

NYC Emergency Medical Services Periodical

# EMS BANSHÉE

Volume 1: Issue 2 *PRAY FOR THE DEAD, FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE LIVING* September 2009



## The Future is Ride or Die

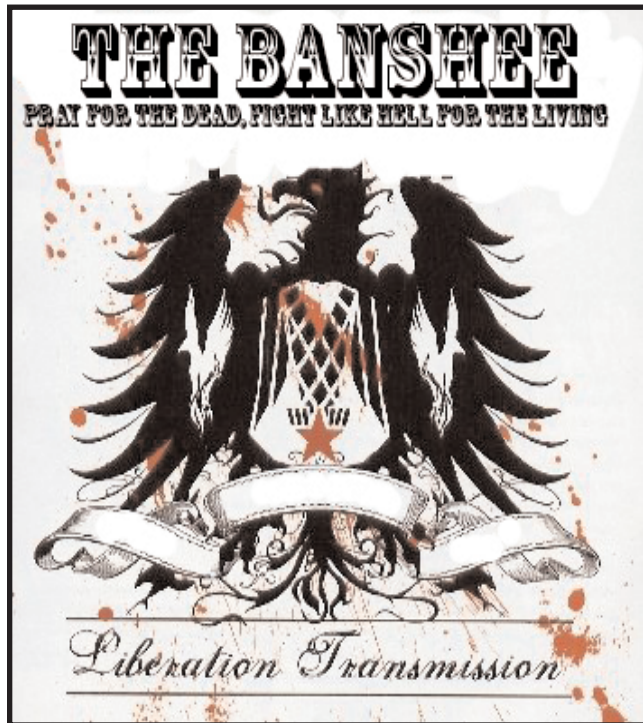


GO HARD FOR THE PLACE YOU'RE FROM

# **NYC Emergency Medical Services Periodical**

## **EMS BANSHEE: THE RIDE OR DIE ISSUE**

### *Volume 1, Issue 2 September 2009*



### **PRAY FOR THE DEAD, FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE LIVING!**

## **MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS**

From us to you Good morning and Good night to all you hard working folks out in the trenches picking up this paper. Ladies and gentlemen we are back and business is booming. Banshee Business and life saving business generally. A cool summer means a hot fall as swine flu and the reaper comes a knockin'. So thank you all for sticking with us, this is issue two, and the Banshee continues to howl as we go hard for you.

**First, we would like to HUMBLY apologize to all Christian and Catholic readers who took offense to our admittedly callous and insensitive comments at the end of the Hatzolah piece.** While two of our four editors are practicing Catholics and the piece was submitted by an independently affiliated writer, The Banshee is committed to advancing EMS, not making crude commentary on politics or more importantly people's religions. *The line in question made comparisons between Hanukah and Christmas which equated Hanukah with dradel spinning and schnitzel (breaded chicken) eating while juxtaposing football playing and hot dog eating. We reiterate our apology and ask you to forgive our editorial insensitivity.*

**Second, to all our Orthodox Jewish readers we apologize if you found the Hatzolah piece crude, specifically as our research has revealed Hatzolah handles over 23% non-Jewish calls and certainly is committed to interfaith life saving.** Our aim was to give non-Jewish EMS a better perspective and *no we will not be revealing the name of our inside man, i.e. author of the piece in the question.* Suffice to say, people's religions will not be finding any future place in upcoming issues.

**Third, to all our brothers and sisters in Transcare, we encourage you to write articles reminding the corporate side that The Banshee does not publish any call for agency infighting, calls for industrial actions, or attacks on Private EMS.** Our past article on 'The Fable of the Banshee' was ghost written by a Transcare Paramedic, and although he and other Private EMS agencies support this paper, they are cognizant of the fine line between libel and first amendment rights. Paramedic Aaron Gabriel, author of this month's fable divests himself from all aspects of this paper other than fanciful story telling while *Transcare EMT-CC Dave Briscoe is thankful for the experience that agency has given him.*

