may have seen and done some stuff, but now you become a great firefighter, great police officer, because of overcoming some of the stuff earlier in your life.

 17:18

That happens, it happens. But my my thought on it, though, is always been there. 1000s, great candidates, you know, if I can get a great guy who doesn't do anything, you know, and I don't have to worry about his behavior. I'll take him over somebody and say, I may be a little sketchy. So that's just my matter decision making process. So it doesn't matter anyway.

 James Geering 17:47

But this is the thing. This is an interesting perspective. And that's why I'm asking because, you know, it's it's not a question that you hear very often. Or you talked about your dad volunteering, through, you know, when you were growing up as a young man, what was your perspective or kind of lens on the fire service as the son of a volunteer fire, what were the influences at that age,

 18:07

but there was always the opportunity for him to, you know, basically, play with us at the firehouse. He was a dispatcher on weekends, and we looked around the corner at that point. So we would take his lunch and dinner to him at the at the firehouse and wait there while he was eating and then bring the plate home after he had finished. But in the meantime, we got to play on fire trucks. So growing up in the firehouse like that man, you knew, you know a lot about it before he got started. Those the, you know, the impact that it has on family dinners, you know, he'd run out in the middle of the night. Maybe at dinner time, you know, it was there was always that issue. Sometimes, you know, we didn't get to go to parties because he was, you know, at a fire or something like that. And the one the big impact was when he got badly hurt. He fell off a ladder and broke his back and he was in a body cast for about six months, full body cast from the neck down. That was huge. He was out of work ended up you know, getting fired from the job he was on because he couldn't go back to work for six months. So that was huge. Like I say we were poor to saw with and that hurt but the guys in the department you know did the best that they could try to make up for it and took care of us the best they could. One of my first jobs as soon as I turned 14 was with a another firefighter who owned a restaurant in town. You know, gave me a job. Okay. My brother warrant a job gave my brother Joseph a job. You know so that we had some money there.

 James Geering 20:04

So walk me through then were you always wanting to become a career firefighter or was there a profession first?

 20:11

Well, I didn't know what I really wanted to do. I don't know any, you know, 18 year old really knows I had a hint. But at 14, I started well, I had been following fire trucks. You know, I was a buff, if you will, going to every fire in a neighborhood and there were a lot of fires in that neighborhood at the time. There were a lot of vacant buildings in town. And I take my bicycle there. I started taking pictures at about 14 years old taking pictures of fires, bringing them back to the firehouse, showing the guys who were in the pictures. My second job, there was a fire equipment distributor and fire extinguisher repairman who opened a business in town. And I started working for him at 14 years old. spent the next six years working there on and off for him. Learning about extinguishing systems, learning how to recharge fire extinguishers. I was always heavily involved in the fire service, learning about sprinkler systems. That was all part of my August a high school year, high school years hanging around the volunteer firehouse, there was a two brothers actually in Inwood. We had about five or six New York City firefighters who were also volunteers in a department. And they were very influential on so many of us. The next generation, this fellow Joe ball. I was at the firehouse at around four o'clock one afternoon in Inwood. And Joe came in and I asked him several times what's it like to be a career firefighter? And he said, Oh, it's just great job. Great job, you know. So one afternoon, I said, Hey, Joe, what's it gonna work? Okay, how's that? You know, hey, look, come on. I'll show you what it's like. And he took me into work and it's firehouse in Bed Stuy in Brooklyn. And I, I had no idea about what a career firefighter was, I thought they did cop tours, you know, three to 11, four to 12. Midnight to eight, those kinds of shifts, eight hour shifts. And it's now about, I don't know, four o'clock in the afternoon, I thought we were going in till midnight. And when I have worked at school the next morning, I'm still in high school. And we get into the firehouse, and it's a very busy place, engine 230 and squat three at the time when I was in that house. And it was an eye opener. I said, Man, this is absolutely fantastic. You guys get paid to do this, this amazing. How do I get this job? You know, and they were all kid finish high school first, you know, you gotta gotta finish high school first. Got to take the test. You know, they told me the process. And from then on, I was really hooked. I wanted it. I wanted it badly. Of course, college, you know, high school is one thing. But now the end of college at the end of high school is coming up and okay, what are you going to do with the rest of your life? Well, my father said, you're going to college, get over that. Get that through your head. You're going to be the first Norman in our family to go to college. So I don't care what to do. He was pushing me hard. He wanted me to go to the Naval Academy, Annapolis. And I was okay with that. I started the application process. He had made some of the connections, you got to get an appointment from a congressman. It made some connections that okay. You get in, get it accepted, and you'll get the appointment. Well, that didn't work out. I went for my physical exam. And the Navy dentist said no, I don't think so, son. So now I was lost. I hadn't even applied to another college. And now it's, I guess that was in probably April of 1970. And they said no, you're not going to be accepted. So the Ball Brothers again, Joe ball and his brother John ball. The New York City Fire offices, said try Oklahoma State University. That's why we went it's grade school. has a great program. Very diverse program. Anything from fire protection engineering. You know, you get courses on In a simple Fire Administration, which served me well in my life, I ended up getting out without a degree. And it came out and got hired as a fire protection designer for a company in Queens. And my first job out of college was designing a portion of the high pressure standpipe riser for the World Trade Center. The World Trade Center was a five story deep hole in the ground. At least the building I was dealing with two towers were actually topped out with steel. But the one my next job, the windows weren't even in place on the upper floors. So it's very early in a construction project there. And that was another great, great experience. I mean, all of these things from Oklahoma governor is a fire protection student being a student firefighter, living in Stillwater fire departments, campus fire station, going on to the fire protection, engineering degrees. All helped me immensely. In my



later years, as a New York City, firefighter and fire officer, I got an education and building construction that was unimaginable. If you're going to be a fire officer, you have to know building construction. And I got the firsthand introduction to it going from the ground up in all kinds of buildings, everything from stores to high rise buildings, you know, so how the path flowed the way it did? I have no idea. But unfortunate that it did

 James Geering 26:42

that through all the time that you're working in the fire prevention side, are you already testing for FDNY was a very competitive back then.

 26:50

It was competitive. What happened was they gave a test in 1973. They only give the test every four years in New York City 1973. But the application period was in 1972, I was still out in college in Oklahoma. And nobody told me about the test coming up. So I missed the first entrance exam that I was eligible to take because I didn't know about it. So 77 comes along the next test is to have any interest, interim, New York City had gone through a terrible budget crisis. And they laid off over 1000 firefighters. So there was no idea whether this was going to continue. There was a lot of drama that they might not give the 77 exam. And there's a deadline, because at the time, you could not have reached 28th birthday. So in 77, I was still eligible. If I missed that test and had to take the next one, four years later, I would not have been eligible because I would have been over the age limit. So there was a lot of pressure there. Again, I was doing a job that I liked. But I didn't love it. It was you know, like I say I saw it as a useful skill, useful career, but not one that I really loved. I didn't get up in the morning and say, oh, man, thank God, I get to go to work today. So I took the 77 exam. And I took other exams. So I took the New York State Police exam, I took the New York City Police Department exam, I took the Washington DC firefighters exam, I took several exams, were looking to cover my bases. And fortunately, fortunately, I didn't take the New York State Police exam because it showed me a weakness. I had gotten out of high school and I had been a runner in high school. And I thought I was in good shape still. Now comes let's see 77 So I was 25 years old, I hadn't really run hard in seven years. Fortunately, the state police had an a mile run portion as part of their physical exam also. And I realized I'm not in the shape I was in five years ago, seven years ago. So I had to get back into that kind of shape for the fire department exam because that was a competitive exam and physical was competitive at the time also. The physical was not a job related physical, but for example, there was a mile run on it, which was timed the faster your time the more point you were awarded all the eggs all the component parts of the exam or time And, and points were based on how well you did. So realizing that I needed to get into shape I did. And I did pretty well actually, I scored better than some college, college athletes that I was working out with. Because they didn't practice the exam, they went with the fact that they were in great shape again, you know, football players and, and what they presumed to be good physical condition, but they weren't ready for the exam. So luckily, I got myself into that condition and did well enough to get hired pretty early.

 James Geering 30:43

Now, you mentioned about potentially losing 1000 firefighters, and now we'll get into 911. And just the horrendous impact the losing 343 initially had on the department and especially the



Special Operations community within FDNY. With this, again, this this incredible lens on the fire service that you have now, that is one of the immediate go twos we hear over and over and over again. I mean, even you know that the heroes that were hailed early pandemic, were now being called selfish, if they didn't get vaccines in there, they're being fired. So it seems like where you know that 912 People are up, you know, standing and applauding, there's that kind of reverence for the fire service. But when it comes to budgets and their careers and the impacts on their families, and whether a fire station is staying open or now you're closest is to first us over. That seems to be a reoccurring theme in in not just in the states in London and so many other places, too. What is your perspective of the the, the quick kind of reflex knee jerk to cutting first responder, you know, jobs and our ability to deliver service when it comes to these budget crunches?



31:58

Your number? That's all any of us are? We have to keep that in mind. Yes, like you say, Okay, well, you're heroes, when the politician wants a, you know, photo op. But we've seen it over and over and over again. 1975 1975, I went to an airplane crashing just off JFK airport. And it was a huge, huge loss of I believe is 106 people killed on the plane. Eight or 10 survivors though, and the first dual engine company arrived on the scene. It's in a desolate area. They found the survivors that section it was the tail section of the plane that broke loose. Some of them were still trapped, strapped in their seats, and the first engine picked them up. At the time, EMS in New York City was an absolute shambles. They transported the survivors to the hospital on air ambulance first dual engine just grabbed all the survivors, pick them up, took them to the hospital. Three days later, half of those guys that responded were laid off in the budget crisis. So yeah, you are great heroes, you know, all kinds of news coverage. And three days later, you're just old news. We saw it again over and over and over again. And the 2002 or 2003 budget cuts in New York City. That was almost a punishment. As you say, in 2001, fall of 2001. The public was applauding, you know, first responders is heroes. When Mike Bloomberg took office as mayor, he closed six engine companies. He wanted to close 25 Not because he had to not because of budget issues. He wanted to show power that I can knock these heroes off their pedestals anytime I want. And he closed six engine companies just to prove that kind of like Ronald Reagan did to the air traffic controllers, okay. You want to go on strike go on strike. You're out of a job now. So I believe Bloomberg did that. To show his power is authority that I'm going to put air I'm the boss of his sake. And you all listen to me and we see it over and over again it as long as there is a service that meets the bare minimum that's that'll be good enough. And that's just the politicians way you know that their money determines and the the public, the squeaky wheel is going to get their attention. And firefighters and police officers and any other public servant you can just bet your you know, that's your life on that that don't don't think you're special. It had a corrosive impact. In 75, we had the layoffs. Shortly thereafter, we had firefighters in New York City go on strike. And I believe part of it was because of the fact that they saw that they weren't they didn't have a contract with the city now. And I don't mean the written legal agreement. I mean, that bond that we have for the city, and the city is always going to be here for us. But once they realize that they're only they're only being treated as just another number. Okay, well, then why can't we go on strike, and it worked, you know, that had a corrosive impact on a department for a whole generation afterwards, guys who went out on strike, we'll never forget that, you know, they didn't want most of them did not want to go on strike. Actually, the Union voted against going out on strike. But when they were treated like dogs, they felt that okay, you know, what, the city doesn't owe me anything. And I don't owe the city anything that so it was it was a horrible impact?

