

## "I Wish You Could Know"

I wish you could know what it is like to search a burning bedroom for trapped children at 3 AM, flames rolling above your head, your palms and knees burning as you crawl, the floor sagging under your weight as the kitchen below you burns.

I wish you could comprehend a wife's horror at 6 in the morning as I check her husband of 40 years for a pulse and find none. I start CPR anyway, hoping to bring him back, knowing intuitively it is too late. But wanting his wife and family to know everything possible was done to try to save his life.

I wish you knew the unique smell of burning insulation, the taste of soot-filled mucus, the feeling of intense heat through your turnout gear, the sound of flames crackling, the eeriness of being able to see absolutely nothing in dense smoke-sensations that I've become too familiar with.

I wish you could read my mind as I respond to a building fire "Is this a false alarm or a working fire? How is the building constructed? What hazards await me? Is anyone trapped?" Or to call, "What is wrong with the patient? Is it minor or life-threatening? Is the caller really in distress or is he waiting for us with a 2x4 or a gun?"

I wish you could be in the emergency room as a doctor pronounces dead the beautiful five-year old girl that I have been trying to save during the past 25 minutes. Who will never go on her first date or say the words, "I love you Mommy" again.

I wish you could know the frustration I feel in the cab of the engine, squad, or my personal vehicle, the driver with his foot pressing down hard on the pedal, my arm tugging again and again at the air horn chain, as you fail to yield the right-of-way at an intersection or in traffic. When you need us however, your first comment upon our arrival will be, "It took you forever to get here!"

I wish you could know my thoughts as I help extricate a girl of teenage years from the remains of her automobile. "What if this was my daughter, sister, my girlfriend or a friend? What was her parent's reaction going to be when they opened the door to find a police officer with hat in hand?"

I wish you could know how it feels to walk in the back door and greet my parents and family, not having the heart to tell them that I nearly did not come back from the last call.

I wish you could know how it feels dispatching officers, firefighters and EMT's out and when we call for them and our heart drops because no one answers back or to here a bone chilling 911 call of a child or wife needing assistance.

I wish you could feel the hurt as people verbally, and sometimes physically, abuse us or belittle what I do, or as they express their attitudes of 'it will never happen to me'.

I wish you could realize the physical, emotional and mental drain or missed meals, lost sleep and forgone social activities, in addition to all the tragedy my eyes have seen.

I wish you could know the brotherhood, and self-satisfaction of helping save a life or preserving someone's property, or being able to be there in time of crisis, or creating order from total chaos.

I wish you could understand what it feels like to have a little boy tugging at your arm and asking, "Is Mommy okay?" Not even being able to look in his eyes without tears from your own and not knowing what to say. Or to have to hold back a long time friend who watches his buddy having CPR done on him as they take him away in the Medic Unit. You know all along he did not have his seat belt on; A sensation that I have become too familiar with.

Unless you have lived with this kind of life, you will never truly understand or appreciate who I am, we are, or what our job really means to us...I wish you could though.

\* Author unknown \*