Firefighter After Action Review Podcast: The 1964 Marshalls Creek Explosion That Changed Hazmat Safety (Part 1)

Michael Preet (00:00):

Welcome to this special two-part series featuring a little-known incident that took the lives of three firefighters in the small Pennsylvania town of Marshalls Creek. Though most have never heard of this catastrophe, it led to nationwide changes in the fire service and transportation industry.

Hello, I'm Michael Preet, a contract project manager for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Welcome to the *Firefighter After Action Review*, a podcast series discussing line-of-duty death incidents to honor those heroes who gave their all.

Intro Voiceover (00:55):

This is where tragedy struck. Dozens of firemen had already dropped from heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation.

MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY

They continued to battle this giant, which now threatened to consume them.

We had a house explosion.

Ambulances were moving in a steady stream.

MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY

I think we have one dead officer of the truck.

Michael Preet (01:42):

Welcome to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's podcast series, honoring firefighters who were killed in the line of duty. My name is Michael Preet, a project manager for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. On behalf of our board chair, Troy Markle, and executive director, Victor Stagnaro, we would like to thank you for joining us. Today, we are here in Marshalls Creek, Pennsylvania. The location of a tragic hazardous materials explosion that took the lives of three brave heroes and three civilians on June 26, 1964. Lost on that tragic day were Firefighter Earl Miller, Firefighter Leonard Mosier, and Firefighter Edward Hines. Also lost on that tragic day were three civilians, resident John Regina, motorist Joseph Horvath, and pedestrian Lillian Page. We are honored to be joined today by two members of the Marshalls Creek Fire Company, President Eugene Berry and lifetime member Robert Huffman. Gentlemen, welcome and thank you so much for taking the time to sit down with us today.

Bob, if it's okay, I'd like to start with you and ask, if you think about long before June 26, 1964, this department already had a legacy. So, it's a volunteer organization, and it's neighbors helping neighbors, volunteers answering the call when the alarm comes in. And so, it was something that you all did every day. So, this was another day in helping neighbors.

But can you give us a little bit of history about the fire company itself, when you were founded and how you came about to become a fire company here in Marshalls Creek?

Robert Huffman (04:08):

We were founded in 1945. My father was involved in the formation of the company. He was treasurer for many years, approximately 20. Then I was treasurer for over 20 years, but he was very involved. When I was growing up, every Wednesday night he left the house, then he came to the firehouse. And that was something that was done religiously every week. Same with when I was in the fire company. Every day, every week, every week you came here on Wednesday and worked on the trucks, worked on the equipment and polished this or did that or trained on a new piece of equipment. It was a lot of fun and always everybody was here. All the firemen. And we really enjoyed our time together. And it was a great and it still is a great organization.

Michael Preet (05:15):

Sure. And were there challenges in the early days that maybe you don't see today something?

Robert Huffman (05:23): I don't know. We didn't have to look for people. We always had firefighters. We always said it was a matter mostly in the daytime was the big problem. When a fire wasn't the daytime, you had people working. Four o'clock in the morning, you have a lot of people that could come to a fire. But the daytime fires were... I live a couple hundred yards from the firehouse. Dick McDonough lived a hundred yards from the firehouse. He and I were always here. First truck out the door every time. Number one sat right down here and was out the door first. And it was always Dick McDonough and I, all the time. And that's the way it was for years.

Michael Preet (06:14): And you bring up a good point because, obviously, throughout the United States, volunteerism has dropped a little bit, and companies all over the U.S. are struggling to find personnel to staff fire apparatus. But it sounds like in the early days here in Marshalls Creek, that wasn't as much of a challenge because people were…

Robert Huffman (06:36): It wasn't the challenge because, from what I understand now, there's a certain amount of training that has to be done. At that time, they don't care if you were a garbage collector or you owned a business. If you were a fireman, you were a fireman.

Michael Preet (06:53): I see.

