

Recollections and Quotes

*From the 40th Anniversary Banquet, Columbus, Ohio
June 4, 2010*



“I went to work in EMS in 1968. Back then the only thing available for the advanced ambulance industry was Red Cross—Standard Red Cross, If you were really good: advanced first aid. In December of 1968, there was this buzz starting in Denver because you had these physicians like Dr. Jake Hefford Owens, Dr. Hank Cleveland, Dr. Dan Draken, and all of a sudden there was this talk about taking an advanced ambulance driver program. Some of us ended up taking that program. It turns out it was the pilot program put on by Dunlap & Associates on behalf of the Trauma Committee of the College of Surgeons, AAOS and the National Highway Safety Board at the time. It was the pilot for the EMT program. Interestingly enough, when we graduated in June we still didn’t have a text book, and they still weren’t sure if we were going to be called ECTs or EMTs. Ultimately they decided on EMT. In 1971, Dr. Owens approached several of the ambulance services and said there was going to be a national exam and expected all of us to take it. Ken Cole was the manager of the ambulance service, and Ken was a visionary. He was literally on the cusp of everything that was fresh and new and good. He convinced all of us that we needed to take this upcoming national examination. [Ken later became State EMS Director in Missouri]. We questioned Dr. Owens on the value of this exam—because we had taken the state test—and he told us (not very politely), we needed to take it to make something of ourselves. He essentially was saying to become a professional—more than an ambulance driver—you needed to take this exam. And so, sometime right at the turn of the year, many of us sat for that very first National Registry examination.”

“I think all of us have certain value systems and certain belief systems. I have both those that are personal and those that are professional. I obtained my National Registry in 1972, and **for the past 38 years, every two years, I have paid out of my own pocket to become re-registered because of my belief in what the National Registry is and stands for.**”

*Jimm Murray
Immediate Past Chairman, NREMT
Air Methods Corporation
Papillion, Nebraska*

“As a young guy back in the late 1960’s I was privileged to work with a teenaged buddy of mine whose dad had a lot of money he was willing to let us blow on trying to develop an ambulance service in the Charleston and Parkersburg, West Virginia and Ashland, Kentucky areas. We tried to do the best we could and...there was limited training resources available. I remember in addition though to standard and advanced Red Cross first aid and American Heart CPR, which then was only about 6 or 7 years old, we had civil defense medical self help. We took all the training courses that we could as other likeminded people around the country did and we also ran across the American College of Surgeons list for essential equipment for ambulances and we assured that every time we had an ambulance go out on a call it had that list of equipment on board.”

“In the early 60’s, Buck Ambulance in Portland, Oregon asked orthopedic surgeons in Portland to do some training for them on musculoskeletal sprains and fractures and from that a few hours of training developed into three and four day programs covering the whole gamut of emergency care--still under the auspices of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, and they developed a course called Advanced Training in Emergency Care and Transportation of the Sick and Injured. When [it was] available for the first time in 1968 in Huntington, West Virginia, we took it. We belonged to the Ambulance Association of American, one of two prominent associations for private companies.”

“At the time the Registry was founded the first Chairman of the Registry was Roddy Brandes, who also was President of the Ambulance Association of America. So we got a mailing from him saying there was going to be this National Registry exam. So I said, ‘Well I’m gonna take that--that’s a no brainer.’ I wanted to try and achieve the epitome of everything.”

“I didn’t know until Theresa [Morando] told me years later, [my certificate] was the earliest dated Registry certificate. So, I am proud of that fact, but to me it was just a no brainer. The week after the exam, the 30th and 31st of October 1971, I started as an EMT instructor in the first EMT course in northeast Kentucky. And at the end of that course they had a state...exam and to me it was a no brainer that I would encourage all those people to take the National Registry exam on top of [the state exam.] I also thought it was a no brainer to pay our employees more per hour if they were Nationally Registered. It only made sense. We advertised as such in our letterheads and other advertisements. Later, I went to work in West Virginia as the training coordinator where there was a state certifying exam that was horrible. No one had ever done an item analysis on the thing, it had a couple of wrong answers, the answer key was wrong and nobody ever failed it. It took me 90 days to get the National Registry implemented at the Basic level. It took a little longer, about 7 years for the paramedic level, for other reasons. But to me it was just a no brainer to do that. In fact, because we trained coal miners as EMTs and gave them that exam as well, we trained so many in West Virginia that at one time we had the 4th highest total of Nationally Registered EMT-Basics. “