**Finally, thank you to the brothers and sisters in the streets committed to distributing this paper, the agency leadership giving us ins and advice, thanks to our advertisers who pay the bills and to Stellar Printing rolling out our copies.** We encourage everyone to keep getting involved, send us articles, photos, and enroll in our distribution command. *As made plain and clear in the balance sheet, we ain't in the cab driving business, we ain't in the lying down and taking it business, we ain't in the bending over business. We're not in the back biting, infighting, talking down business. WE IN THE LIFE SAVING BUSINESS, and cousins: BUSINESS IS BOOMIN'.*

**-The Banshee Boys**

**-Banshee Command Staff**

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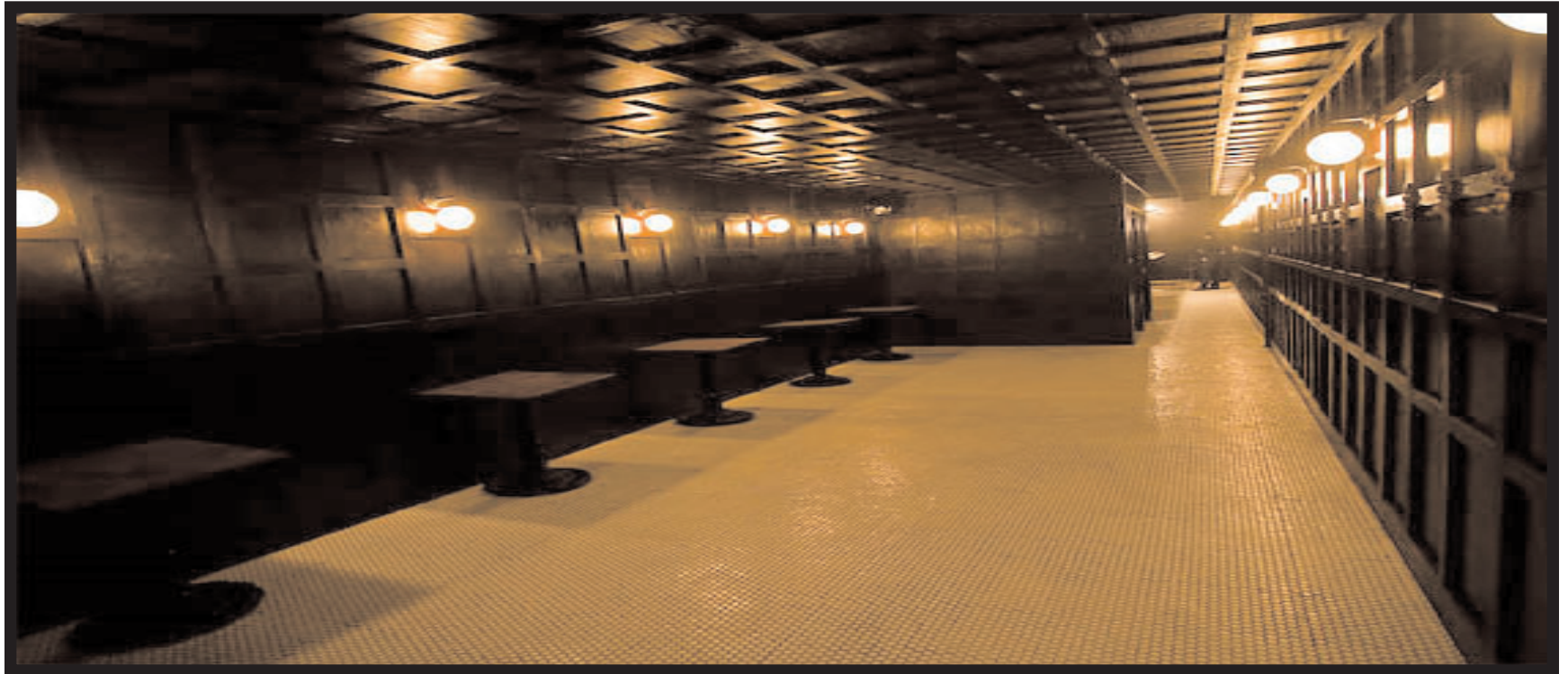
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# BEDSTUY VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE CORPS

***Saving lives today. . . . building  
lives for tomorrow.***

*ARTICLE CARE OF BSVAC Website official statement.*

The Bedford-Stuyvesant Volunteer Ambulance Corps (BSVAC), the nation's first minority-run volunteer ambulance corps, was founded in 1988 by two EMS workers, Captain James "Rocky" Robinson and Specialist Joe Perez. The creation of BSVAC was their

response to the crisis in emergency medical service that afflicts New York's minority communities.