 J

James Geering 36:38

Well, I think one thing that the public aren't told, too, is that there's this massive reduction in the ability to serve, they're not getting a tax refund, you know, there's paying their same taxes, and they don't realize that that station is now closed or browned out. And it might be 10 extra minutes before that crew gets in. And when when it used to be an engine or a truck with four or six people now it's, you know, four or five, maybe. So I think that's not articulated as well, and in my opinion with this kind of small career, but an interesting kind of Gypsy, like, multi department way is we, as a profession, don't do a good job of educating the people what we do, and therefore have them advocate for us.

 o

37:24

Absolutely. You know, part of the issue is, we don't want to blow our own horn. And unfortunately, it's something that we have to do, you have to have a public relations component, you got to have a public information officer, who is out there touting all your actions all day long. The flip side is, the public doesn't believe they'll ever need our services, particularly fire. Unless they're in, you know, the heart of a ghetto that is burning to the ground around them. Nobody thinks they're going to have a fire, you know, Long Island where I live now. Everybody here assumes that, oh, it's never gonna happen to me. Hot attacks, medical emergencies, yes, and they want the ambulance service, but they don't really think that having a fire is going to ever happen to them. So we have that issue, as well as some of it, again, is our lack of playing the PR game. But part of it is just the public doesn't really think that they're going to need us any moment.

 J

James Geering 38:30


There seems to be as well, this kind of job justification element. And a lot of us that worked in combined fire and EMS systems that are prevalent now. You know, we're actually running a crapload of cold calls every single shift even if you're not, you know, the Bronx or Brooklyn and the glory years or the war years, that's now being replaced by the firefighter paramedic getting their ass handed to on a rig instead. But be even in the kind of department culture, there seems to be this busy work mentality. Now for me fitness training in actual operational training, and then rest and recovery, getting time where you're not is so important. But throughout my career, I've seen them just give more and more and more, and they have less tools to even do it with and certainly less time off to process it.

 o

39:18

Yeah, I mean, you have to have that balance. And it's not about busy work to me. I mean, I have I could justify anything, you know, based on the amount of training that's required to do this job. I can say physical fitness that we need to have our people in good physical shape and they need to be rested. I mean, all of that plays a role. Is there a need to do building inspection? Absolutely. hydrant inspection? Absolutely. You need to know your district. You need to get out into your buildings as firefighters to be good at it. There was a proposal. There's a group in New York City called The Citizens Budget Commission. And it's basically an


advocacy group. And for years and years, everything they did every year, there'd be a recommendation cut the Fire Departments budget cut the fire department's budget, cut the fire department's budget, they wanted to give it to the police because one of the heads of the organization was a retired police officer. And one year, they actually come out with a proposal, pay the firefighters more paid them per inspection, give them a bonus for how many inspections they do per shift. And, you know, I was like, there are guys that they're not going to care when they get the extra dollar or shift or whatever they were going to authorize you know, but I don't need to be paid to do my job. You know, I need the incentive to be good at what I'm doing. Not an extra, you know, dollar per building or whatever they were going to give me. Because I know what that would lead to, that's just going to lead the guy sticking your head in the door saying we're here and not have any real impact. I want the guys to be there wanting to do the job because it's the right thing to do. So that's a rock and a hard place there.

 James Geering 41:28

Absolutely. But these are important topics. Because I mean, we're, as you said, we're very, I would I would like to think it's a very humble profession. As you said, we don't go around beating our chests. There's certainly people out there with social media accounts that every car fire and structure fire, they can't wait to post a picture of themselves in front of it. But But, but that we kind of we kind of shoot ourselves in the foot as well. Because, as you said, if we're, if we're the quiet professional with some of the special operations communities refer to themselves, then you do just kind of get a notice. But we do have to I think brand and I hate that term. But we have to educate people, not only on what we do, but how important it is to have the staffing, the training and the physical fitness behind that. And that also takes time. And you won't shout at your security guard in your apartment complex for not chasing people 24 hours a day. They're they're there because you want them ready. God forbid someone tries to break into your apartment. Well, it's the same with the fire service. We got away get away from this, they always need to look busy thing and actually allow them to do their job and stop micromanaging.

 42:36

Absolutely, I guess it's damned if you don't damned if you don't. But we have to find that balance.

 James Geering 42:46

So I know you you went into FDNY at 79 is that right? Yes. So walk me through what the physical standards that like then. And if, if there was any kind of conversation when it came to the mental health side, you're kind of, you know, front door of your career.

 43:05

Well, the physical standard was set by the entrance exam, again, the fact that it was a competitive exam, and you had to score a 95 or better to get hired on a physical exam. That's just the reality. Yeah, you could pass the exam with the 70, they would never get to you on the

Civil Service list. So that got people initially in the door in pretty good shape. Like I said, mile run. And in the past, there were, you know, exercises, lifting weights and so on. By 79, there was an attempt to make a job related. They had things like the we had a five foot high wall and an eight foot high wall. And some of it was ridiculous. There was an arm hang, you had start on a chin up position. And the longer you held that position, the more points you got. It was supposed to simulate, okay, if you were stuck hanging off the end of the ladder for some reason, I don't know. There was some other stuff that was thrown in. It was ridiculous. But some of the things like the eight foot high wall, that's something we actually do in New York a lot. Our roof firefighter has to climb up onto the roof of a bulkhead, in full bunker gear, you know, with a mask and you got to be able to climb up on that bulkhead, maybe eight to 10 feet off the ground and you have to get yourself up there. Are there some tricks? Yeah. Use the pike pole to help pull yourself up. Use the halligan tool as a step to get yourself 1820 inches off the ground, but you're still in bunker gear. When you take any exam. You're doing it in short gym shorts, you know and a T shirt. So it gets you to People who were in pretty good shape this thought the problem was there was at particularly in 79, there was no follow up, there was no annual medicals. There were people who were so out of shape that I don't know how they stayed as firefighters a matter of fact, I had a guy when I was a captain. I was captain or firefighter came to me wanting to transfer into my company. And he was morbidly obese, 350 pounds. At maybe six, six months. I says, No, go lose 50 pounds and come back and we'll talk. And he was offended that i He was in a, in a lighter company at the time, not a, you know, slashing busy company. But in fairly busy company. I've been doing this for 10 years, I'm in good shape, as you're not in good shape, you are in horrible shape. And he left and went out to another company. And he had a heart attack. He was our first fatality after 911. It was a heart attack waiting to happen. And we've had those guys all along. That was really one of the things that made our medical examination, much more strenuous. guys used to scam the system. We had guys again, all along that, you know, they were in good shape when he got on the job. But now they're 1520 years into it. And they've been sitting around eating doughnuts all their career. And they're in horrible shape. When we bought in the bunker gear in 93, that forced a lot of those guys out there. They said I can't do this. But I predicted we're gonna lose a lot of guys to heart attacks in that first year. Fortunately, that didn't happen. A lot of them just retired. But we used to have an annual medical and guys would scam the system, they would go sick from home the day they were supposed to get called to headquarters for their medical. And there was no follow up. They would go back to work the next set of shifts and say yeah, I had a call that didn't feel good. And nobody followed up on how come this guy hasn't had a medical in five years? Well, because for five years, he's been scamming the system. So after a few tragedies there where that came to light, that guys hadn't been going to their medicals the department got computerized and it got wise and if you went to medical, for any purpose after your after you called out sick or whatever, and they see you hadn't had a medical in over a year. Yeah. Okay, you're getting it today. So we finally got, you know, wise in that mode. The annual medical now it's a lot more job related. There's a pregnant treadmill or Stairmaster component, where you're monitored your you know, vital signs have monitored throughout the workout. And if you don't meet it, okay, you're going to light duty right away. It's not something that okay, come back and try it again. No, you're gonna light duty until you get yourself in shape. So well, there's some strategies to get to that point, though.

J

James Geering 48:39

Yeah. And it's, it always does, you know, look at anything, whether it's bailout rope, or SCBAs, or whatever it is, you know, there's, there's, the innovation is usually there. But it takes a while before there's buy in. And this is what's so, so hard to understand. I spend a lot of time bringing

on guests to really illustrate why the environment we work in is set up for setting us up for failure physically and mentally. It just does the shift work and that sleep deprivation, etc. So you have to be able to be the kind of person that despite your environment, you're still going to eat well, exercise, etc. But I've seen a lot of resistance in my career by administrations and even by unions to some of these fitness standards. And the US get this oh, you know, you're, you're trying to take our jobs. It's like, Well, no. In Florida, when I pass my fire academy, it's called minimum standards, they label it, this is the shittiest you should ever be in your entire life. But then you go into the regular fire service and you start to see some of the self serving, where people are protecting themselves rather than doing what's right, not only for who we serve, but our ability to perform and our longevity in an after our career.



49:49

Yeah, it's for our benefit. I mean, this job takes a tremendous physical toll, and you have to be prepared for it. There's no doubt out. Like you say, we owe this to the citizens. We owe it to our families. We owe it to the fellow firefighter next to us. I had a great story. I'll leave the fellows name out because I love him dearly. But we're working one day, I'll even leave out the unit. But it was very busy year. We're in a very busy unit. And we go to a fire. We've gone to three or four fires that night. A lot of work. And I see him is pulling ceilings right next to me. I'm pulling ceilings. He's pulling in Bronson. He goes white. Almost drops to his knees drops his hook. You are right. Yeah. I don't know. I just don't feel right. All right. We'll go down to the rig, get him some oxygen. I tell the boss as boss. This is sketches had a heart attack, I think. And I was a medic. At that point. I had been a advanced medical technician out on Long Island where I live. I recognize the heart attack sign. And he said No, I'm alright. I'm alright. And the lieutenant says, Come on, we'll take you to the hospital. He says no, no, no, I'm okay. I'm okay. He's getting off duty in about two hours. He goes back to the firehouse. Nine o'clock, he goes off duty. And he's on vacation for three weeks now. That's what he didn't want to go to the hospital because it was going to interrupt his vacation a couple of months later, we're upstairs making beds. And he says to me says What would you say if I told you that as a guy working in this company who's had a heart attack? I'd say who is it? This is we can't have that kind of guy in especially in this company. Our job is rescuing crap firefighters. If guy had a heart attack, and he can't do the job, somebody else got to pay the price. He says, Well, the guy doesn't want to retire. He got a lot of reasons. This is unacceptable. Can't do that. You got to tell me who it is. We got to stop it. And he says, well, it's me. And remember, a couple of months back. I had that episode. And you said you got to go to the hospital. And it's yeah, he's well, I went to my doctor that day. And he told me I had a heart attack. But I felt okay afterwards. And I did some, you know, exercises, did rehab. And before I came back to work, I benchpress 600 pounds. And if my heart didn't blow out, then I figured I was good to go. It's not it's not good to go. And what about the next guy? If you could do it? What about the next guy who has a heart attack? In New York City, we have what's known as the heart bill, any heart attack is a presumption that it was a job related heart attack. And if they can say that, well look at this guy. He continued working after a heart attack. They cannot deny everybody else who has a heart attack forever and ever. And they don't get to retire on three quarters disability pension for heart attack, because you decided you want to keep working. So he finally retired and he's still around, thank God. I mean, it's 40 years ago, he's still around his heart attack did not kill him. But he was he was an amazing character, tough guy. But that's not the norm.