“But I am proud of the association I have had over most of these 40 years with the National Registry and ... on my own, decide to re-register [with the NREMT] and I am proud to be a Nationally Registered EMT-Paramedic.”

*Terry Shorr
Former State Training Coordinator,
West Virginia
Former NREMT Employee
Earliest Dated National Registry Certificate*

“I started in emergency care in the late ‘60’s as a national ski patrolman with standard and advanced first aid. My degree in college was in health science and one of the requirements was to take a first aid course--a two credit course. Since I already had first aid they suggested I take this new EMT course that they were trying out for the first time that semester. So I took that. It was 1971.”

“I started working full time at the local hospital where they had a hospital ambulance service and we operated out of the hospital. That same physician/instructor/professor decided to start a paramedic program in 1974. This was at Western Illinois University, which is literally in the middle of nowhere.

Fortunately this was a graduate level course, and so I got almost a third of my Masters Degree completed with the paramedic program. I was certified by the state of Wisconsin as a mobile intensive care technician-- that's what paramedics were called back then. I was hired at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in Green Bay, Wisconsin under a Robert Wood Johnson Grant, where they paid for the first three years of my [employment] there. I have now been there for 35 years as a paramedic instructor, and in that time [I have] trained over 800 paramedics. It has been a really good career, I have enjoyed it, and I have certainly enjoyed and needed the help of the National Registry over the years, to help make this truly a profession..."

Jeff Clark
ACLS/Paramedic Educator
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
Green Bay, Wisconsin
Holds NREMT certification #5

"In 1980, I made some comments which I am going to quote tonight because they are as meaningful to me tonight as they were when I said them in 1980. **"The National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians is the only agency in the United States with national standardized mechanisms for assessing the knowledge and the performance capabilities of EMTs. Thus the designation Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician carries with it evidence of the best possible assurance of up to date knowledgeable and skillful patient care in emergency situations."** I said that in 1980 and I hold to it now in 2010 and I will until the day I die."

Roger White, MD
Professor of Anesthesiology/Cardiology
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine

"When I heard about the National Registry, I was working on some of the committees at the National Academies of Sciences developing the EMT guidelines for training, before there was EMT training. It has been a heck of a ride with the Registry from day one, and even before day one when I was working with a lot of the people like Oscar Hampton, Deke Farrington, Irwin Henderson, that is just a real catalog of people who have made EMS..."

"I was on a DOT committee and Fred Lewis was moderating our group there where we were called in as a bunch of consultants. [Fred] said that the Highway Safety Act 'has only one purpose and that is to minimize crashes and injuries and mortality on the highway.' And I thought, 'Wait, what do you mean that is the only [purpose]?' I turned to a gentleman next to me and said, 'What is he talking about?' and he said, 'You've got to tell him'. So I got up and I said, 'Mr. Lewis I can't understand what you are saying; you think that the EMS Act from the Highway Safety only deals with highway safety and highway accidents?' He said yeah, that's what it is all about. I said, No it isn't; most of these people in communities across the country do not have emergency squads, do not have ambulance services, so if it

is only going to be related to those kinds of services then these people in all of these little communities and suburban towns are going to be out of service – they can't afford this kind of stuff. So, the guy sitting next to me said, 'Fred, you better listen to this guy'. So he listened to me and it ended up it would be for all emergency medical services and all emergencies regardless of whether they were industrial, civilian, home or whatever that would be—and if they would establish an EMS service in their community it would cover gamut. I was so proud of bringing that up; of course I felt like a little fish in a big ocean when I was in Washington. Nonetheless, I laid it out and the committee accepted it and it is part of the guidelines for EMS training.”

