

2003

Patrolman Michael Shaw

Mentor Police Department

Lieutenant Mike Mahon
Firefighter John Cumberledge
Firefighter Brian Lee

Mentor Fire Department

You never leave your house and think that today is the day I'll become a hero. You go to work expecting the ordinary, As a police officer, you think about ending your shift and going home safe. As a firefighter, you hope that this is the night that you're finally going to get a full night's sleep. You could never imagine that this is the day that one little spark could end those plans, and any others that you might have made.

On March 12, 2003, a fully loaded BP gasoline tanker was exiting State Route 2 at Reynolds Road, northbound. As the truck went around the sharply curved exit ramp, it's speed caused the truck to roll over. The driver was only slightly injured, but was trapped within the truck cab. A large amount of gasoline was leaking from the damaged tank.

Patrolman Daniel Shaw was the first emergency responder on scene. Gasoline was pouring like a waterfall from a three foot gash in the side of the tank and was flowing through the cab. A witness advised Shaw that the driver was trapped and was screaming for help. His legs were pinned in the cab. Traffic continued to drive through the scene, increasing the volatility of the situation. Shaw immediately went to the truck and slid on his back into the cab of the overturned truck. He attempted to free the driver, but was unsuccessful. He was, however, able to lift the driver enough that the victim was able to shut off the truck's engine. Shaw remained with the driver, comforting him, while providing information to responding units from the Mentor Fire Department. This allowed fire command to better assess the situation and response needs. A witness to Shaw's actions stated that he "headed right up to the rig without regard for his own safety." He further stated that Shaw was a "brave and lucky officer." The amount of spilled fuel and multiple possible ignition sources placed both Shaw and the victim in grave danger.

Upon arrival of the first units from the Mentor Fire Department, it was apparent that this was an extremely volatile situation. Lieutenant Mahon and Firefighter/Paramedics Cumberledge and Lee realized that they could not even take the time to set up hose lines for their protection. They went to the truck to work on rescuing the trapped driver. While Lee attended to him, Mahon and Cumberledge worked to free his trapped foot. As soon as they worked it free, the driver shot out of the truck like a rocket. His clothing was so saturated with gasoline, that it had to be removed prior to transporting him to a hospital. The three firefighters then returned to their duties and worked for the next eleven hours at the scene.

Chiefs Daniel Llewellyn and Richard Harvey nominated their personnel for the award. They wrote "These brave members of the Mentor Police and Fire Departments performed this life savings act at great personal risk."

The awards were given on February 18, 2004 at the LaMalfa Center.

Patrolman Shaw continues in his employment with the Mentor Police Department, and has served seven tours of duty in Iraq with the United States Army.

Lieutenant Mahon and Firefighters Cumberledge and Lee also continue to be active members of the Mentor Fire Department.