Robert Huffman (06:54): And that was all there was to it. You learn when you went to the firehouse how to handle a red line or a four-inch line or a three-inch, but you learned how to work and do that stuff. Me, I never knew a damn thing about a pump. I couldn't start a pump on a. But I knew when I got in the truck, that guy driving the truck, he knew how to do the pumping, and I knew how to use the red line.

Michael Preet (07:19): Okay.

Robert Huffman (07:20): And every time we got to a fire, I always grabbed a red line.

Michael Preet (07:24): Sure.

Robert Huffman (07:24): Start with that.

Michael Preet (07:26): So, let's talk a little bit about June 26, 1964. I'm sure that day started just like any other day would have started in this fire company. What would a day like that look like before that alarm came in? What would the firefighters be doing? How would they be going through their day?

Robert Huffman (07:51): Well, I would be going to work on that day, and if the siren. If I was at the hotel, which is right a hundred yards up the road, I would hear the siren. If I was home, you'd hear the firehouse phone ring. And my mother might answer it or not. Usually during the day, Dick would answer it at the store. We had three firehouse phones. The store, the chief's house, and my parents' house. And that's how we answered fire calls. The control center was not involved at that time. You answered the phone, and you picked up the thing that blew us, and it blew the siren, the receiver.

Michael Preet (08:33): So basically, the firefighters who were members of this company would be going about their daily lives.

Robert Huffman (08:39): Definitely.

Michael Preet (08:40): Whatever they were doing in their occupations.

Robert Huffman (08:43): I might not see Dick McDonough. He might be going down to Easton to get material so somebody else would be at the firehouse. Okay. "Where's Dick today?" "Oh, he's doing this or doing that." But you had to worry in the daytime, especially if it was a grass or a woods fire.

Michael Preet (09:03): Right. But on that summer day, on June 26, 1964, this company faced something that no training or experience would have prepared you for.

Robert Huffman (09:20): Definitely. I was very lucky that night. I was very lucky. My mother and father answered the phone, and they decided not to wake Bob up because we had been to a fire at four o'clock in the morning the night before. Let him sleep. It's only a truck fire. So, Bob slept. Next thing I know, I'm on the ground. When the thing blew three miles away, it knocked me out of bed.

Michael Preet (09:50): Wow.

Robert Huffman (09:51): And I said, "What was that?" And mom said, "The fire company went to a truck fire and I think something happened." Well, that's when I drove up there and I saw what happened, which was not a pleasant sight.

Michael Preet (10:08): Sure. Sure.

Robert Huffman (10:11): To this day, I can still. It's a bad scene. I said to somebody, I said, "There's Dick McDonough. The truck had blown up, and it was on his arm or Bobby Hyde." So he said, "Well, there's Dick. He's hurt too." Somebody said, "Ed Hines was standing in front of number two, the big red truck, and he was blown right into the pump, that his legs were blown right out of the truck because all three men that died were all closed caskets." It was not a pleasant scene.

Michael Preet (10:58): I can't even imagine. I can't even imagine. And there's no words that I have of even today, all these years later that would even begin to express the amount of…

Robert Huffman (11:12): And the one person I talked to was Ralph Miller, whose brother died. And he was very nonchalant. And I'm going, I think, geez, he lost a brother. But that's the way it was. I mean, when you were a fireman, you never knew what was going to happen.

Michael Preet (11:31): Sure. Gene, you weren't a member of this department at the time, but do you have any specific memories about that incident just from being a firefighter in a neighboring or another community here in Pennsylvania?

Eugene Berry (11:46): No. It was pretty much the information about it was kept more centralized up here to Northeast Pennsylvania. At that point, I was down in southeast Pennsylvania, suburb of Philadelphia. And even when I joined and started in the fire service, there was never any mention of this type of incident.

Michael Preet (12:08): Even as impactful as this was nationally, 10 years later, when we know about the Transportation Safety Act and the fact that this was the catalyst for that, it still was something that was not discussed. 300 miles away.

Eugene Berry (12:27): No, we're maybe 120 miles away, and there still was no push to it. And when I got in the fire service, there was still no push. This was 1985 when I started in the fire service. And there was no push for education in the fire service on hazardous materials, knowing that we had such a tragedy here in Northeast. 150 miles away. Yeah. Northeast PA, and even across the country with several other. And it was just never mentioned. No training on hazardous materials.