As in other minority communities, many residents of Bed-Stuy do not have health insurance. As a result, they are less likely to visit the doctor's office for routine care or for treatment in the early stages of disease. At the same time, African-American men and women suffer disproportionately from high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease, heart attacks and strokes. These factors lead to a disproportionate number of emergency room visits -- 75% of all emergency medical calls in New York City come from minority neighborhoods.

In continuous operation since 1988, BSVAC is the busiest volunteer ambulance service for its size in the nation, answering over 100 calls per month.

When BSVAC first began operations, the response time in Bed-Stuy for city ambulances averaged about 30 minutes. BSVAC established a record-breaking ambulance service that currently responds to over 100 emergency calls a month with an average response time of less than 4 minutes. BSVAC also established a neighborhood first aid center and has worked to promote preventive health care in the community. BSVAC has lost count of the number of lives it has saved.

In addition to medical services, BSVAC has worked tirelessly to train the Bed-Stuy community. To date, over two thousand local residents have been trained through BSVAC as First Responders who can save lives in emergencies. BSVAC has also developed a remarkable Youth Corps program that provides CPR, first aid and basic emergency medical training to teens and young adults, preparing them for full-time employment in emergency medicine. A program for younger





For its remarkable accomplishments and ongoing efforts, BSVAC has received numerous honors, including: Robin Hood Foundation Hero of the Year Award, New York City Hero Award, American Institute for Public Service Jefferson Award, Points of Light Award (awarded by President George Bush), and Maxwell House Hero Search Award.

BSVAC is now operating a free EMS certification course for the community that recently put 22 new EMTs onto our city's streets.

BSVAC is a New York not-for-profit organization that is exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All donations to BSVAC are tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law.

**ENLIST AND SUPPORT THE the Bedford-Stuyvesant Volunteer Ambulance Corps which is located on: 727 Greene Avenue**

**Brooklyn, NY 11221**

**(718) 453-4617. [www.bsvac.org](http://www.bsvac.org)**

children, called the Trauma Troopers, has also been developed by BSVAC; it provides CPR and first aid training. In addition to medical training, these programs provide positive role models and social activities. To date, hundreds of young people have completed the program; almost 100 of the graduates have become EMTs or have otherwise pursued careers in medicine as nurse, physician's assistant, or doctor. While based in Bed-Stuy, BSVAC has reached out to other minority communities, from Harlem to LA, providing emergency medical training and assistance in setting up programs. Closer to home, BSVAC responded to the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993; it also responded to the Queens air disaster and to the World Trade Center on 9/11, when BSVAC volunteers saved a firefighter's life.



# EMS In the Balance

*Comissioned By: Technician Walter Adler STA 35 FDNY-EMS, EMT Jon Saltzman STA 35 FDNY-EMS, EMT-CC Dave Briscoe, Transcare Brooklyn, Paramedic Aaron Gabriel, Transcare Brooklyn and EMT Chris Jacobs Station 55 .*

EMS in resent years has been in a near constant state of upheaval, controversy, disillusionment, infighting and as a result has come to systemically and internally exhibit an utter break down in moral. We as a service have long struggled to find our place among the more established city agencies such as the NYPD, Sanitation and Fire Suppression. In doing so we oft forget the historic struggles of these respective agencies which have fought continuous battles, and largely emerged victorious for their respect, their security and their wages.

