



Of Cowards and Firefighters

Barry Roberts Greer

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The pipenozzle.com blog was started back in 2008 to record my fire service experiences. Since then the Great Recession financially clobbered one fire department after another, and the IAFF and other public service unions remain under assault from the ideological right who are using the Recession as cover to bust unions. So the mission of pipenozzle.com shifted from personal experience, although that appears a couple of times, to observation of political cowards who now wish to villify those they praised following 9/11. In short, local governments have attacked public service workers for simple budget expediency. Rather than admit that cutting public safety budgets would reduce public safety, the politicians again and again tried to argue that they could save a buck without losing a life. Pipenozzle.com shredded that Orwellian logic used again and again from Philly to LA and finally in the fire district where Greer himself served. Almost all the 2013 section entries concern the battle to stop destructive leadership in the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District, the largest and busiest in Groton, Connecticut. The battle is not over, but as of this publication, the firefighters union has halted fiscal insanity with the help of the State of Connecticut. Without unions, power certainly does and will corrupt. Unions are about paychecks, sure, but also about countervailing power, about voices that can tell Mayor Lee of New Haven or Mayor Bloomberg of New New York City or Alan Ackley, a Connecticut fire district president, where to go when necessary. Unions are also about informing the public with information on the consequences of shutting down firehouses and laying off emergency service workers in the years after 9/11 when the fire service became the fire/rescue/ems/hazmat service in a world that never seems to become safer. The title piece itself concerns former Penn State president, Graham Spanier, who is the antithesis of everything emergency service workers stand for and everything the politicians who understand emergency services, like Cory Booker, should stand for.

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