Robert Huffman (13:02): You mentioned that day. The next day was unbelievable here because after it happened and everybody heard about it, the next day, these roads were packed to go drive up there and see what happened because you can't loop around. If you've driven up there, there's a road that loops around. I think the main road might still have been closed because of the big hole, but people had to see what was going on. And the front here, the next day, a whole bale of daily news with the pictures and everything of the explosion in that they dropped off for the firemen.

Michael Preet (13:47): Interesting.

Robert Huffman (13:48): Which was very nice.

Michael Preet (13:49): Now, Bob, we know that you had a direct connection to the incident. Are there any individuals still alive today that would have a direct connection to that incident?

Robert Huffman (14:06): Wow. Wish you had asked me that before. Wow. Not that I know of. My brother, he was in the service, so he didn't know anything about it other than what he heard. He was in Puerto Rico at the time, so he didn't know anything.

Michael Preet (14:25): What about, now I understand that there's a brother.

Eugene Berry (14:29): It's a son.

Michael Preet (14:29): A son.

Eugene Berry (14:30): Assistant Chief McDonough's son.

Robert Huffman (14:32): Dave McDonough. Mac.

Eugene Berry (14:34): Mack.

Robert Huffman (14:34): Mack.

Eugene Berry (14:35): Richard L. No, Assistant Chief McDonough's son is still alive. Yes.

Michael Preet (14:42): Okay. So, when we share this information now, we're pretty much sharing it through stories, not personal accounts. Because aside from you, Bob, just about everyone else has passed away.

Eugene Berry (15:00): With Assistant Chief McDonough and Bob Hyde surviving with injuries, Assistant Chief McDonough continued to run in the fire service. Unfortunately, Firefighter Hyde's injuries necessitated him retiring.

Robert Huffman (15:15): Slowed down.

Eugene Berry (15:18): Slowing down, almost retiring. And Firefighter Hyde passed away several years ago. And as chaplain of the fire company as well, I had the pleasure, if you would call it that, of running his funeral service at the request of him and his daughter.

Michael Preet (15:36): Are there any stories that have been relayed to you, I guess, Gene, because Bob, you were there, but are there stories that have been told to you that stand out about the incident individuals maybe sharing?

Eugene Berry (15:55): When I joined Marshalls Creek in 1985, one of the first things that I learned was the history of the company. And obviously the history of the company includes the incident from June 26th. And folks like members like Bob and Mack McDonough and stuff have relayed to me a lot of the history, as well as in going out on my own and researching to find out more and other stories from folks.

Robert Huffman (16:25): So, there are times I come down here. I'm asked to come down here every once in a while to talk about this. And when I come in here, the place is full. Their ears are, they can't believe what they're hearing. But I saw it, and this is what happened. And this place is, this is the same knotty-pine that's been here for years. And I've been in this room many times. And boy, when you talk about the explosion…

Michael Preet (17:00): People listen.

Robert Huffman (17:01): You fill the room.

Michael Preet (17:02): Sure. And one of the things we try to do with this podcast is help other fire organizations, fire departments, fire companies, fire chiefs, firefighters, company officers in their ability to navigate through the waters of a line-of-duty death. How did Marshalls Creek Fire Company navigate those days following the incident? How do you move on to the next incident? Because the bells are going to ring, the pagers are going to go off. You're going to have to respond to the next call. How do you do that?

Robert Huffman (17:42): Well, we lost three pieces. Not only did we lose three firemen, we lost three major pieces of equipment. Doylestown, Pennsylvania, right away donated it's a truck. Next day it sat in our firehouse. It was nothing but a tank of water, but it was a fire truck because people tried to help us. Stroud Township loaned us a truck. I mean, we had a full firehouse, and we were ready to go. The fire companies around here try to use the same thread so that we all can work together. When you go to a fire to help somebody, if you don't have the same thread, you're not worth a damn. Very true. You got to be able to pump water and be able to do it. And everybody works together.