As the Old Guard says to the New Jack; *“Kid, you have to pay your fucking dues.”* Fire Suppression in the past 200 plus years has gone from a gang controlled, politics ridden, wildly undisciplined volunteer force and remade itself into the world’s proudest and most respected life saving fire suppression agency. The NYPD has overcome widespread corruption, vicious racism, and besiegement by its own city to forge the finest, most effective instrument of law enforcement in modern urban history. Sanitation via strike and vicious labor struggle and mafia domination has secured its workers the highest wage of nearly any other city sector and for a city of an official 8.5 million keeps plague and death away.

We remind you all, our sisters and our brothers that we have not yet even begun to fight. In solidarity and respect for our Old Guard which has achieved Uniformed Status for our brothers and sister in the FDNY-EMS, as well as the countless others in the private sector fired for industrial organizing, in specific solidarity with 1199, 2507 and other unions who have fought a decade’s long battle to establish us with a foundation and basic labor rights;



***WE HAVE NEVER SEEN OURSELVES AT A LOWER POINT IN OUR HISTORY SINCE THE DAY OF THE 1995 Merger.***

A critical blow to the development and identity as NYC Municipal EMS was the consolidation of EMS with Fire Suppression. It is not that these were unrelated trades; in fact throughout the country they are often performed by the same dual trained personnel. But union without inclusion is a bitter brew. We are not Fire Fighters and should not be defined by them. Until their MOS act as our brothers and sisters and exhibit the same solidarity as do the NYPF we are to remain a divided house. Things have improved exponentially, but less 1/5 of all citywide personnel participate within this union; we are a service apart and must now act in dignified union. We should never forget that that Municipal EMS in this city accounts for a minority faction of all EMS providers city-wide. Every form and function; commercial, voluntary and community volunteer faces its own struggles and issues along the lines of the battles we now fight. The issues we raise are not just those of the FDNY; they are directed at all EMS personnel and agencies throughout this city. Our aim is not keep to complaining. As we present each of the fol-

lowing ten point on this balance sheet; we call on you, our sisters and brothers of every patch to carry this question to your battalions, stations and garage garrisons: WHAT IS TO BE DONE? The future of this entire service hangs in the balance based upon the both the actions of our members as well as the decisiveness of our leadership.

## **1. If members don't respect themselves they will never be respected by their City.**

**First impressions are a bitch.** First impressions are a bitch. Be it our employers or the thousands of civilians we interact with every day; be it fire fighter; interactions with the NYPD and even with our own families; when our members present like a burnt out rabble that is how we will be treated. There are last stands being made over boots, as some 30% of all fall injuries relate to untied laces. Many MOS leadership choose to not wear them which of course sets an incredible example. There is an utter disregard for

uniform enforcement. There is the issue of sedentary weight gain and high rates of alcoholism off the job. The first impression of EMS is that we look like shit. How can a service be perceived as a capable and disciplined service with un-tucked shirts, untied boots, ill-fitting uniforms and a total failure to maintain physical fitness? And every time a member trash talks this service and belittles our job to other MOS, the public, or your own family you bring down the utter nobility of what this calling exists to do.

**Critical Aspect:** *How can we expect to inspire confidence or expect higher wages if we do not wear our uniforms correctly, maintain an image of professionalism and do not keep in shape as befitting an emergency service? Ask yourself how many times have you visited your doctor's office and been greeted by unshaven scrub in jeans and t-shirt? Would you trust them; would that appearance inspire confidence? There is a reason doctors and nurses look professional, why would we bring ourselves to a lower standard.*

## 2. Lashing out and lashing down keeps us weak and divided.

We work in a very stressful business. Red tape, municipal ass covering, a constant and inexplicable lack of funding, corporate bottom lines, low bid equipment, difficult entitled patients, partner infighting; the list is endless. It's no surprise we direct our frustrations somewhere and it is too easy to lash out and down at each other and especially shameful to undermine the work of the transport crews that do our exact job with three times as much stair chair.