James Geering 53:43

No, exactly. I think that's the part of this conversation that is often lost. It's not you're trying to take our jobs as if you get you to the place where you're fit and healthy again, you're minimizing the chance of a line of duty death. And obviously for him, I'm sure that getting off shift getting away from the stress sleeping in his own bed every night. Probably contributed to him reclaiming his own health and forging longevity in his heart.



54:11

Or it was just a lucky guy. Oh,



James Geering 54:12

that so what about mental health when you walk through the door before the night, you know, he what, if any is the discussion about the things not only that we see in the job, but even if is there any discussion on what you're bringing to the job?



54:30

Well, that was a different time period. I mean, a lot of we didn't have peer counseling. There was a counseling services unit which was mostly concerned with counseling people who are addicted to either drugs or alcohol which was rampant in the fire service at the time when I grew up when I started in 1970. You came out of good fire and for First thing you went and did was have a couple of beers. And you sat around the firehouse, talking about the fire over a couple of beers. That was our counseling, peer counseling was gone numb ourselves with a little alcohol. And that was in a volunteer fire department. But that was just the way it was. Like I say, there was no counseling, or PTSD treatment or anything like that. After 911, we recognized that we had people telling us, you're going to have dozens of suicides. And you'd better do something to prevent it better have some counseling for those survivors. And the Department took that very seriously. By that time, we already had a an in house counseling unit that did the do some PTSD, training or debriefing in the field. But it was a very small unit meant for handling one routine line of duty death, not hundreds of line of duty deaths now and every firehouse in the city being affected. So the Department took a very proactive stance, they recruited a know a large number of outside counselors. Every firehouse that lost a firefighter was basically given a full time counselor, many of whom, you know, spent weeks in the fire houses, constantly, I mean, some of them lived and slept there for weeks on end. So that they would be there with the people that needed to talk. I'm sure everybody has their own take on it. Some people react well to discussion of, you know, the tragedies, and other people, they don't want to talk about it publicly. They need to talk with somebody who's been there and done that not a psychologist who has no understanding of what we actually do. So there has to be a mix of personnel involved. I said, we had a few of those people in house, but not enough to go around to every firehouse. So we recruited a lot of retired guys, which helped tremendously also guys who would get been there and done that and had a great reputation. And when they came into the kitchen, just started talking and chatting. That went a long way. But everybody has to accept that, you know, this is unusual stress, not everybody is supposed to see this. I mean, I think some of the things that I asked people to do. And to think that you

asked them to do that, and they did it. And now come back to work and try to live like a normal life. And nobody's supposed to be able to process that it wasn't built into our brains to be able to just process that kind of tragedy.

J

James Geering 58:22

Speaking of the tragedy, you you go from a high op tempo fires for house that you find yourself when you first get hired, and then you transition to the world of special operations. I heard you talking on the oh my god, that on the best of the bravest podcast about being exposed to the world of the subways. And then you know, you obviously had the suicides and those kinds of things. And there was one story you told about an entrapped patient that you knew the moment that you freed them, they were then going to bleed out and die. So if you want, if you wouldn't mind expand on that a little bit, one of the things that I've struggled with, and again, not actively struggle, but I think it was the thing that hit me the hardest was the inability to save. As a paramedic, I'm taught if I do these compressions, and this, you know, defibrillation and give these drugs, then the person will be okay. And if I you know, cut the B posts and flat this down, then the person is gonna be able to get out and then you go in the job and you realize that you've been set up for a lot of failure because a small percentage of those people actually in my career, or for cardiac arrest, I didn't save one in 14 years. So that really on the black cloud when it comes to the statistics. So how talked to me about any calls that kind of maybe even haunt you with that inability to save contrary to that beautiful rescue that we see a dawn, you know, the firehouse and some of these other publications that we love.

o

59:53

I don't have any survivor guilt, I don't have any guilt over being unable to say If anybody I mean, I regret not being there in time, in cases I can say, I mean, the subway incidents, particularly the space case, you get somebody that's trapped between the subway platform and the car. And everything from the waist down is just eviscerated. The body can't dump out yet, because it's being compressed between the car and the platform. But we know we've seen this before that the moment you push that car away, and release the pressure that's holding the bottom of their body together, they're going to die. And in one case, I wasn't actually the guy doing the movement, but I was there. And the believers, a police officer, or a medic, I'm not sure which said, guy, you know, there's nothing we can do is this going to happen. And it was in the early days of cell phones. And he asked him if he wanted to make a phone call. And the guy called his family and told them that he loved them. And he's gonna die. And that's, you know, it's a tough, tough thing to accept that, you know, there's nothing we can do, I mean, the medic said, we've got two lines running until the moment we take that pressure away the whole bottom of his body's wide open, it's just going to dump out onto the tracks. And, you know, that's, there's nothing we can do about that. If you've done your best when you go to a fire and you grab a kid or grab an adult, and you pull them out, and they're burned, and you're doing mouth to mouth on them, you're doing everything you possibly can, that's out of your hands, you do every single thing that you possibly can and then they die. I go out of there with a clean conscience, I did my best. And that's all I possibly can do. If I if I was unable to do my job, then it's on me, if I was unable because I wasn't physically fit enough or I wasn't, I was drunk or I was drugged or some other issue, and I wasn't able to do my job, that way I should be able to, then you should have some guilt, you should have a lot of guilt, because you're there to do your best. And you got to be prepared to do your best, your best, again, has



physical limitations. I mean, I was about six foot one and 200 pounds, I couldn't lift a six foot four 300 pound person by myself, couldn't lift them over windows. So that's a physical limitation that I can't overcome. Even though the fact that I'm in the best shape I could be might, you know, a six foot six 300 pound firefighter who works out all day been able to lift them over the windowsill, maybe, but I couldn't be that person. So I can only be the best that I can be. And that's the way every firefighter, every first responder ought to be thinking, you know, I'm doing the best that I possibly can. There are going to be circumstances that are out of our control that are just beyond our ability to make that difference. But it ain't going to be because I didn't do my job.

 James Geering 1:03:36

Well, speaking of that, I think there's a mental health elements of that as well. I mean, it's unacceptable that we lose someone because we weren't prepared for that particular event. But I think also flipping the mirror around. There's a because I agree 100% with you, I've lost a lot of people. But I trained diligently I was always taking extra classes. I've always stayed in great shape. So was I the absolute best? Of course not there was still corners and areas that I could have done a lot better. But I was certainly that was my philosophy was to be better every single day. So that gave me some solace in the fact that you know, this code went really well. But this 28 year old had a blood vessel explode in their brain, there was no way of saving them. But you're that person now that doesn't make it to the 10th floor because you're untrained or you've forgot to check your your coupling and now your tank is pissing everywhere and half your tank has gone whatever it is that's unacceptable. That also carries a mental health thing because that will haunt these people. So it's like another layer to that understand your training is imagine if someone's family died and you knew that they did because you hadn't trained that should haunt you when you're training that should be a constant thing in your mind to drive you to train more.

 1:04:52

Absolutely. That's when you held your hand up to take that oath of office, whether it's career or volunteer When you say I want to be the firefighter, who the public is going to depend on, that's what you're setting yourself up for. And you have to be prepared for it.

 James Geering 1:05:12

So you spent a lot of time in, in very, very busy companies, initially, the regular companies, and then the special special operations side. A lot of firefighters in the country. And I've seen, you know, both spectrums, I've been in very, very busy companies. And then some places when it came to fire, my last department barely ever saw any they protected a theme park. So it was very well sprinklered. And it's a good thing, not for an avid firefighter. But it's a good thing for the people in the buildings. But there are a lot of people, we just don't get as many fires anymore. It is a truth no matter how many times you post about things on Instagram, the reality is, if you're not in some of these areas in the states that burn a lot, if you're not in Detroit, chasing you know, derelict buildings being burned again, and again. And again. The great news is that our buildings are getting safer. So what is your philosophy on the average

American firefighter who knows in their heart of hearts are not going to see as many fires as the AES, for example, that philosophy to train for whatever is gonna happen next. And sadly, in our profession, obviously, you add new things like school shootings and those kinds of things.



1:06:19

It's still your obligation. People talk about the warriors in the FDNY. And I say, What about the pre war years? What about the 1950s, we're still doing more fire duty than they didn't 1950 in New York City, they were still great firefighters, there was some excellent, excellent officers who develop tactics that we use today, why not because they were doing it 10 times a night. But because it was the right thing to do. They were professionals, they were trying to be the best they could possibly be. And I don't care how much work you're doing. If you're not studying and working, working hard at it, you're not going to be as good as you could be, which is you're letting yourself down, you're letting the public down. Being You know, busy, like you say doing 10 fires a night. Okay, if you're doing the same thing over and over and over again, and you're not learning from it and not, you know, adapting to the change around you, you're setting yourself up for failure. Just because we did something 10 times and it works doesn't mean it's the thing to do on a loving fire. So we have to be professionals about it. Whether you're getting paid or not, you got to be a student of the fire service, you got to learn your job. And you owe it again to yourself to your family and the community around you and fellow firefighters around you to be that good.



James Geering 1:07:53

One of my favorite conversations on here, and we've remained friends since is with Al Benjamin. And to me if someone says hey, do you have a you know, outline 100 episodes now Do you have one that talks about being the senior man, that's the one I always said, I never rose above the rank of firefighter partly because I moved back and forth. And secondly, if I'm completely honest, I adored the job so much I wasn't ready to to do you know behind the steering wheel or even the front seat they're in again, in a lot of departments, there is a rush to promote and I understand you know, if you're not earning very much money and you know there's there's going to be a lot of growth and you don't maybe want to be under some of the people that are behind you. There's many of these areas that are driving in obviously the the core the nucleus should be that you're ready for that next level and you want to challenge yourself but I think the the kind of concept of the senior firefighter is a very, very important one for people to understand certainly before you rise the ranks or for some people that don't even like I honestly can't, can't envision myself anything other than chomping at the bit wanting to get into the fire. So, what is your perspective you rose through the ranks very high yourself, but what is your perspective of the senior man philosophy and and how can we kind of maintain that, that history and empower some people to just be phenomenal at their job at that rank?