“It was in 1968 or 1969 when we were completing the guidelines for training. We were completing the work on the medical response for the ambulance vehicle and its equipment. Along came the idea that a registry was needed as dictated by the Federal Government, and by the medical societies. So I sat on that committee where we established the name – “emergency – medical – technician.” Needless to say that some of the physicians who were on the committee frowned on it: ‘You are going to be first aiders--no way.’ So I stood my ground and they supported me, and as time went on the Registry was getting together and I was invited to serve as the Executive Director, and I thought that was a pretty nice job, and I ought to take it, and I did and they hired me and took me right in.”

“Well the beautiful part of it was the AMA was going to give us office space and help; the Employers Insurance of Wausau--they also wanted to do the same thing...but that would have meant moving my family to Chicago and I wasn't going to do that—that's a [hard] transition for a family of six. So Dr. Oscar Hampton said if [I wanted to take the job there was] no problem if [I wanted to] set up the office in Columbus, Ohio. So, we went to work. My wife and I began to collect applications for examinations on our dining room table. It's no joke – and we did this for a number of weeks until I had time to rent some office space. There was a new building not too far from us and I rented two rooms there. Theresa worked as the secretary and a gopher and I sat in my office –the other room and talked to all the people in the country. It was a tough show. And very difficult--we had no money, so I made that known to the board and Dr. Farrington, who lived in Wisconsin, hit Employers Insurance up for money and they offered to give us \$15,000 to help us out as seed money and that was great! The AMA did the same thing--they offered another \$15,000 for seed money for us to get started, so we had \$30,000. Then Roddie Brandes and his group sent in \$2,000 for seed money. So, that wasn't bad--\$32,000--that was more money than I ever knew existed. So I rented the office space, began to collect applications and money that came in with the applications that I began to bank.”

“One person who really came to our rescue was Dr. David Boyd who was chief of EMS in Chicago and ended up at the Department of Health in Washington. He said they [liked what we were doing] and wanted the Registry to accept applications from all EMTs in Illinois for our exams. Well, we examined hundreds, so that gave us some background and some money to spend. So, that was the way it went and that was the way it was and from then on it began to grow.”

Rocco Morando
Founding Executive Director
NREMT

“Well, what an evening, Rocco Morando, Dr. McSwain, Dr. White, Marilyn Gifford, Howie Werman, Sandy Boguski, Pete Glaeser, Mr. Ray Bias, Drew Dawson, Jimm Murray, Chief Mary Beth Michos, members of the Board of Directors and the staff both past and present. It is a pleasure to address you tonight on the

40th anniversary of the first meeting of the National Registry Board of Directors. Tonight we celebrate 40 years of EMS leadership...”

“Let’s just look at some of the milestones...to help improve patient care by adopting meaningful standards through the past 40 years. We have talked about the first meeting of the Board of Directors in June of 1970 that launched a new certification agency on a path that traveled many turns to get to where we are today. It began by administering 1500 exams at 51 sites in 1971. You had the opportunity to meet Terry Shorr and Jimm Murray, two people who have spent a lifetime in EMS and have been great contributors to the National Registry. In 1975 Rocco Morando developed the brief that was submitted to the AMA Committee on Health Manpower designating Paramedics as a member of the allied health profession. In 1978 we gave our first Paramedic exam in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 1979 we became a founding sponsor of the Joint Review Committee for EMT Paramedic Programs and helped develop guidelines for accreditation of Paramedic programs. In 1980 we broke ground and built what would later become designated the Rocco V. Morando building, the current home of the National Registry. In 1983 we started a new level of care in the Nation, the EMT Intermediate. In 1986 a DOD directive came out that began a long friendship with the US military and eventually led to the certification of all US Army and US Air Force medical personnel being certified by the National Registry. In 1988 Rocco retired after 19 years as the Executive Director and in 1989, appointed me as Executive Director.”