There is an extremely distinct line between hazing new members and the culture of rumor and infighting that persist within EMS. It is quite obvious by our funeral turn out, our support of our medal winners and our so-called "mentoring program" that the low morale which prevails in EMS is a great deal more ingrained via our insistence on internal division. Let's make it plain; just because Fire Fighters run into burning buildings does not make them braver than us; and just because the NYPD holds this ethnic-patchwork-powder keg together doesn't make it finer than us. We have to have pride in our service to earn respect of other agencies.

Let us make another thing plain: just because FDNY EMS runs circles around Fort Totten and has a fire man patch on their arm gives them no right, nor reason to hold themselves above any other EMT or Paramedic private 911, or transport for that matter. There is quite a lot of stair chairing in transport shift. Every single time we trash on new members, shit talk fire men, ramble on about the 'skel-scab private sector'; we miss the fundamental reality that attacking each other we dividing our numbers and debase ourselves.

**Critical Aspect:** *The mentor program should be either abolished or re-vamped and led by seasoned people with a few years on the job paid a differential. EMS needs to stop attacking other services for what they do and be more conscious about our own affairs. EMS in the FDNY needs to build with Private EMS. Transport has to be given its due.*

## 3. If you don't like the job; QUIT.

Don't act like you were oblivious to the daily comings and goings of EMS. If you were that oblivious, you basically took a on career without doing any research what so ever. If we only responded to life threatening emergencies the powers that be would fire literally ¾ of this service and rely on CFR trucks and medic units. If Medicaid didn't create a vast socialist medical bureaucracy everyone would just take cabs or visit clinics (which is largely what most of them should be doing anyway). People need to quit the bitching about our bread and butter. This is not an action adventure movie and you are not in Mother, Jugs and Speed. You are assigned the hard task of watching the city die and doing your best to expedite care as well as enable some death dignity. We are called to do a wide range of activities not in our protocols; counseling the broken and damned, pulling families out smoking, mangled vehicles on days off, showing empathy with an abused child; restraining a crazed domestic situation, taking down a jumper up; and of course picking up the drunks. Just about any other job besides working at McDonalds (maybe) pays better than this and opens more doors. And for all the so-called benefits; nothing quite beats having a savings account you can fill when flush and flooded with private sector cash. And since the job takes a huge toll; divorce, alcoholism and suicide stats far higher than other services; if you didn't come here to serve the city you ought to evaluate why you stay. If all you wanted was a measly just-get-by check, go sling burgers, pour coffee or become a drug dealer.

**Critical Aspect:** *The future of a proud EMS will only be won with struggle, discipline, solidarity and a vast well of untapped constitution to drag ourselves up from the state we are in. We don't just need more EMTs and Paramedics running trucks we need a service with pride and swagger. The economic times are tight, but DC 37 has an education fund, CUNY has myriad programs for city workers and never underestimate how much you can read on a bus if you turn down the radio, cut down the crab-assing and watch less TV at the station. Most of the privates have incentives and perks if you can find them. And of course, it almost goes without saying keep its workers solid middle class with above subsistence wages for paramedics and EMTs in the 911 sector.*

## 4. If you're not from here, you just don't get it.

There is no such thing as a black, white or a Hispanic. There are Bajans, there are Nigerians, and there are Louisiana blacks. There are Jews and Bahamians, Russians, Irish, Italians and the Dutch. There are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and people who are from Spain. And if you went to school in small town in Jersey, Long Island, PA or anywhere else with a bunch of people who looked just like you you're going to miss the nuance here. And probably end up calling a 10-13. This goes way beyond stupid EEO crazy thought police. This has to do with having a vested interest in protecting the people of the city you are from (and regardless of their identity). And if you only came here to be a fire man or have some sick fucking thing about buffing trauma; you probably didn't take this job for the right reasons. Suffice to say there are a lot of people on this job that don't leave their neighborhoods except to go to work and still only hangout with people that look like them. But, if you are from this City you had to get it at some point; this is the City of Tolerance. You don't have to accept people's cultures, you don't have to give up your prejudices to groups that piss you off; you don't have to play like the UN School; you do have to tolerate difference and realize this melting pot was made great by wave after wave of immigrants taking refuge on its shores. Immigrants that have always formed the back bone of the public services we know today. (Shout out to the Irish and Italians).