1:09:18

Well, again, part of it is they you know, we go back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they have to have the basic salary that they can survive on firefighter salary. If a firefighter can't survive put food on the table for his family, he has to do something else either you know, take a side job which detract some from it or get promoted within the department. So, that is a given. I

mean firefighter pay scales have to reflect the ability to do the job and be able to provide for their families but within the organization There are people who really I mean, don't want to be fire don't want to be bosses, they don't want the responsibility of being a boss. And that's great. There are great firefighters, I mean, senior guys that broke me in, who never got promoted. And we're just great, great firefighters. And I always appreciate them for it. Guys like Jimmy Connie and 69 engine was I mean, amazing person. Mike Lamy and Ritchie spatter for him want to love and truck I mean, great, great people. The job can't survive without them. But we also do need good leaders. And for in my case, I was blessed to work with and for some spectacular leaders. And I always wanted to be just like them, I said, if this is, this is the best firefighter, I have a no. And I want to be just like him when I grew up one day. And that's what I work towards. We also have the negative mentors. You know, you mentioned that you don't want to get passed up by some of these people, I didn't want to be forced to work with a for some of these people. As an underling, there was a boss who I remember the day I said, I'm gonna study, I'm gonna get promoted, because I don't want that idiot, being my boss, you know, I, if he can be able to kind of, I damn sure can be a lot better Lieutenant than this guy. So there are, there's that pressure as well. It's not for everybody. I mean, like you said, you want to be chomping on the bit. The good part about being an officer in the FDNY at least, is you are going to be chomping at the bit, you're going to be right alongside the nozzle team, or you're going to be right alongside your ions team. You know, you're not out in the street, acting as a sector commander or anything like that. So you're at the tip of the spear. And that's reflected in our casualty statistics, our lieutenants and captains, the line of duty deaths, almost on par with the number of firefighters killed, because they're at the tip of the spear.

J

James Geering 1:12:32

That's a very powerful, you know, perspective there. I mean, that's the problem is a lot of the smaller departments as in problem, it's not a problem, but just the different dynamic, that officer is probably going to be outside with a radio in their hand. Versus as you said, I mean, larger incident in in one of the places that I worked for, we would be going in with our officers, but smaller ones they're sending us in and we do the work, which is you know, what I love doing. So at that rank level, that's going to take us now to 911. And obviously, I'm skipping over decades of your career, but I want to get to certain areas that I haven't heard you talking about in other episodes that you've done. Talk to me about the preparation prior to 911 through obviously a special operations lens now and then kind of walk me through what they that they like was for you personally through your eyeballs.

o

1:13:23

Well, the preparation prior to 911. We thought we were in pretty good shape. We had had a lot of training and preparedness for terrorism. It was on our radar screen. Well before 911. We'd had numerous attacks in the city, water, the tax that the FBI and NYPD prevented, but we knew that terrorism was here to stay. You know, the 93 World Trade Center bombing was an eye opener. But it wasn't the first we've had bombings going back decades into the 20s. You know, in the 60s, we had over 200 bombings in New York City. So we had prepared we had created the squad companies, for example, was our probably biggest pre 911 Step. We had created at that time seven, while six new squad companies plus squad company one gave them additional training and equipment to prepare for NBC warfare, chemical, biological, and radiological warfare. Because we knew you know, this is never going away and we have to be prepared for

it. We had our urban search and rescue Task Force, which is part of the FEMA system that we have used in house in New York City incidents. We were never prepared for the scope of the 911 attack. That morning. I was at home Oh Off Duty sleeping actually when the attack began. And when I got to the scene, it was a unimaginable moonscape. I had spent eight years of my life in and out of the World Trade Center while I was going up. I knew every nook and cranny I knew the back hallways that the public never got the seat because I used to go through them when I was in a sprinkler business. After the complex was completed that fall, the prior fall leading up to 2000 January 1 2000. I spent every Friday afternoon from September through December 31. At the number seven World Trade Center, which was the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, like I said, I knew that complex in and out and backwards. And when I got to the World Trade Center vicinity that morning, I couldn't make Haydn O'Hara, where I was, all my visual references were gone. If you were a New Yorker, you could orient yourself to the direction. Other people use the sun sunrises in East sets in the west. Well, if you're a New Yorker, and you look from certain directions, the North Tower is the one with the antenna, that's going to be on the right side or it's going to be on the left side. If you're on the south side. That was all gone. I had no frame of reference there. So Oh, command structure was decimated that morning. You know, we lost the Chief of Department we lost the Senior Assistant Chief, another assistant chief Jerry Barbara was also lost rate down and we lost 21 chief officers that morning. And some of those who survived everybody who had been at the Trade Center when the collapse has occurred. They're in a post traumatic stress moment. A lot of them have inhaled concrete dust and powdered people. And you know, they're barely functioning physically. So it was an absolute true disaster for us. And we were trying to regroup. And a lot of it was done in ad hoc procedures. There was very little the typical ICS structure. Yeah, we had assistant chiefs come in and take sectors and start breaking up into areas. But getting a handle on the size and scope of the incident was an it took me days to get to see all the sides of the incident you couldn't get through some of the areas. The streets were blocked, you had to go blocks away, you had to go out or along the waterfront. To come back in on the other side of the damage area. The streets were literally three feet waist high in powdered pumice on the south side you couldn't walk through you couldn't drive through just couldn't be done. So it was an immense challenge to try to organize the continuing firefight. Number Seven World Trade Center had not collapsed yet. And that was a 50 storey office building and it's on fire. And I a good friend of mine was Al Hey Al, he was a new deputy chief that morning. And he was given the responsibility to check on several World Trade Center and see how we're going to fight that fire. And he went inside a met people who was in the building and they said there's no water in the standpipe system. The water mains out in the street had been destroyed. 20 inch main it served the area as severed and now it's just spewing water everywhere. And there's no water in the standpipe system. We've got people coming in we've got off duty people coming in. We've got units from the outer boroughs coming in to fight the fires and you know try to do whatever rescues can be made. But if the off duty people come in, most of them don't have any SCBA they don't have any radios. You know, they might have the gear with them bunker gear with the maybe some hand tools, but that doesn't make an effective firefighting force. And if we send them up to the 30th or 40th floor of that building, and we can't talk to them to get reports or to water them down. You we're risking a lot more people's lives. So Al's recommendation to, I believe it was Frank Fellini assistant to Frank flinging that morning says abandon this building get everybody out of the building. It had been evacuated by civilians already. We did get several more civilians out who were still in the building, when the collapse, the first collapse occurred. And then when the second collapse, hit them, hit that building. There was still in the building, but we got them out. But it says we can't fight this fire, we don't have the resources to fight this fire, the building is in, it's moving, the building is climbing, they're still climbing in that building, we can see it has heavy fire on multiple floors, this building's gonna fall down to. And that was a decision that they made,

okay, it isn't worth the risk, we're gonna we're gonna send 300 More firefighters up into that building, and have it possibly fall down as well. You know, that was a tough decision to make until that morning, nobody had ever had a high rise building fall due to fire. And then we now had to within two hours, and we have another building that is built in similar fashion, not exactly the same, but similar fashion. And it's got a heavy fire or multiple flaws. And the risk is we lose 300 More firefighters. Or you know what, we don't lose any firefighters. And we lose a building that may be lost anyway. So they made that decision. And it was the right decision. But our Hey, said, for that next five hours, all I did was pray, I hope this thing falls down. I hope this thing falls down. I hope this thing falls down. Because he didn't want to have to go to the Chief of Department in three weeks and say why didn't you evacuate that building when it wasn't necessary? It wasn't it didn't fall down. So yeah, it was a decisions like that made based on training. And basically gut feeling, in some cases that this is the right thing to do. And people all around that perimeter in all kinds of ranks made those decisions that this is okay, we're not going to win this get out of the way.

J

James Geering 1:22:35

Well, I think it's a powerful perspective for a lot of us, you know, sadly, you hear you know, firefighters killed in a factory or you know, or even a car explodes or something. And I've seen the mistakes that I've made as a firefighter through my career, you know, I mean, you think about a car, it's a dumpster fire a Class B, dumpster fire is all it is, you know, when we get right up on it, and we're gonna get, you know, things exploding, taken out our knees, or God forbid, even exploding even more. And now you have these electrical vehicles that are basically bombs on wheels. And then you know, also the moth to the flame and the structure fire and there's a lot of chest beating. And you know, you never know if it's vacant, you know, if it's tenable, you know, you know if it's structurally sound, so it's we have to be able to pump the brakes, you should know Yeah, right. Yeah. So So you know, of course, if there's someone confirmed that they're trapped, and you haven't seen fire blown out of every single one on every single floor, then yeah, you affect whatever rescue you can. But there's many times where people are going in, like you said, it's basically concrete and wood and steel, and you're not saving anything, the same as you're not saving anything in a car car is gonna be written off the moment that it's on fire. So sometimes, that especially in my generation, that desire to get in and be aggressive as a firefighter, because it may be the first fire you've seen in a few weeks, a few months, even, that we have to remember, risk a little save a little risk a lot to save a lot.

o

1:23:58

That is absolutely it's the heart of your job. I mean, you're not there to get yourself killed in not there to get yourself even severely hurt. Your job is to do the best you can and save what can be saved and if it's full fire can't be saved. If people are in a room full of fire, they can't be saved. And I worked in busy areas with a lot of vacant buildings. And yeah, I had people come up to me I'll never forget my first night tour, where I got the outside vent assignment and ladder 103. You know, I had that for years in the firehouse. At that point. I had never been given the outside vent, I had been inside the irons. Ken had been in the engine couple of years. And now Okay, your job is the outside and a guy comes up to me says there's people in there. Were in that back room. Second floor, back room. There was nobody in there. He was just trying to get me to go into a vacant piece of shit building, which I did. And it was there was

setting me up, you know. And it's just like, they know the way to scam the system. You want an ambulance to come right away, even though you just broke your finger? What do you say? Chest pain? I'm having chest pains, you know? How do you get a cop to come right away? I need somebody to fix this guy who's you know, yelling at me? Well, you give a police officer needs assistance, give it 1013 And the cops are gonna come swarming. You want to get firemen to go someplace? Yeah, tell him his people in there. And there are people that do that just to scam us. And you have to keep that thought in mind. You know, in my experience, you know, when it's the real thing. You know, when there are really people trapped. You got to use some judgment there. I mean, I've gone into vacant buildings that, you know, we shouldn't have been in, because there might be somebody in it. And we've had guys hurt and killed and those vacant piece of shit buildings. And in one case, I remembered, you know, most dramatically. It was battalion chief and the four four battalion Frank taller Mundo and I had a fire with Frank the night before I had Vega vacant building. And it was a piece of crap vacant, you know, the roof had been burned off already, every window was already vented. And we went to go in and he said, Absolutely not stay outside here. And we hit it with the tower ladder multiple times. And at some point it got there was fire in between the roof, and the top floor ceiling behind the front brick wall that we just couldn't hit no matter how many times we've repositioned. We just could not finish that. And he said, All right, go ahead, 90 Take your line, and then just finish that off, you know, be careful, it's a little bit of flying out. But this building's had multiple fights piece of shit, we're really don't want to go in it. But other than finishing it off with the one line, we'll be here for hours, you know, so we're going to be very careful about that. And he left the nozzle man and the officer go in. And I was supposed to be the backup man. And he said, No, get down off the porch get down out of here. I don't want anybody else going into this thing. And then he went up to supervise the operation. And feed hoes where I would have been feeding the house. The next night, they had another vacant building fire over on Osborne Street. And there was squatters trapped. This is a chief that had been there and done that for 20 years, you know, been everywhere knows all about this knows about vacant buildings. And he ordered the engine Get out, get out now. And the engine should cheap. We got people trapped here. He says I know. We can't say them get out now. And they didn't come out. And he went in to get them to pull them out. And when the building came down, he got killed. The civilians died anyway, they were not going to be able to be saved, he knew that they couldn't be saved. And the engine company got banged up. And a lot of those guys got put out of the job on, you know, bad bad injuries. But they didn't trust his judgment enough. And God Almighty, He's got the credibility, you got to trust the man. You know, actually, I had a fire when I was the staff chief in the same neighborhood. And there's a vacant right now it was partially occupied. It's actually you know, it was a vacant, but there was squatters living there. But a company gets in and they start making a push with the handline. And the captain or truck says I don't like this, you know, primary search is negative when he told us it might be people. Let's hit him with the tower ladder. And one of the firefighters says that we don't need that, you know, give us 10 more minutes. And the chief said the battalion chief said, no, no, come on out now. And the guy gave the chief impression of crap. And I happen to be on scene and overheard that comment. I lost. Get out now. Right here every one of you I line up in front of the building. Who are you to make that kind of call? That's what he's for. He's the one ultimately responsible. Do any of you know who Frank Tala Mundo was These are companies in that same house. And, man, I was so pissed those you know, that's what your bosses get the big bucks for, they got to make that hard, hard choice. They're not doing it, because they like to, they don't want it to save your life I had it a couple of times like that, that just drove me crazy. So when you see a guy like Frank, and we'll pay the ultimate price