“In 1993 the Registry funds were used to develop the National EMS Training Blueprint—a document that guided EMS education throughout the 1990’s. In 1995 we did our first practice analysis. In 1998 the Board funded the LEADS project, a longitudinal study of EMS providers that has been going on for 12 years. In 2000 the Board began strategic planning. In 2002 we raised our fees at all levels for the first time since 1973 by increasing them five dollars. In 2001 the Board positioned itself to become the National EMS Certification as outlined in the *EMS Education Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach*, by starting a process with the Bob Bailey survey that was answered by 47 state EMS offices identifying the need for more stakeholder knowledge and a process that gave us a faster turnaround time.”

“In 2002 we obtained accreditation by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies – we are still accredited by that organization today; and we reinstated our Community Relations program and started our Research program. In 2004 the Board of Directors started the process of moving from paper and pencil examinations to computer adaptive tests. By 2005, forty-six states used the National Registry for their certification as part of their licensure process and we were testing, on average, 600 people a day. In 2006 we hosted regional meetings and went to 50 states to give them the plans of launching computer based testing. We established additional testing sites in cooperation with our partners, Pearson VUE in rural areas and worked with national leaders on projects to help in the Scope of Practice and the National EMS Education Standards.”

“In 2007 we launched computer adaptive testing across the nation. This huge project was led by a hard working Standards & Examination Committee. It allowed overnight reporting of results anywhere in the United States. Eventually we opened over 350 testing centers with our partners, Pearson VUE and in November [of 2007] the Board of Director passed a motion that by January 1, 2013 all candidates for certification at the paramedic level, must be graduates of nationally accredited programs. In 2008 our first Research Fellow completed his PhD at The Ohio State University. In 2009 we hired a full-time Research Director and completed a \$400,000 upgrade on our computer system to accomplish online recertification.”

“And here we are in 2010 celebrating our 40th anniversary and I am proud to say that over the past number of years there have been one million, four hundred and forty one thousand Nationally Registered EMTs in the United States, a significant contribution to America’s health & safety.”

“All of this did not happen by accident – it involved hard work; long hours; many, many meetings; developing consensus and leadership to produce action. [It involved] change that came about based on the ability to recognize the need for the change, to gather the intellectual capital to guide us through the process to test the change, and as Drew Dawson always said, ‘Make sure you follow the process and then implement the change – sometimes in the face of adversity but always in the sense to improve patient care and the stature of those who serve the public in this profession.’”

“Many here will wonder why they were invited to the 40th anniversary celebration, [because] we just couldn’t ask everyone. Some of our great leaders have passed away but their memories live eternally in us and are part of the history of the National Registry. Many others were invited but unable to attend. Jean [Davidson] and I read some wonderful letters of congratulations from those who could not attend for 40 years of fine work. As EMS professionals we understood their financial or age-related difficulties in their inability to make today’s event. Many of you came tonight and I wish I had time to tell a story about everybody in this room, because believe me – I know one!”

“I would be able to tell people of your contributions to the National Registry and EMS. You are special people with special places in our hearts. You have made us grow, both individually and as a profession through the promotion of our certification organization. Many are current and former staff members who have done an outstanding job performing the mission of the National Registry. I always say you’ve got to surround yourself with dedicated and talented [people] and these are the folks that are on the Registry staff.”

“Let me tell you a few stories of some of the people that are here tonight and their services. First I would like to have John Taska and Victor Dominguez stand up. And while John and Victor are standing I would like to have Tim Coleridge stand up. Now, Tim was the first real soldier who came to the National Registry Board of Directors meeting. He was a physician and a consultant to the Surgeon General on emergency medicine. Probably in ...1988 or ‘87 I would say, and he told me of the stories of so many surgeons and emergency physicians in the Department of Defense who wanted to increase the capabilities of the combat medic, to prepare them to better take care of their colleagues in battle. At the same time, around then, John Taska was the Director in Arizona and Victor was the State Training Coordinator, and they had this very talented, young emergency physician who was the state medical director. And she was a former nurse and paramedic, and had gone through medical school and later on she enlisted in the Army and years went by and the DOD passed the directive--Tim remember in 1988 we all went down there and they all started taking the Registry exam at the Basic level? And they did horrible. Ugh, it was terrible, so it didn’t take them long to figure out they were spending a lot of money and getting nothing so they took the smart route and decided to only test the top graduates of the program. And they would train 500 medics and only 50 would take the Registry exam and they would complain that they had a 70% pass rate, and they gave them all EMT certificates.”