Michael Preet (18:31): And what did you do for each other in terms of. Now today, we have official critical incident stress debriefing teams, and we have counselors that come into a fire station. But back in 1964, that was nonexistent. So how did you manage that?

Robert Huffman (18:47): We had meetings. A couple days later, we filled this firehouse with firemen who I'd never seen before. All of a sudden, they come out of the woodwork when you're talking about what are we going to do? Well, we decided this fire company isn't going to fold because of this incident. We're going to keep going. And we did. And they're better than what they were before. And…

Michael Preet (19:15): More resilient.

Robert Huffman (19:17): Yes. Everything was done properly.

Michael Preet (19:20): And then you have the community. This is a small community. I drive around here and I see that everybody knows everybody. How did the community come together to help you through this journey?

Robert Huffman (19:33): Well, the community was great. I mean, you couldn't do anything without. If you were a fireman, it really meant something because, to be a fireman, that means you have to get up at four o'clock in the morning, or you have to get up at two o'clock in the morning, or you have to leave your job. There are things that you have to do to qualify to have this job. And to do that, people appreciate it. That's why a lot of your employers say either take the time off and get the hell back to work when you're not doing anything. Don't stand around the firehouse. And that's the way it's done. They come and help for an hour or two and get back to work.

Michael Preet (20:19): Sure. But the community itself, I'm sure the non-firefighters, they had to have rallied to your all's assistance as well.

Robert Huffman (20:26): Definitely. I mean, everybody, the women, we had an auxiliary that was extraordinary as far as food and helping us out anytime we needed anything. We went to a fire. If it was a woods fire or something, a couple hours, next thing you know, we had a box full of sandwiches coming from someplace. And that's just the way it was.

Michael Preet (20:49): And that probably didn't stop, did it?

Robert Huffman (20:52): No, it did not. It increased, if anything.

Michael Preet (20:54): Sure. And I would imagine that still happens today.

Robert Huffman (20:58): Yes.

Eugene Berry (20:59): Yes. It's a tight-knit community. And as you said, Michael, everybody knows everybody for the most part. And as soon as a need for the fire company today is broadcast, made known, we've got people standing behind us in return for the service we're providing to the community. We now do fire, we do rescue, we also do EMS. And today, it's the program that we have to use in the fire service. And we have the citizens and community standing behind us, which is greatly appreciated.

Michael Preet (21:38): Right. And Bob, you went to the scene, you saw the carnage. I'm sure you, at some point, went back home. Your family, your mother, your father, your friends all had knowledge of this. Did any of that affect you? How did your family react to this? The fact that they knew that tomorrow you might be right back in that fire truck going to the next incident.

Robert Huffman (22:12): That's the way it is in Marshalls Creek. You're a fireman or you aren't a fireman. If you're a fireman, you go to whatever. When that tone goes off on that Plelectron, you go. Whether it's an accident, we used to have an emergency for accidents or wrecks or something. You didn't call the whole fire company out. We had a dozen people would go to accidents. Dick McDonald and I always, that's what I say, we always went to accidents all the time.

Michael Preet (22:45): But you didn't have any family or friends saying, "You know what? This is just too dangerous. You shouldn't be doing this."

Robert Huffman (22:50): No. No. No. It was something where you were helping the community as the community.

Michael Preet (22:56): And they recognized it.

Robert Huffman (22:58): Yes, they did.

Michael Preet (22:58): They saw the risk, but they knew that it was something you had to do.

Robert Huffman (23:00): Yes. It had to be done.

Michael Preet (23:03): Right.

Robert Huffman (23:03): Somebody has to do it. And why not you? You're a member of the community. Give a helping hand.

Michael Preet (23:10): Yeah. And it's in your blood. And I think people realize that. Yes. They realize it's something that is in your blood. Do either of you believe that people really understand what the human cost of that day was? I mean, certainly, the community reached out, and there's no doubt that in the days that immediately followed, you had the support of the community. But do you believe that the community actually understood the impact that this had on this fire company, on the people who were the firefighters here, on your families?