 James Geering 1:30:50

ya know, exactly. And this is why we need to hear these voices. You know, I mean, as we said, sadly, it takes tragedy a lot of time for us to change things. And there's this kind of, you know, that tongue in cheek is not even the right word. But this snide comment of all the hit it hard from the yard, like there's this heroism to running into the same with the clean cab, like there's this mythology that you're gonna leap from the cab, Dart straight into the building. And if you had to take the time to put your pack on first, then 1000 People are gonna die. Well, to me, you know, if you're gonna get out because I was a tellement for a while, my pack was down at the bottom. So I had to get out and then put my pack on. And it takes about eight seconds. Meanwhile, the LT is actually Oh, Captain is doing a size up, because I'm a fireman, I'm not leaping off into anywhere, my office was going to tell me, here's what I want you to do with your partner, you know, we're going to force the door, we're gonna go the Charlie side, we're gonna go on the roof, whatever it is, so you have time. So it seems to be a lot of the younger firefighters. And I'm not demonizing a generation. But, you know, when you have some of these departments that have such a high turnover, a lot of the ones I've worked for, I think 50% of the department had five years or less. So if we allow this kind of myth, this this culture to seep in, just as you've illustrated, you get this this kind of ignorance is unfounded mythology that sends young men and women into fires that never come out?

 1:32:04

Yeah, that's not our, not our goal, not our job. I mean, you know, kinda like, think it was George Patton said, the job is not to die, you know, fighting the enemy, your job is to make the enemy die

 James Geering 1:32:22

of that country. Well, I want to just hit one one point before we can move through the 911 to modern day and um, you know, you're interested in perspective on terrorism. Now, you have this background in fire prevention, you've literally watched this building erected, you have all these different so called, whether it's actually philosophies or ideas from people that are educated on the matter. And then you have the fringe conspiracy theories as well. We talk you know, we hear about the fire cladding not being done and all these things, just not loading the question at all, because I have, you know, what, what I saw was that a plane flew into a building, and then the building collapse, which made perfect sense to me, but what is your perspective on what happened and the ability of those those buildings to withstand or not withstand being hit by a 747?

 1:33:10

Well, I go back again to the late 60s, when they were designed. I had copies of the original drawing I sent my first job was 1973, it was maybe February or March of 1973, I get down to the World Trade Center. And I'm going to run a high pressure, eight inch stamp pipeline. And I get there with drawings that were built in 1966, that were blueprints, designed in 1966. And there is a cutout in the steel beam that runs the exact path of my pipe that I have to run it. I don't have to design it. This was done in 1966. And the steel, which was made two years prior, the cuts were in the exact location for me to put this pipe in there. Those engineers structural



engineers design that building that entire complex. And at the time, they the biggest building, the biggest airplane in the world was a 707. And they said, this building is meant to take the impact of a Boeing 707. And it did. They stood up to a plane bigger than a 707. The planes that struck the two towers were much larger than a 707. And they took that impact. They've forgot about the fire bowl. The buildings were built. It was a very unique design and the architect won all kinds of awards. The exterior steel walls were a load bearing structure the building could not have been built using typical brick walls or masonry walls. It had to be an exterior load bearing wall to provide that large open floor spaces that they love. There are no columns out in the office spaces. It was the exterior wall and then the interior core where the main columns were located. The fireproofing I have pictures again, in my timeframe, I have pictures of those floors. They skimped on the fireproofing the trusses, they had basic bar joists trusses like you would have on on a strip mall, supporting the floors. They sprayed the fireproofing on the bottom coordinate topcoat and across the decking, except for the last 18 inches on the bottom. Because if you didn't spray that 18 inches on every cross in that building 1000s 10s of 1000s of trusses, you saved 18 inches times 10,000 you say \$5,000 or whatever, they did not spray the fireproofing on the steel bearing wall on the inside, except in certain areas where the trust is connected to it. But what do we know about steel when a fire vented out those windows, the outside of that steel had no fireproof cladding. So the outside of all this structural steel was exposed to the full temperature with no fireproof cladding. It was we were lucky that it didn't fall down in prior years without an airplane hitting it. When those buildings were first built, the office floors were not sprinklered The only things that was sprinklered with public assembly areas like the windows on the world, the restaurant and the observation deck on the to the top floors of those buildings, the restaurants in the lower areas, but the office floors were never sprinklered when a building's went up, and they had what are known as access stairs within the buildings. So you had open interior staircases, not fire retardant walls around them, no fire doors, so that if a fire started on the lower floor, it had access to at least three floors at once. So we were lucky we did not have a severe, you know, again, potentially deadly collapse. And the prey is 2030 years that it was up. So yeah, they were built. They were never intended to be fire resistant buildings. You know, when I I use the Trade Center attack, as an example it was possible to do it. There is a building. Today it's called 90 West Street. It's a I believe 3025 storey 1908 highrise built 1908 25 storeys high, it was hit by the South Tower when it collapsed that major gash in it. It burned for 24 hours. We did not go near that building for 24 hours because it was surrounded in metal pipe and wood plank scaffolding. They were waterproofing the exterior, we thought that building was going on at least the scaffolding was going to collapse. The building had been evacuated for the most part. There were a few people that did die in that building, they were in an elevator, I believe, when the towers collapsed against it, and set the building on fire around them. We didn't have the resources, we didn't have the people to fight that fire. It was the same decision that was reached at number seven World Trade Center. But that building is still standing, you can build a fireproof high rise. You just can't build it cheaply enough to satisfy the greed of the real estate industry. We can't build 110 stories to be fire resistive, and build it cheaply enough

J

James Geering 1:39:40

when it's so many times in these conversations that the term false economy comes in and by trying to save a little bit of money and even like grown fell in London, you know, they they cheaply clad the building from what I understand it's a poor area adjacent to a very wealthy area, and they wanted it to look pretty They put this petroleum laced cladding on it. And then after that they had the audacity the to act like the London fire brigade was the reason why it wasn't mitigated and lives were lost. And it's disgusting. So even though it was as blatant as

you could, your description, which I haven't had it put to me that way before make so much sense with these two areas, certainly in the London one within, you know, within a heartbeat they've gone from heroes to villains again, and one of my guests, Danny Cotton was the chief at the time. And she was vilified by the media and everyone else. And I've, I, as a firefighter across the Atlantic was originally from the UK, I was looking at your go, and they did everything they could. And I've had firefighters from there too. But no one is looking at the people that put the cladding on and saying, You're the reason why those people died,



1:40:50

right, the building code, the people that authorized the building code changes. And we had a code in 1938. That required multiple staircases to be widely separated the far opposite corners of the building, so that God forbid something bad happens. All of our standard staircases are not impacted by the same event. I can retreat to the far corner over here if the fire is in that corner. Well, in 1968, the real estate industry was fed up with that it was costing them too much money to build buildings. And they lobbied and they changed the building code and 68 building code came in. And it still would not allow what the World Trade Center was built, like in 68, when those buildings should go on up. So the World Trade Center just ignored the New York City Building Code entirely because it was being erected by a by state agency that said, Well, we're not subject to the New York City Building Code. Just the way federal buildings exempt themselves from our building codes. The fire chief at the time John O Hagen's Fire Commissioner and the chief said this, this building just is a deathtrap, you know, not going to survive and work and fire. And he was proved right. You know, long before the attacks. I had a I was taking a lieutenants promotion class. So it had to be 8586, somewhere in that era. And a fella named Mike Cronin, Mike Cronin had been my captain when I was a firefighter and a lot of 103. And he said that he was in a class, he was the instructor, he says, compared the Empire State Building. The Empire State Building had a world war two bomber hit it on a 77 floor in 1945. It was only a third alarm fire. It was only third alarm fire, there were people trapped on a fire floor, who stayed in an office on the remote side of the building. And firefighters went up there and brought them down a staircase. And they survived. No floor floor extension. And he said that's the way the building was designed. Now, if a modern high rise took that same hit, he said, This is an 85 of a modern high rise ever takes that kind of a hit from an airplane, we'll find pieces of that high rise across the river in Queens at the time. And that's basically what happened at the World Trade Center. The debris ended up across the river. Not the actual building, but the brewery from dust and paper and so on.



James Geering 1:43:51

Well, firstly, I appreciate your perspective on this. I mean, there's so many things to take away from that. Another thing that I think was so powerful is the multiple reports. And I've had so many people on here that were touched by 911. And whether they were doing part of the Coast Guard evacuation on the bag I had with him No, it was one of the two Port Authority officers that was rescued. But that that sense of post 911 There was referred to it as 912 where everyone came together and you know, you had synagogues and temples and you know, all these different religions banding together these different colors and creeds and sexualities, because everyone was a New Yorker and or an American. So talk to me about that through your

eyes. And then the ripple effect of this because you see that and then you see you know, the the your FDNY brothers and sisters fighting for cancer benefits, almost losing them only a few short years ago, is stark contrast to the initially post 911 era that we all romanticize about now.