“And time evolved and time evolved and time evolved and finally it was time to face up to the nation and a two-star General--General Peak was the Commander at Fort Sam Houston, and what a visionary he was, because General Peak decided he was going to have emergency physicians leading the training of combat medics in the United States. He appointed Al Meyer and Skip Whittford for awhile and then one day I went down for a visit and they told me they were going to have this new Colonel coming in, Pat Hastings. And Pat Hastings was the same medical director that I met in 1992 in Arizona. And she was going to be in charge of the program at Fort Sam Houston. Al Morgan and Skip Whittford did a great job, but I’ll tell you, Pat Hastings took it to another level. And now people like Paul Meyer and John McManus and some of the folks, Command Sergeant Majors Jim Aplin and Terry Markwood and Bob Suter and all these guys who fought with us years ago, they now have like a 95% pass rate. Every medic has to take

it, you cannot go into combat today, in the Army or the Air Force unless you are Nationally Registered – thank you to you guys.”

“The next person I would like to have stand up is Les Asher. I want Rob Wagoner and Phil Dickison to stand up with you as well. Okay, I got to the Registry in '85. Les Asher worked for the City of Chicago, Department of Personnel and he helped write the test for the City of Chicago and some place along the line Rocco ran into him. Then in '87 or '88 Rob came to work for the Registry and then we hired Phil around 1990--remember guys having the meetings with Les? Les was the guy that kind of started this and believe me, writing a good test question is absolutely an art. There is no way it is a science. You can tell a person all the colors of the rainbow but they cannot paint the Michelangelo – there is no way. Les Asher taught Rob, taught Phil, but Les let me tell you something, these guys took it to another level buddy – in fact by about 1992 or '93 Les said 'I don't need to come to these meetings anymore.' Les, we have about 13,500 items in the Registry bank and I am telling you buddy, they are all great items and it is because of work like you started and the work that Rob carried on and the work Phil has carried on, and man, you guys made the bank!”

“Next, I would like to have Mark Johnson stand up. Mark Johnson taught me a great lesson as a rookie. [We were at the]1988 State EMS Directors meeting--Rocco Morando's last meeting. They are doing tributes to Rocco, and Mark Johnson gets up-- he is the State EMS Director in Alaska. And I heard Rocco talk many times about Alaska and Mark--about how much work the Registry did and those 'son of a guns' – those weren't the words he used – dropped the Registry. And then Mark got up and did one of the things that I thought was loaded with courage. He got up in front of the State Directors and he said, 'You know, the National Registry bent over backwards to try to help Alaska and I am so happy that they got our EMS program started up there. But you know, we couldn't get our people to pass. So one day my boss came down and said, 'You've got two choices, buddy--either you get rid of the Registry or we are getting rid of you'. And so Mark continued on as State EMS Director. But one thing he taught me right there, you know no matter how hard the Registry works, it's not necessarily all about us. It's about the quality of the work we do. He had great respect for what we did, we worked hard for him. I was just a rookie then and I thought you know, if I'm going to stay in this job for a long time, I am going to care about one thing – quality. That's it. Whether you win or whether you lose makes no difference, it's all about the quality. You taught me that – thank you.”

“...Tonight you are standing before an audience of good Samaritans. Some are providers of care who found and [had] been called to patients lying in the streets. Others are at today's inns--they call them hospitals--and they treat and nurse patients on the road to recovery; some are educators who teach to provide care. Others are administrators, call center personnel, computer programmers, staff of the Registry [who] provide valuable services to improve EMS providers and make their jobs easier. Regardless of their specific nature or jobs, they are all good Samaritans. All are here to celebrate the 40th anniversary, all have contributed to making life better for Americans.”

William E. Brown, Jr.
Executive Director, NREMT