Robert Huffman (23:54): I think at that time, yes, they did. Because those fire trucks sat for, I don't know how long, down here. And you wouldn't drive by here without seeing somebody down there to see those fire trucks. You couldn't believe what they looked like and what they went through. Like the helmets, everything. I mean, the way they looked was just atrocious. And to see that, to see pictures of it is one thing. But to see the automobiles, Leonard Mosier's truck side down there. He lived on the way to the place. So he drove up there. His pickup truck was blown apart. That sat down there. So, everybody could see exactly what happened. And that was very memorable to everybody in the community.

Michael Preet (24:51): So they had a visual reminder every single day when they…

Robert Huffman (24:55): And it was very easy. When you drove by the firehouse, you could look down there and see those. Every day you could see them and you knew what happened and what we went through.

Michael Preet (25:04): Sure. And how do you think moving forward, that incident changed your fire company to even today?

Eugene Berry (25:16): It's part of our history. As we have new members coming in, they're taught the history of this fire company. It's given to them. They're told about it. They're told about the sacrifices that those three firefighters made. They're made aware of this business. It's a sacrifice of time, energy. And we make sure that they're aware of that.

Michael Preet (25:44): What about training?

Eugene Berry (25:44): As you see in the firehouse, we have pictures, we have reminders, we have the helmets. We still have parts of that, of a reminder of this part of our history. Not only ours, but the history of the fire service in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but in the history of the fire service in the United States and the lessons that have been learned. Training. We know what the Transportation Act of 1974 said as far as needing placards on trucks, and we're not allowed to carry the dynamite with the blasting caps anymore and all the legalities that were given to that. Training, National Fire Protection Association has come out and said, "Folks, firefighters, you need to train on hazardous materials." We cover part of Route 80, an interstate. We're not sure what goes up and down that road every day, 24 hours a day. One of the regulations…

Robert Huffman (26:45): That was something after this situation. All of a sudden, blasting caps with dynamite. First thing they did, they jerked that. If it hadn't been for the blasting caps being in that truck of dynamite, nothing would have happened. Truckload of dynamite would have made no difference. But the fact that the blasting caps made the difference.

Michael Preet (27:10): Right. So operationally, did you see a change? Did you see all of a sudden, we are going to approach tractor trailer fires differently? We're going to approach auto fires differently. We're going to approach hazmat incidents differently.

Eugene Berry (27:27):

Training has changed in the fire service. I've been in for more than 50 years. When I started back in the mid '70s, early '70s to mid '70s, there was no mention of hazardous materials training. As Bob said, you learned how to pull the hose off the truck. Today, and it's great that it's changed. Takes more time out of those coming into the business, but we now require hazardous materials training at the awareness level and at the operations level. So what? When we approach that tractor trailer, we go in cautiously now. When we even approach a car fire now, you've got to because of the change in automobile construction. You approach it cautiously. Same way with structure fires, because you don't know what's in there in there. I'm sure, and we all know there are hazardous materials in there. We've changed our training skills, requirements and so forth. We also, the way we handle… 20 years ago, we never put an SCBA on for a car fire, for a vehicle fire. Today, mandatory.

Michael Preet (28:37):

Sure.

Eugene Berry (28:37):

You don't get off the apparatus without your SCBA on air, put your mask on air, pro set car fire. Again, the vehicles alone have gone off to plastics to more hazardous materials. We do not need to see another one of these tragic incidents occur anywhere in the fire service. Not here in Northeast PA or anywhere in the country.

Robert Huffman (29:04):

The one thing that should be noted in this whole situation is the fact that this man had explosive signs under the seat of his truck that he had taken off the trailer. Whether he took them off up there or not, we don't know. But he had them. He detached his trailer. His truck drove to East Strasburg, was on the phone, and he heard it blow. And he said, "I think I just heard my truck blow up." He told his boss on the phone. Down across from the high school, there was a payphone. Payphones weren't as they are now. There was a payphone down there because there was a high school. And he stopped to call his boss and say, "My trailer, I left it sit up there because the tires were on fire." Well, he left them, and they were on fire. Whether they were on fire or not, we don't know, but that's what blew up.

