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Interviewer: Connor Perry

Interviewee: Michael Roach

Disclaimer: I removed crutch words and false starts from this transcript. These crutch words include Uh, um, so, and yeah.

Connor Perry- My name is Connor Perry I will be conducting the interview. We are in Prospect VA. If Could you state your name and spell it please?

Michael Roach- Michael Roach M-i-c-h-a-e-l R-o-a-c-h

CP- Okay perfect and the agreement has been signed this interview is being recorded for the use of Longwood University any information given may be made for public use. Alright, okay so Did you grow up in this area?

MR- No I grew up on the other side of the county, Green Bay is actually what its called but my wife is from this area.

CP- Okay so Did you guys meet here?

MR- (chuckles) Probably yes as youngsters we used to come to the Harvest Sale, when I was young so we probably met playing out in the back field here yea.

CP- Gotcha so, what do you think of this area then, not coming from here?

MR- Oh I like it a lot, very nice

CP- Alright so What is your favorite childhood memory, or one of them at least?

MR- From this area or...

CP- Just in general

MR- Just in general well just to keep it with the harvest sale, I remember coming when I was younger and playing football with a bunch of guys in the back field here uh and just having fun with kids.

CP- Gotcha okay so What has changed the most about this area?

MR- Well its growing just like everyplace else, where it used to be field now it is subdivision, its sad to see, as a matter of fact a forest right across from my mother in law's house right down in the bottom their cutting that down now. I hate to see that, but I guess that's what happens when things grow.

CP- Did you ever have any interaction with the department as a child?

MR- Yea we used to come to the harvest sale when I was younger my father would bring us, it was, and still this way it's a social event I know it's a fundraiser for the fire department but its also a social event for not just the prospect community, but pretty much the whole county.

CP- So you said your father used to bring you here was he a part of this fire department?

MR- No, no he would just come to the sale.

CP- Okay Was there any early influence to you or leading up to you joining this department specifically?

MR- I guess one of the things that may have had some bearing is there were a couple of fires one was our next door neighbors house burned down right at Christmas time and I was younger and I was looking out the window and I could just see the house burning, and just seeing the firemen trying to put the fire out it was, it was a pretty bad fire that destroyed the house and also on Easter morning the church burned down and that was right across the road from my house and that was like I said in Green Bay which is on the opposite side of the county and Prospect sent a

truck that day pretty much every fire department responded, but Farmville that day so you know that meant a lot to see a fire department on the opposite side of the county come try to save your church.

CP- So how old were you when you joined?

MR- 23, 24 something like that

CP- Okay Is there any reason why you joined this department specifically and not the one back where you used to live?

MR- Well the requirements are you live in the area of the fire department that you know is in your district. So I was living in this area at the time so it made sense to join this one.

CP- So How long have you been a member then? Or a volunteer?

MR- 24 years

CP- And how much longer do you plan on being with department?

MR- Well I don't have any plans one way or another well just see how it goes as long as the health is in good shape you know I don't anticipate quitting anytime soon, ill just put it that way.

CP- So do you enjoy the work that you do here?

MR- Yea I enjoy it, its a good group of guys and you know you get that sense of community and giving back to the community

CP- So what do you get out of volunteering personally?

MR- Just the sense of community and feeling like your doing something good for the community being uh a good member of the area and helping people

CP- Alright what is your favorite part of being a volunteer?

MR- I guess you know just being around the guys, you really hate to have to go to a fire because that's not a good thing but if you can help somebody you know that's a good part of what we do too.

CP- Is there anything you would have done differently with your career in volunteering?

MR- Well I've not been able to participate as much as I would have liked in the jobs that I've had a lot of overtime had two young kids, so you know just can't up and leave your kids at home when they're there by themselves. So things like that If I could have uh it would have been nice to be able to be more active, but I don't regret you know anything that I've done so.

CP- So have calls ever caused any issues between the comradery of you and the guys here?

MR- No I don't think we've had any issues, you know, if we have issues at a fire scene we talk about them, try to get better you know we, I think we do a pretty good job with that. they've come along way now with support. If you go to fires that have, especially motor vehicle accidents where anybody gets killed they will, the state will actually send out somebody to talk to you if you need it. Things like that so that support is fairly recent and but most of the guys they do pretty well if they go to a scene like that.