1:44:55

Yeah, you know, it's absolutely true, James, you're absolutely All right. 912 You know, I remember, actually, I don't think it was the 12th Maybe it was the 13th I was getting a ride up the West Side Highway and the checkpoints or Canal Street. And once you got north of Canal Street, that's sidewalks were lined with people, you know, waving flags, offering, you know, sandwiches, bottles of water, Euro heroes, you know, it was so great. And I had actually I was staying, I didn't go home for weeks afterwards, I was staying up in Manhattan, midtown Manhattan and I had my fire department placard on the dashboard of the car. And you know, people love notes on the car under the windshield wiper, you know, how great you are your heroes and all this. And didn't last long. I mean, in some cases, we bought it on ourselves, you know, guys couldn't handle the adulation. And they began to think that I had a friend of mine, Richie fanning said, Never believe your own press releases. You, you're human, you know, but people put you up on a pedestal without understanding that we are human. And we have failures and people. We had an episode of guys getting arrested for DWI, and so on. And, you know, I don't know what caused them to do that. But, you know, you're still a person who has responsibilities. And again, we have people who didn't like seeing us, they're jealous people out there, who were jealous of firefighters at that point, who began to attack us in many ways, and we help them we gave them ammunition to help us, you know, be attacked. To see what happened today. I mean, thankfully, it lasted long enough for us to capitalize on that public adulation, we got, you know, things like the USC grants, we got the tons and tons of federal money. And more importantly, the research that led to what we understand today. We had been trying for years and years to get research into firefighting tactics. I mean, you will underwriters Labs had their fire test building. For decades. They were doing research on like construction assemblies, they didn't do anything toward firefighting tactics, or firefighter safety and survival. Until after 911. Like I said, the money that the grants got got, every major metropolitan area in the United States has played a tremendous role in disaster planning, you know, the schools, they you saw task forces that existed before 911. Some of them did not have the tool and equipment cash, there were task forces in name only because you had to be deployed for the feds to buy your tools. So some of those task forces only got, you know, the real tool capabilities after the Pentagon and Shanksville and the World Trade Center attacks because they were then able to be deployed. And now that system has grown so robust, they're out every hurricane season they put in place beforehand. The I think of the response to the pandemic, you know, firefighters did not understand decontamination, for the most part real technical decontamination until after the terrorist attacks have that for October, the anthrax letters, you know, that bombarded the country that we got a lot of capabilities out of that, that came back to help during the pandemic in 2020. Because fire departments had been educated and had gotten equipment, and gotten things like you know, peppers and so on. So it helped in the long term. Even though the firefighter is no longer the hero that was on the pedestal of 2001.



James Geering 1:49:54

Now, the mental and physical health detriment from 911 If I'm not mistaken, sadly, I think we've actually lost more to post 911 illness than we have the 343 that you lost that day. So talk

to me again, through your eyes, you know, what is the support, if any, and if it's lacking, what do we need to do? How can we fix that to make sure that these families are taken care of?



1:50:19

Well, within the fire department in New York City, we have a great support network, our medical office, going back into the 90s, has been very, very proactive. We had Dr. Kelly and Dr. Present, who were Fire Department, medical offices, we have a robust medical staff on the department, in addition to our EMS, Medical Response doctors, but our health care for the firefighters improved dramatically in the 90s. Prior to that, there was an issue where the medical office was seen as punishment. They weren't there to help treat firefighters, they were there to make sure you weren't malingering. That changed, like I say radically in the 80s. And under Dr. Kelly supervision, particularly and then continued by Dr. Prasad. It's just been tremendous. They knew what was going to happen. Going back to 1975, the we had a fire in lower Manhattan post, the telephone company fire in lower Manhattan. And I believe there was 700 firefighters that responded to that event, over a period of days burned burned for days. Out of the 700, I want to say 450 500 have had cancer or died of cancer, and that their medical folder was given a red stripe. And it was called the red stripe of death. If you went to that fire, your folder was marked with this red stripe to highlight it to the medical officer who pulled it pulled your file. Wait a minute, this guy is at high risk of cancer. They Dr. Kelly and present wanted to avoid that. After 911, they started a very robust MediCal program, which continues to this day, I'm retired 15 years and I am still I'm scheduled for my World Trade Center Medical in the fall here and they screen you for cancer they screen you for all the known issues. And they have a tracking system that is gonna say pretty, pretty robust. And if you have something that wait a minute, they haven't seen that before. It's not normal for the general public. Well, okay, they they start tracking, we've identified new CT new cancers, that they can now correlate to your exposure at the World Trade Center. Will that save you? No, you know, if you've got something that's going to kill you knowing about it doesn't save you. But what it does is it allows your family to receive World Trade Center benefits. So your health care is covered. You don't have to worry about like right now what's going on with city employees. They're trying to cut the retiree benefits. Well, if your injury is shown to be World Trade Center related, you don't have to worry about that. Your medical care is going to be covered. So I can't badmouth the FDNY for that. tell you why I know. I would prefer that nobody got sick. But that ain't gonna happen. You know, we were operating in places and our guys say, Well, why didn't you just wear a mask? Why didn't you wear the respirator? Well, in the first few days, we didn't have the respirators. We didn't have them to go around. We weren't dust masks, but that wasn't adequate. I remember vividly being up on top of the North Tower and we were working to freeze you know, firefighters bodies that are trapped. And they were using saws or battery operated tools left and right and throwing the batteries you know, just I can't be bothered taking it down and bringing it down to get charged and give me another one just give me another one. And they put the other one over here. And the next day went back up there and the fire overnight and burned up all these lithium ion batteries. And now we have guys Working in that same area, again, and this is bad stuff for you, you know, but they felt that they had to be there, we had to be there. I'm sorry, I had to be there. And to wear the respirator, you couldn't see what the mask or the respirator coming out blocking your vision down, it was more hazardous to wear the respirator because you might fall into this cliff or off this abyss because you can't see where you're stepping. So, guys made judgment calls based on emotion in some cases, because these are, they're finding firefighters, they got guys there that they want to bring home. And, you know, to their own detriment, they risk their health, then yeah, you know, some of us are paying a price.

 James Geering 1:55:58

Now, you mentioned obviously, the FDNY was taking care of their own, it seemed like it was the city that was the one that was pushing back against supporting some of the men and women that were sick and ultimately their families when they passed away.

 1:56:10

Well, I don't know if it was the city, it was I believe a lot of it came from the federal government, the resistance and federal government fund. You know, it's a very broad category. I know that there were people who came there posed for pictures outside and went back. And now they filed claims with the federal government and collected half a million dollars or more, you know, they weren't exposed any more than a resident of Chinatown was, you know, they didn't spend weeks digging through the debris. But so the government I'm sure is the we write a blank check to everybody who was in New York City that day. How about the people in New Jersey? Who downwind when the wind blew from the east? Did they all get a check to? You know, so it's a tough position for anybody to be in?

 James Geering 1:57:14

Absolutely. Well, I want to get to you know what you're doing now. But obviously, there's a transition out prior to that. That is another chapter in a first responders life that can be somewhat flawless if they've built new tribes and communities to transition into, but can be very jarring for I think most of us, you have that tribe, you have a sense of purpose, you have the identity. I am a firefighter and a paramedic, and then your ID doesn't work anymore, the bay door comes down behind you. And now you're not so what what was your perspective? And then, you know, through your lens, have you seen that kind of transition as an area that some people do struggle that you've seen with your own eyes?

 1:57:56

Yeah, absolutely. It's very traumatic. Depending on how you go out, that has an impact. If you you know, in our city, you will have a mandatory retirement age at 65. If you're, you know, working and you're 64 years old, you know, it's coming to an end, and you have an end date, you know, I can't go past this date. And that's hard to accept. But what I found harder, is when you are suddenly injured, and now told, you know, okay, your 13 year plan that you had in front of you, that's out the window now. And now you are done. And that's what happened to me, I plan to work until I'm 65. And Dr. Kelly says, No, you can't codify us anymore. And that's, that was a problem. And the first year, it doesn't sink in. You know, you go off on vacation, and you think, okay, I'll be back. I'll be back. And for so many people that I've talked to, it takes a year, and then all of a sudden you realize, wait a minute, I'm not just on vacation. This is forever. And it hit me very hard. I had been associated with what we call the wind driven fires project. Since I was a captain in 1995 was first time we had a firefighter and death friend guy I had just met I had just met him two days three days earlier. Guy named Jimmy Williams, and he was killed in our first one driven high rise fire. In 98. We lost three more and I was actually taken out of

rescue one and assigned to the line of duty death investigation and worked on a High Rise Task Force developing recommendations on how we're going to prevent this. Later on work into things like the fire window blanket, the high rise curtain, the flow below nozzle, those are all things that I worked on, developed and eventually put into play. And in 2008, we, in New York City, we're doing some UL and NIST test burns on Governors Island. And it was all in research, we were going to research all these things, we're going to test all these concepts that we've been using for the last 10 years or more. But now we're going to document it with scientific research. And they gave me about 15 minutes, we have people from all over the United States and some parts of Canada and Europe, at this symposium, and we're presenting, okay, this is the background, this is what happened, this is how we got to this stage, and that that was my component. And I said, and we had this fire, we had that fire. And, and I said, and I remember very clearly, I said, and that's why we are doing these burns. And I realized, we're not doing these burns. They're doing these burns. It's not we anymore. And I couldn't finish the sentence. I couldn't finish the rest of my speech. It hit me that hard. But yeah, you're not part of it anymore.

J

James Geering 2:01:43

So what did you do to navigate that next part, because it seems like some of the commonalities in these conversations, refining that purpose, because I think that we were kind of tricked in believing that the only way we can serve is wearing the uniform. And you forget that that service was in your heart before you put the uniform on. And there are 1000 different ways to serve, once you transition out as well. So what was your kind of road to overcoming that initial kind of punch in the throat a year in?



2:02:13

Well, I had a few things, irons in the fire, if you will, I had been teaching for 30 years prior to that point, various seminars at the, for example, FDIC Fire Department instructors conference, firehouse magazine. I had several books written at that point already. And I had a great family support network. So I kept doing those issues, people still called and wanted my opinion, people asked me to come and teach. And I kept up with that. Again, I had a family that very supportive. And I had a new home, if you will, up in the Adirondacks. We bought the house up in upstate New York in 2005. And I was doing a gut renovation on it. And that became my emotional and my physical therapy. I had a very serious line of duty injuries, which is why I couldn't go to fires anymore. And I was bad, bad neck injury. And that became my physical therapy. And I had my wife was my support network. And we worked side by side kept me down.

J

James Geering 2:03:41

So you found yourself becoming an expert witness and working in the kind of domestic terrorism seems to be the terrorism and prevention and preparation area. I want to get to the actual terrorism side in a minute. But before I do, you got a very unique perspective. What is your observation? And what are your kind of philosophies behind how we address this violence that we're seeing in our schools for the last three decades?



2:04:12

I wish I knew the answer to that. James. I wish I knew the answer. I was at my grandson have three grand five grand sons now one grand daughter. I was at a show the other day with them. I went to pick them up after school and there's a security guard in the lot. But we still have people doing stupid things. I mean, security is this is a reality world we live in today. There are people that can there's evil in this world, and we're not going to prevent that evil so we have to be able to separate the evil from the good. Whether it's closing and locking doors, you know whether it's ID Jack's separate the evil from the good. And you need sheepdogs, you know, the sheep, there's wolves and sheep dogs and we need them. So I wish I knew the answer to, you know, school shootings. To me, I think a large part of it is a mental health issue. And I think almost every one of them have been identified as having mental health issues before the event. Well, we have to get the people who know these people to say something. Okay, yeah, I get it. That's your child. You don't want to see your child being demonized. But if you think he's demonized now, wait until he's killed somebody else's kid. Then they're going to be demonized forever. That Oh, can you get the mental health treatment? Yeah, I don't know the answer. Again, I wish I did. I don't.



James Geering 2:06:07

Yeah, I just know what doesn't work is that the moment as a school shooting, you divide into pro gun and anti gun lobbies? And then you just argue for two days? And then forget it ever happen?



2:06:18

Yeah. Yep. That doesn't fix a thing.