And he said to his boss, he said, "I think my truck blew up." But he had the signs underneath the seat of his car, his cab.

Michael Preet (30:17): So, there's relevancy today to today's firefighter from the experience that you had back in 1964. I mean, obviously, the job is still dangerous. We still have hazards on the road. We still have hazards in homes. I mean, now we have hoarding. We never know what we're going to have. So, there's relevancy to firefighters even today that can take away from your experience from 1964.

Robert Huffman (30:50): The one person's name that you mentioned as being there, Coda, he is the man that turned the fire in. He was a tractor trailer driver. His truck was parked there. He as a tractor trailer driver stopped, saw the tire fire, called it in, and he ended up dead.

Michael Preet (31:10): Wow.

Robert Huffman (31:11): And now he knew that there were no signs of the truck. If it would've been, he wouldn't have stayed there for Pete's sake.

Michael Preet (31:18): Right. Wow. So, as we look back on the incident and the impact, can you talk a little bit about how the 1974 Transportation Safety Act has affected you personally as a firefighter today?

Eugene Berry (31:48): The Transportation Act of 1974 took 10 years to get through our government after several firefighters, three of them, which were ours, perishing because of no regulations on the transport of dynamite, blasting caps, and other hazardous materials. And at that point, then, that act required the placarding of labeling of all the trucks and trailers and railroad cars. So, it gave us a warning. It gave us a warning as firefighters, if we were coming down the street to a tractor trailer fire, we should be able to observe situation that would tell us what's going to happen or possibly happen, depending on what the load of the trailer was. Some of it, obviously, we now do training on hazardous materials, minimum up to the level of operations level where we can do defensive tactics involving hazardous materials. Something simple as carrying binoculars now on apparatus. So, as we're coming down the road, officers sitting in the front seat can take the binoculars and look ahead and have a much closer vision of what's waiting for us.

Michael Preet (33:13): Exactly.

Eugene Berry (33:15): The federal government putting out the guidebook every four years with the list of all the chemicals and everything. But not only now in print, difficulty reading at two o'clock in the morning, but we all have it on computers in the cab with us now, or even on our telephones, our mobile telephones that we carry, that we can bring it up. And as we're coming down the street, we can get some of the ideas. So if you see a cloud coming at you, a vapor or whatever, we're trained well enough now today to not say, "We got to go find out what it is." We just back away and take care of the business. The safety becomes paramount to us because we don't want to see anybody else.

Michael Preet (34:04): Absolutely.

Eugene Berry (34:04): Our learning lesson, sometimes this is an incident that provided learning for the fire service, but it's a difficult way. And we don't want to see this duplicated or repeated ever again.

Michael Preet (34:15): Yep. So, the *After Action Review* podcast visited Kansas City, Missouri last year. And one of the incidents that we talked about when we did our podcast with them was the 1988 incident where they had ammonium nitrate at a construction site kill six firefighters. Are you familiar with that incident? Did it bring back any memories? Bob, did you hear about that?

Robert Huffman (34:46): No

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Michael Preet (34:37): No? What about Eugene? When you heard about that, what emotions did that conjure up in you when you…

Eugene Berry (34:57): It's here we go again. Here we go again. Yeah. I mean, you have to take that thought that here we go again. We're coming into a situation with explosive materials. Were they labeled? Lessons learned from ours in 1964, or were there other extenuating circumstances? We lost three here in ‘64. I was not here in 64, but obviously, I'm well now connected to those deaths. Sure. And to see even one more firefighter, one more brother, walk into the same situation and have the problem and create that problem for first his family or her family. Second, for his or her organization. And then thirdly, for the entire fire service across the country. Why?

Michael Preet (35:59): And it's interesting because now Bob, I assume you were still active in 1988?

Robert Huffman (36:06): Probably, yes.