CP- So on a different note what is your second job other than being a volunteer?

MR- Second job, I work at BMW in Lynchburg. So That's another thing I'm not around as much as some of the other guys. Some guys can leave when and go fight a fire and I cant do that

CP- So are there any benefits to being a volunteer? Besides from having the enjoyment of saving lives

MR- Well, the county will allow you a country sticker for free so I guess that's the benefit.

Keri Lenheart- That's what I always look forward to

CP- So on average how many calls do you get around here per week or per month?

MR- I would say on average probably 8 calls a month and here lately its been a lot of motor vehicle accidents. structure fires, like I said that's something you never want to have to go to, but we've Been fairly lucky, structure fires haven't been as, as not as many as vehicle accidents.

CP- Is there any reasoning behind the spike in motor vehicle accidents?

MR- Well there's just more people on the roads. I remember back when I was younger learning to drive riding around with my grandfather, you wouldn't see a car. Now anytime of night or day it doesn't matter and pretty much anywhere, back roads, main highways you're going to see people on the roads. So its just more cars on the road, the more chances for accidents.

CP- Gotcha, So what has been the call that has had the largest impact on you?

MR- Well One that sticks out with me and luckily enough no one was injured, but We had a house fire and you know Each fire is different and I don't that I had been to one up to that point that when you walked in the house there was nothing, I mean just smoke you couldn't see anything you couldn't see your hand right here (puts hand in front of face). That still stands out with me just because of the shock of even with the lights it was nothing, nothing but darkness you were feeling around and hoping you didn't fall down the steps which I almost did, but things like that you don't forget that

CP- Okay, what does your family think about you being a volunteer here?

MR- I think they all respect it uh my wife has never complained my youngest daughter especially she's, she wants to join so, and she helps a lot, she's up here now helping with the fire department, with the fundraiser and we do a fundraiser next weekend at the Christmas show and she's already asked when's that, I want to do that so she's getting involved.

CP- So this might become a family legacy for you then?

MR- Well she's already said she wants to join the fire department. We had talked about it (sucks teeth and sighs) junior fire department and she wanted to know how she could join so I think its just as soon as she turns 18 I think she'll join.

CP- Okay, so did you personally respond to the Rotunda fire over at Longwood?

MR- No I did not, we had, well my previous employer we had customers coming in the next day and we had a big meeting so I, I couldn't go, real job first.

CP- Gotcha, did you know anyone here that responded to it?

MR- Oh yeah, lots and lots of the guys here went.

CP- Could you describe in any way that you've heard from them what it was like?

MR- Well I don't know that anybody came out and said, said it but, I think one of the things that I kinda took from listening to them talk is, just the history that you see going up in flames that's you know that's the sad part because yea you can rebuild a building that history that's there that's the thing that you lose.

CP- So its kind of one of the last questions we will ask. What is something that you would want people to know about this fire department and a specific call in one hundred years?

MR- I think that think you would want people to know that they do their best to help others whether it's a vehicle accident you know helping someone if their injured, trying to save somebody's house, they you know its over the years you see techniques have changed and things like that its its good to see that the younger guys have learned these techniques and making the fire department better so you want people to know that that were not the best but we try to learn to be better and I think that a lot of people don't really understand that but its a lot of training that goes into this and a lot of the other guys especially and its takes a lot of time now the state offers a lot of courses now that have grown since ive joined but I mean its a lot of time and effort I mean its not just the time and the fire it's the training and things like that and I don't know if people really understand that and how much time it actually takes to volunteer

Rachel Alabaster- How long is training?

MR- They have different class', a lot of classes they try to if its just a smaller class they'll try to get it done in on the weekend. SO 8 hours Saturday and Sunday a lot of classes you actually can do online now and that's you know 40 hours and you do it at your leisure so it all depends on how much training you want to take they have different levels and so I mean it can get a little up in the hours.

CP- So you said that there is a lot of new members coming in through this department?

MR- Well a lot of younger guys.

CP- So do you think that this department is going to be stable for the next generation of fire fighters to come through.

MR- I hope so you know we have probably a good core around 20 guys and it uh I like it to see it stay that way and we will need some younger guys and ladies to join in the next few years but one of the things that bothers me a little it is that the population is growing and this area is growing the fire department is not growing in the same ratio so hopefully you know we will keep a crew of younger guys coming in and and be stable and one thing that I wanna say too uh

another little fire department and we work really close with those guys so we help each other out so between the two of us and their just a few miles down the road so between the two of us I think we work really well together and that helps a lot too.