James Geering 2:06:21

Absolutely not. Well, with that, we have this horrendous attack on our own soil just over 20 years ago. You know, we had a pandemic sweep through, you know, three short years ago, of which, in my opinion, we didn't take away any of the lessons, whether it was the one that Mother Nature was showing us or whether it was the fact that we need to be mentally and physically healthy as a species to be able to fend off whatever comes our way. And it's, it's sadly, very easy, I think, is behind you know, the, as we said, the layoffs in the station, closed closures, the moment that amnesia sets in again, we're good. And this can happen even in departments where I used to work the last time, the pulse shooter came to my first view, and he and it was Disney Springs, I can say it because it's all public. And thank God, there was such a large police presence, I think it was shift change, he packed up and went up to the club, and not thank God for those poor people in that club. But that was swept under the rug, as a member of that department, I came back from a vacation I was on at the time, and basically was told nothing, it didn't happen, you know, and it was completely ignored. So I think the other way, if it hasn't happened, and if you're a gambler, that means that the odds of hitting that number are getting higher and higher and higher with each throw of the dice. So with this



audience of first responders on this podcast, you know, what are some of the cautions? What are some of the knowledge that you get to see that the average person uniform doesn't have us that can remind us of our vigilance as a responder individually and as a department?



2:07:55

Well, again, you can't let your guard down for one second, you know, we we've been saying is for 30 years or more. The terrorist only has to get lucky once. You know, the good guys have to be 100% 100% of the time. And that's almost an unrealistic burden. I mean, again, sheepdogs Why did he not pick Disney Springs? She talks, you know, law enforcement there, that is an essential part of civilization, that, you know, thin blue line flag. You know, a lot of people are offended by it. But it is reality. Without law enforcement, we don't have a society. We have chaos. We have laws for a reason, because we've tried living without laws for eons. And it didn't work. So we had barbarians sweeping the plains. Do we want to go back to that? I don't I don't see the the rule of the you know, the strongest being a good model. We have to agree with what is acceptable behavior. Here is the law. If you can't follow the law, well, we're going to remove you from society, you gotta go someplace else. I don't care where it is, but you can't stay here. And that's, again, part of what we have to deal with. The mental health issues. I don't we're never going to solve the mental health issues. There are so many, you know, whether it's religious hatred, you know, this so many phobias out there that people just they hate somebody else. And it is become acceptable now, to use violence to further and political agenda. And that's, that's not a civilized society. We don't want to go back to that made you want to go back to the Old West. No, I don't think so. It worked. Okay. We know cattle rustling Wow. Okay. I don't think you want to go back there.



James Geering 2:10:05

Yeah, absolutely. Well, even with with some of the evolving technologies, I just did an interview and I was on his podcast. He's been on mine. But Pete Wakefield has the firefighters podcast, which is the British one. And he was talking about the, the explosive ignition element of a lot of these electric vehicles now, how I forget what he was talking about, specifically, but basically the potential of using vehicles as they did with the World Trade the first time, you know, it wasn't just a regular bomb, that these vehicles now have the capacity to actually be a bomb in itself and even things like that. I don't know. I've never heard that before. But I haven't been wearing uniform for five years now. But this constant evolution of our knowledge, the latest, you know, it was fentanyl. Now there's something in the anesthesia world. I think it's being combined with fentanyl. So we're a jack of all trades, master of none, and that complacency that will it's never happen. Therefore, we're okay mentality drives me crazy, because we're never going to master our craft. I just saw a video of Dizzy Gillespie talking about the trumpet of absolute master threw eyes. And he's like, No, it's a fight every time I pick it up. That's how we have to view the fire service.



2:11:20

Absolutely. I can't tell you how many times I've heard that phrase and category more than just because it never happened before. Doesn't mean a damn thing. You know, human beings are so forgetful. I mean, I one example I have is my sister in law, who I love dearly. There was a

hurricane coming toward New York. And she lives in a very vulnerable area to hurricanes, flood prone Peninsula. And, you know, I've lived there 75 years, I'm not evacuating, it's never been that bad. I bet but it's never ever it's never it's never it's never. It's never in your lifetime. And then it was. And she had to be rescued by an off duty firefighter because she was being swept away in floodwaters. And, you know, your life experience is so short, all of us, no matter who we are, where we are. Our life experience is so limited and so short, you can never say never to anything. So, if it's possible, it will happen.

 James Geering 2:12:36

Absolutely. Well, I want to get to your books, and then throw some closing questions at you. So I can let you go. Because we've been talking over two hours already. You've written several obviously, the the renowned books within the fire service. But talk to me about working with giants, what made you write that and give people an overview, so they know what to look for?

 2:12:57

Well, it's kind of a memoir, it's a tribute to as the title implies, the giants that I was privileged to work with. Throughout my career, people who formed me. And the the impetus came, many years ago, I started writing things down, going back into the early 90s. People would, you know, we'd come back from an event, the fire, explosion, collapse, whatever it was, and then it would be spectacular, we did a great job. Somebody said, Man, somebody want to make a movie out of that. And, you know, somebody else would say, nobody outside the firehouse would believe it ever happened. You know, he couldn't make a movie out of that. And it but somebody should write it down. I go back to my father, you know, the stories that he told, I wish I had gotten him on tape, you know, captured those stories, and not just, you know, all these people who did such great things in their lives. And there's nobody that talk about it anymore. And I said, you know, I'm gonna write it down. I'm gonna write it down. And being the officer I had to prepare the fire reports. And if there was something like a meritorious act, where a firefighter did something special, and they were going to get a, you know, an official department recognition for it. I had to write that whole detail out with all the information who, what, when, where and so on. So I just kept a copy of a lot of those those reports. And man, if nothing else, I want to be able to remember this 2030 years from now, man, this was some spectacular event. And I started, say kept a file of a lot of that I still have a lot of it. I digitized it. Thank God Oh, no shrank my file cabinet. But having all that there, it was a great resource. And then I had a another bed for in 2019. I was up hiking in the Adirondacks in January. And I had a great day. It was a beautiful winter day, we had about two inches of fresh snowfall. And while hiking down, my wife went with me for the first time. Usually, I'm up on that mountain by myself all day long. The week prior I was up there in the same location by myself clearing it's a snowmobile trail. It's a bridge across the snowmobile trail that the week prior had, we had gotten a flood that washed a bunch of brush and debris down. And it had buried that bridge. So I went back up there this day, January 4, in order to make sure that trail was going to be open again. And turned out, there was no debris to be cleared. So we had a couple of extra hours, I was planning on spending three hours, you know, cutting debris and moving stuff out of the way. And now we don't have to. So we went exploring, went off on a new trail. And on the way down, I slipped on ice and came back, flat on my back, my neck hit a boulder. And I was paralyzed from the neck down. I couldn't move a doctor, I was actually looking to my right. I could see my right hand. And I couldn't wiggle a finger. I couldn't move my hand, couldn't feel my toes

couldn't move anything. And that's a very humbling experience. You know, I'm laying there. My wife, who was a nurse Naren was with me, she tried to move me I said, you did. This is bad. You gotta get help. And she had had on surgery a few months earlier. And now she has to drive the ATV back down the mountain and get help over the ice. And it was bad on the way up. I shouldn't listen to her. And on the way up. There were patches of ice. And she said we should stop wish to turn around and I said no, no, no, I can do this. Come on. We got this. And we did we got up there but now she has to drive it back down. Call 911 Wait for the first responders to get there and then guide them back up and their vehicles, they're in pickup trucks and their vehicles will go up over the ice. So now she takes two of them up. The chief and a pass chief of the volunteer fire department up there Edinburg, she brings them up. And the chief was he's a sharp guy. As soon as he heard the 911 call reporting person for and paralyzed he launched the lifeflight helicopter and he requested mutual aid for a neighboring department that had a tract off road vehicle. And they come up now my wife has to go back down to get the EMS personnel up and bring them back up. So I and they are laying on the ground looking up at the sky unable to do anything for an hour and a half before they get back up. And you get to look at your life you think about where you want to be from here on like I say that was a tough couple of hours there. And I decided I did not want to die without getting that stuff published. So that's where it came from. Like I said, I had most of the stuff from the early years I already had an old document that had the stories written that had been written for many years. But I didn't want to take it to publishers after 911 I didn't want it to be seen as a you know, okay caching on 911 kind of book but now it's question of okay. Either I do it now might never get published. And I say there's so many great people who made me what I am today that I wanted to make that story get told

J

James Geering 2:19:48

well again thank you for that story because I'm sure people were going to buy the book before but they sure as hell gonna buy it now because I mean that's just you know, that shows the power and even the emotion that's that's emerged through this conversation, that's that, you know, the the power of what we do and you know, some of the things that we carry out as well. Or you talk about lying there, obviously having paralysis. Now, you know, we're sitting here, I'm assuming there's been the growth again, from that you're waving your arms at me. So walk me through that. I mean, we, we know how crippling it is, and I had this I had a pretty bad back injury in the fire service, and then I had knee surgery twice. And you know, you, you've done, you've used your body as your tool for so many years, not just to work like a carpenter or a plumber, but to actually facilitate rescues and save lives. Now you're lying here, staring at the sky. What was that journey for you physically? And what was it like mentally?

o

2:20:45

Well, it gets even worse, because in all my career, I can say that I never got anybody hurt, except one guy who broke his nose. And never was responsible for having any of my people injured. And that day, one of the responders the first two guys up there, he slipped on the ice, a friend of mine, John Olmstead, and he broke his arm. So now I'm responsible for his injury as well. And that was like, Oh, my God, you know, John, I didn't want you to get hurt. And he took it, you know, he was out of work for months. He worked for the local town, but now he can't work. And I felt so badly about that. So that and that happened, you know, early on when he got there, so they still had to package me and treat me and I go down the mountain now

thinking I'm paralyzed. And I contributed to somebody else's injury. I didn't know how bad he was. Turns out it was broken on badly enough, but not a life threatening injury, thank God. But going down that mountain was a scary ride. And when I got to the LZ that they had set up lifelight nurse grabs me and says, move this toe. I said, guy, I've been trying to move for the last two hours, I can't move. It's a no, no. Okay, really concentrate just the right big toe, just wiggle that white break big toe. And I concentrated and sure enough, it wiggled and he says, That's it, okay, you're gonna be okay. Know that now the spinal cord is not cut, you're gonna be okay. And he knew what it was. He'd seen it before. It's called central cord syndrome. When you fall, and I had a very, I was blessed, I was so lucky. My first fall back in 2005, at work that I had to retire from that fall, they ended up doing a crunch cut down the back of my neck, from C three to C seven, went inside, roto routed out a bunch of crap, and sold me back up without putting a roof boards back on. That's how I explained it to firefighters, there's no bone across the back of my neck, from C three to C seven. So when I fell, this time, the spinal cord was able to flex it compresses the fluid out of the spinal cord, which means you can't send any messages. But as long as the cord was not cut, it will eventually get fluid back in it and you will gain your function back again. I did not know that. I did not know that until he you know, recognized it. And when I got to opening Med, the surgeons there looked at the whole thing, X rays and MRIs and all that and says You are one lucky boy. If you had the normal spinal cord with the bone on the back there, it probably would have been cut and you'd be dead by now. So I feel that I am i People ask how I am all the time and I say I am walking and talking and thankful for it. And I mean that. So it's been a blessed journey has its challenges. Everybody has their challenges, but it took me about a year to recuperate from that injury but I'm pretty good now I have my my back has its own challenges, but so does everybody else.