Michael Preet (36:07): Yes. And so, I find it interesting how in the fire service we tend to compartmentize some of this information. You would think that the 1988 Kansas City, Missouri incident would have direct relevance to hear.

Michael Preet (36:26): On Marshalls Creek, but because it was geographically so far away, maybe you didn't make that connection right away. And I guess that's one of the heartbreaking issues is we tend to learn about these incidents maybe through a podcast or a documentary, but it's not something that we're. It's not broadcast. I mean, there are vehicles available and there are email lists and there are notification lists and things like that, but we tend to not always hear about these incidents. And that we lose the ability to learn from those incidents. Here's a direct correlation between 1964 and 1988, and for some reason it didn't make its way here back.

Robert Huffman (37:17): Well, at the time I probably read about it and go, well, like Gene said, “Here we go again.”

Michael Preet (37:21): Here we go again. Here we go again.

Robert Huffman (37:23): Because this road out here at that time, 209 was loaded, loaded with tractor trailers, and you had no idea what they were carrying. And for instance, he didn't have signs on, you don't know how they get away with whatever they're carrying. It might be ammonia or some material that they think is non-toxic or whatever, but it might have problems if you put water on it or if you go to fight the fire or if the truck gets on fire. It creates a situation that is not conducive to somebody being there and trying to put it out.

Michael Preet (38:06): Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. The reaction, etc.

Robert Huffman (38:10): Right.

Michael Preet (38:10): Interesting. On that note, we've been talking about this for a while. Let's break and listen to a message from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

Michael Preet (38:21): We would like to take a break from our podcast to make you aware of a very important component of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation mission. Since founded in 1992 by the United States Congress, the Foundation's primary mission has been to honor fallen firefighters and support their families. However, the mission does not stop there. The Foundation is also focused on reducing firefighter fatalities and injuries through a myriad of other initiatives. This program is tasked with preventing death and injury through our education and outreach programs. We understand that firefighting is a dangerous endeavor, and it will never be without risk. But one of our goals is to prevent the preventable. The NFFF offers 19 courses that we can deliver in person. These courses deal with culture changes, leadership, officer development, risk management, and after-action review, as well as other topics.

Our goal is to take the lessons learned from tragedies and use that information to prevent future tragedies. As of this filming, we have over 282 volunteer advocates throughout the United States that teach courses to various fire departments and agencies and do other forms of outreach, which include trade shows, local events, and more. These advocates teach our courses locally in their own backyards and throughout the country. Already this year, we've taught thousands of hours of coursework throughout the United States. Our advocates are a great mix of civilian experts and retired career and volunteer firefighters, as well as fire service personnel who are still serving their communities today. While 282 may seem like a massive number of volunteers, it falls short of meeting the demands for our programs. The yearning for our programs is endless, and the need to develop more advocates is critical. If you would like to learn more about the advocate program or are interested in becoming an advocate, please contact our coordinator for outreach and education programs, John Kane, at the link in this video.

Michael Preet (41:27):

Although Congress created us, our funding is reliant on grants and the generosity of sponsors and donors to fulfill our mission. Our current supporters include FEMA's Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program, DOJ Grants, as well as private donations and corporate partnerships. Our mission is to honor and remember the fallen, assist their families in dealing with the aftermath, and prevent future line-of-duty deaths and injuries. If you believe you can help, please go to firehero.org and follow the ways to help tab, or pause and scan the QR code you see on your screen. On behalf of our Fire Service Program Director, Danny Kister, thank you. And remember, the past can teach us so much about the future.

Thank you for tuning into episode one of this two-part series. Please visit the Firefighter After Action Review podcast again for the second installment of our visit to Marshalls Creek, Pennsylvania, where we take an emotional tour of the fireground and the touching memorial dedicated to the lives lost on that fateful day in 1964.

Please visit the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation website and social media for more episodes, honoring those firefighters who lost their lives in service of others. I'm Michael Preet. Please be safe.

Announcer (43:18):

This podcast is produced by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation with funding supplied by the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistance to the Firefighters Grant Program and Cintas Fire Division.

This has been a, *That's My Trumpet* Production.