CP- So why do you think that there aren't as many people coming to join the fire department anymore?

MR- Well I don't know the demographic that's moving in but a lot of the people moving in are older or if they do have kids the kids are younger and its just like I have been involved with the local rec league for years and theres a gap of kids in in certain age groups so like my oldest daughter there were a group of kids that came along with her and there was a little gap where it just wasn't as many kids that age so I think that's got something to do with it too and hopefully we are just in one of those gaps right now and and in a couple of years it will have some more younger guys.

CP- So just as a last question, what is one specific call that you've been on that you want people to remember for the rest of time?

MR- Well I don't really have any individual call I would just like people to remember not not just me but all the fire department members and how much time and dedication they put into and we have a very good community we have good community support so I think most people do recognize that.

KL- you were talking about how your youngest daughter wanted to join, how many women per say do you have in the department?

MR- Right now I think we have 3 usually its around 2 or 3

KL- Do they actually run calls?

MR- Yes

KL- Okay

MR- And Its usually around 2-3 at any one time and they rotate out when but its usually 2 or 3

KL- Cause like where im from we have some discrepancy about that like they get along but they don't get along which is why I was never able to join but I just didn't know if they would have issues with like her wanting to join too

MR- Oh no, well I don't have any issues you know I respect any body that wants to volunteer

KL- we have a bunch of younger members that don't really know what their doing our chief is very young

MR- Well we have good chief you know I think every fire department goes every volunteer department goes through stages where for lack of better words they have some conflicts and you know we have certain rules or to be a member of the fire department you have to go to a certain number of meetings and things like that and its not that I disagree with that but I sometimes you have to remind people it's a volunteer what we face nobody's getting paid to do this and a part time member is is you know depending on when they show up you're glad to see them.

KL- Yeah

MR- So I I you know I hate to seen anybody get dismissed by the fire department if they don't come to the meetings or things like that but you know we the bad thing about having rules is you you wanna apply them the same to everyone but sometimes that's not easy to do.

KL- So what about your junior department do yall have any?

MR- Well it was not exactly sure where this came from it may have been the fire association the Prospect Association, I mean Prince Edward County Association but im not sure but it was

brought up trying to start a program in the schools I think that Fuqua has a firefighter type class in the schools and they are trying to get it in the county schools but to do that they want youngsters from certain areas like from the Prospect District to go into that so they want basically they want kids to have a sponsor a fire department to sponsor them and I think that's a great idea id love to see that happen but I don't know that they have the resources in place to do that I don't know that they have anybody that can run that program but I think that its something that would be nice to see in the county id love to see that.

RA- This is kind of a different question, how long does it normally take you guys to normally get ready to go on call?

MR- Well it all depends, depends on what time of day it is, if it's a day time call it usually takes longer because its not as many members close to the fire department and they could probably tell you that the response time but I mean for a rural area I don't think we do to to bad again it depends on when it when it is if its in the day its gonna be longer because some guys get off work they have to drive from Farmville to here to get a truck or things like that a lot of times the officers will go to the scene while somebody is bringing the truck so that they can assess the scene before the truck actually gets there see what the need to do that kinda helps speed up the process.

CP- Well do you guys have anymore questions?

KL- Do you guys attend the fire competition every year?

MR- Well I actually back when I first joined I think it was a big thing then we kinda got away from it we went down to compete last month im bad with dates but we did go back and compete this year so that's young mans thing

KL- Yeah

MR- We have got some people who want to do it so.

KL- It's fun

MR- Yeah

KL- We send a team every year

MR- Yeah we got our butts kicked but uh it was fun to watch the competition we entered our truck the truck did win first place so

KL- I think our truck won last year

MR- Its nice to go see the different trucks down there and see the different equipment, see what you could do or have your wish list to what might be able to help your fire departments as far equipment concerned and I mean its good comradery with all the fire departments it was pretty neat.

KL- Any other questions you guys?

CP- do you have any questions for us?

MR- I don't think so.

KL- Anything you wanna add?

MR- No I don't think so.

All- Thank you so much!