J James Geering 2:24:57

That's amazing though I had a net Eva who is from Fairfax, and he ended I think he retired as a VC never got her on the job. And then when he's my neighbor his weed whacking catches a piece of mulch and takes out one of his eyes. So this is the this is the irony sometimes is that, you know, we were her or not badly hurt when we're on the job. And then life happens, and that you said, it's never happened before. So I should be good, you know, you're not wearing your eye protection, or you're walking on the slippery surface. And sadly, that's the irony of life is all it takes is that one moment that one lapse, and now,

 2:25:32

first, your life can change. Absolutely.

J James Geering 2:25:35

Well, I want to throw some quick questions, closing questions at you before I let you go. So we talked about your book? Well, let's talk about the books in general where the best places forget any to get any of the books.

 2:25:45

Well fire engineering books and videos publishes all of them Working with giants is the

well, the engineering books and videos publishes all of them. Working with giants is the newest, the Fire Officers handbook and type of tactics and fire departments, special operations, they're all published by fire engineering. And they're also all available at Amazon. They're usually competitive with fire engineering. So any of the major booksellers like that online, you can get them?

J

James Geering 2:26:15

Brilliant. All right, well, then first closing question. Those are your books. Are there any books written by someone else that you love to recommend? It can be related to our discussion today or completely unrelated?



2:26:27

Absolutely. I am a voracious reader, I read a book every six to eight days. If you're going to be a fire officer to books, you absolutely must read V dons collapse of burning buildings. And Frank Brian Higgins building construction for the fire service, those are two absolute must, you have to know build and construction to be able to direct people into burning buildings. For leadership, a totally non Fire Service book I love many, many of them. But one is called the mission the men and me it's a book written by a colonel in the US Army Delta Force. And God is named just went right through my mind. It's a it's not a war book. He talks about his experiences in Delta Force. But if you read his book, and where he says, soldier or special operator, if you insert firefighter, you will understand exactly what he's saying. And it will hit home to you there. His name is Peter Blaber, B L A, B E R. The mission the men and may turn the ship around is another book on leadership. It's written by a submarine commander who took over a low functioning submarine and basically turned the ship around and made him one of the pride of the fleet. There are so many great books out there that I just, I guess I can't get enough people's experiences that they share them and learn from them. That's what we do. I love reading on the Kindle. I will say that, but I keep hard copies. On the shelf behind me. I have a couple that I bought the last stand of Fox Company It's a Korean War story about the retreat from the Chosun reservoir and the heroism that those people displayed, protecting the lives of 10s of 1000s of other Americans at great cost to their own lives. The last end of the tin can sailors by James horn Fisher. I mean it's another one it's about the tack on taffy, Taffy three at the Battle of Lady golf, which every time I read them, they send shivers up and down my spine. I mean, this is what people can do for others. And I think commander Evans I'm gonna mess this quote up right now, but they're under attack by the largest warships on the face of the earth. They're in tiny little destroyers. And he said we're about to engage in enemy a Our overwhelming enemy from which survival cannot be expected. But we will do our duty motivated. So those are the kinds of things that I read, and it takes the heart.

J

James Geering 2:30:23

Well, again, thank you, thank you for those. I mean, this is the this is what burns inside all of us. And you know, most of us will never know that true courage where you're truly faced with death, like, you know, few have seen before. But there's so many commonalities as to why I have so many military guests on here as well. I think if you wear a uniform, it's universal.



2:30:42

Yeah, you're a care giver. You're a person who cares for other people as opposed to somebody who are takers. So the world could use a whole lot more givers than takers.



James Geering 2:30:56

Absolutely. Well, speaking of ever motion, what about films or documentaries, any of those that you love?



2:31:05

Oh, man. Yeah, I am again, driven. Again, my father's service, my brothers, my brothers.



2:31:14

And two brothers were veterans. I go back to Saving Private Ryan. That is a powerful, powerful story. It is fiction. But



2:31:33

you know, there were people who did those kinds of things, you know, the rangers who scaled those cliffs. You know, the Sullivan family? lost five sons. You know, those? There were people making sacrifices throughout history. We should never forget those sacrifices.



James Geering 2:31:59

Absolutely not as he works. I mean, I've worked with and had him on the show Dale die. He was the one that taught the actors how to be soldiers in these in that band of brothers for two and etc.



2:32:11

Yeah, I know they are. I don't know him. I know of him is another legendary figure. Marine Corps Captain, you know. Forced to call down artillery on his own position. That's a bad as it gets me.



James Geering 2:32:28

Absolutely. Well, speaking of great people, Dale was my guest. Is there someone that you'd recommend become on this podcast as a guest to speak to the first responders, military and associated professionals of the world?

 2:32:42

Hey, you know, I don't know if he does it or would do it. But I would refer you to read Sawyer, Rei D. I say why er, is a retired Lieutenant Colonel. Special Forces. He began as an enlisted man, you know, Sergeant, and then went to West Point, very instrumental in developing the Counterterrorism Center at West Point, which was a huge mentor to the FDNY. He taught a countering terrorism task. Counter countering terrorism class for the FDNY for about 10 to 12 years after 911. Got it off the ground helped us get our preparedness in many, many ways up there. I'm sure he's got a lot of experiences in. Like I say, he knows the fire service, as well as the military. And he's a great, great person.

 James Geering 2:33:51

Well, he sounds amazing. If you're able to help me connect, I'd definitely love to try at least.

 2:33:55

Yeah, I have his email after check and see if I can get his phone number or address. But I know I've got some contact with him. Beautiful. I haven't spoken to him in about two years. But great, grateful. Great, great guy. He's, he's out in Illinois right now.

 James Geering 2:34:16

We sounds amazing. So thank you. All right. Well, then the very last question before we make sure everyone knows where to find you. What do you do to decompress these days? You talked about hiking in the Adirondacks. So anything else to add to that?

 2:34:29

Yeah, I do my daily Instagram post. That's one thing that I do to kind of stay connected. I do a training. It's a combination training. And sometimes, sometimes it's just the story. daily posts on Instagram at chief Norman FDNY and it gets a lot of attention a lot of people I enjoy it, I've had great feedback from all spectrums of the fire service, international as well as within the US. I'd say it's a very eclectic kind of mix. Sometimes it's building construction topics, sometimes it's talking about a fire, sometimes it's less than on foam or flammable liquids collapse, sure how to do you know. So there's a little something for everybody there, sometimes just talking about a hose load. So it keeps me busy, it gets me up in the morning gives me something to do, I usually do that post every morning. And I have no idea what I'm gonna do until I pick a picture.

 James Geering 2:35:48

That's the thing. Social media can be amazing if you curate it, so that you put good things out. And then the algorithm is like, okay, they're not interested in the clickbait, because that's what I find interesting is all your happy firefighters and positive posts and people doing good things. And on



I find mine is all, you know, firefighters and positive posts and people doing good things. And so when someone says on social media so toxic, you're part of that, if you select things are good, and select things in the fire service and fitness, training and mental health, you will actually have a very, very positive, nurturing social media feed on your phone.



2:36:19

That's all I try to do. You know, I don't get involved in most controversies. I've learned a long time ago, you know, you said in your experience went from East Coast to West Coast and back again. And when I first at the FDIC, they had Chief Brown acini. And Tom Brennan started a head to head after hours class. And they called it east versus West. And it was in New York City Fire Officer and Chief Rossini from Phoenix. And when Tommy passed away, they asked me to step in and take Tommy's place. And I said I can't do this east versus West stuff. I've been around this country long enough to know that, you know, there's a reason that everybody does, what they do where they are, buildings are different staffing is different climate is different, there are all kinds of different conditions that affect you. And if it works for you, it works doesn't have to work for me, you know, my situation is different than your situation, find what works for you. And that's what I try to put out there. Okay, here's something that I've done, this is one option, it's not the only way to do it, you know, there are times when this is probably the best way, it's the best way I've ever found. But you may have something better. So do that. So I did a post last week on a foam adapter, a cutaway of a former doctor, and what the problems are with it, I thought it was a very valuable post. I don't know how many people have ever seen the obstacles to getting foam going at an operation. It is a very complex, simple piece of equipment, but it's very, very prone to difficulties. And we see the difficulties of that post only got, like 190 likes, I don't know why I do a post of a hose bed that gets 800 likes. So I can't I can't tell you know what is going to be good. And I'm not even worried about it. Like I said, I post stuff that I think there's value to and I told my wife, I've said this all along. I've done training classes for six people. And I've done classes with over 1000 in attendance. If the six people came just for that class, and they got something out of that class, I felt good about that class. I know that sometimes in the audience of the 1000 people there people are not going to have any concept of what I'm talking about. They're not firefighters, they're just there to look at pictures. And then and really the audience that I'm trying to reach. I want to educate firefighters that if I reach six people, and they get something out of it, I consider that a success.



James Geering 2:39:29

I agree 100% The I had some weird, massive explosion on my social media. And again, mine is very this this fire related but it's just it's it's service. It's kindness, compassion, it's all the things that I think, you know, as you said, we're all humans. Some of us just happened to wear a uniform, but it it it got bigger and my wife is is pretty good. I mean, it's good. As long as all these people are actually wanting to see kindness, compassion, and if they don't, hopefully they'll leave again the number go down that's fine because again, like Not in the Instagram algorithms are weird. You know, one minute you do, you spend less time you write his posts, and it's like, it just doesn't get seen. But even if you look at people with a huge following, you'll see the same thing, one post will be huge, and then it will be kind of mer. And you're like, why? And I think it's just because it's, it's rotating when it's your turn to be put kind of front and center. And then you got to go back to the back of the line again. So unless you get shared by

someone else, and then there's Oh, actually, we'll put that post back. It's, you know, it's just one of those things. So but if you say, if one person's life is made a little bit better because of this post, and only one person sees it, and that's the one that changes. Job done.



2:40:42

Yep. That's where a lot of



James Geering 2:40:44

brilliant All right, well, then you mentioned about your Instagram account, where else can people find or learn more about you online?



2:40:52

My website, [www.thatcheapnorman.com](http://www.thatcheapnorman.com). Real simple. They can reach me there, anybody wants to reach me? There's a link on there that says, Give us feedback. And it comes right to me, I answer everybody's emails, it doesn't have to be about a topic or anything. Just got a question and you want to know where to reach somebody? You know? If I don't know the answer, I'll put you in touch with some really smart people.



James Geering 2:41:21

Well, John, I want to say thank you so much for being so generous with your time coming on the show, but also so vulnerable and transparent. And what I mean by that is a lot of our generations that are listening, were raised on this kind of two dimensional chsp in masculinity, where the reality is, most people that actually serve you know, we there is an impact. There are emotions attached to this, whether it's our desire to help on the impact of losses, but you leading us through your life story and being you know, having these organic emotions at time, I think adds so much more value to this as well. So I want to thank you for all of those things.



2:41:59

My pleasure, sir. James, thank you for having me.