**Critical Aspect:** *EEO and affirmative action have no place in an emergency service; there are lives at stake after all. Recruiting in shelters has to end effective immediately and the requirement to get on the job needs to probably be higher than a GED and a driver's license. We are supposed to be 'medical professionals' after all. Back in the day this job tested your mettle and was part of who you*



*were as a person. Now, it's just a place to get a paycheck and a backdoor to something 'better. The mentality of 'just fill buses to plug attrition' needs to be dealt with. It takes a special person to do this job, as the saying goes. This job doesn't create skills. Skills, true blue skills hated life before they came here to preserve it. We need a recruitment program that truly attracts those that came here to serve our City and our people because they love the city they grew up in and didn't come here on Safari.*

## 5. We need to play, and win, the hearts and minds game.

No struggle will win be won without the people of this City behind us. We need to get our exploits into papers like the Suppression boys do. We need to engage the community and win back a public passion that we are not the **AMB'alance men**, but a service of rescue, aid and compassion. We need the mere sight of our ambulances to embody hope, not be the late great oxygen cabs of the great unwashed. When we holler at women on the PA, when we are seen passed out asleep in public, when we waddle out of ambulances gobbling food, when we talk on our cells on call, when we smoke cigarettes in uniform in front of kids and when we endlessly complain without taking action: we re-enforce the belief that our services are worth \$13.00 an hour (or less). The wage of a Starbucks Worker, but without stock options. We want more books written about us, more movies made. We need to pursue the spot light like we pursue a great call because the public must understand what we risk to come to their aid.

**Critical Aspect:** *The Service exists to preserve life. The NYPD uphold law, Suppression primarily concerns itself with preventing the wide spread destruction of property. We are the life savers, the fallen angels of the greatest human city ever built. Our stories must be told and we must work tirelessly to court the public into believing in us and caring about this struggle we engaging daily on their behalf.*

## 6. We are not the 'Red-headed step children' of the City Services. We are a vital column of a four prong emergency response.

Without the NYPD this City would tear itself apart with gang warfare and ethnic hatred in less than 48 hours. Without the FDNY Suppression flame would consume whole neighborhoods destroying countless homes and lives. Without Sanitation we'd be overrun with the plague in a matter of days. Without the DOE our public schools would crumble and we'd produce a self perpetuating epidemic of inner city crime and unemployment, oh wait. But looking at the first three examples we see our place. We can't compare ourselves to other services, we do very different things, but we all brave these streets together to keep this machine running. No law enforcement, no fire suppression, no garbage disposal, no schools; no City. And we are the column which ensures that the countless tragedies that can befall a community of this size 8.4 registered/ 11 million including tourists, commuter workers and illegals. Be it pediatric asthma, swine flu, cardiac arrest, violent crime, terrorists, nuclear winter or even abdominal pain on a mass level we are ready to hold the line. If you are sick, dying, drunk or near death; just plain stupid or a poor, unfortunate soul; help is coming. And while PD and the Engine CFRs will always arrive first because of the nature of our response system, it is the training of our , EMTs and Paramedics that insure the proper critical care of the sick, dying and injured that assures their survival.

**Critical Aspect:** *We should not be compared to the women and men in Law Enforcement and Fire Suppression, nor sanitation; because we are performing a distinct and vital role in this municipal infrastructure unique in its scope. While each of these three aforementioned services guarantee a living wage, wide and inclusive benefits, as well as non-pay in pension 20 and out; we are correct in stating that we pull our share yet reap no comparable reward. Not only do our members serve 25 years at a comparably lower wage, there in an incalculable emotional and physical toll when immersed in the lives of those befallen by constant death and tragedy. Few EMT or Paramedic owns a home within the five boroughs, and our rates of divorce, alcoholism and suicide are greater by any fair comparison. We are not the Bravest, but we are brave too without fighting flame. We are not the Finest, but the fine tuned manner by which we gaze into the human soul makes the suffering of our patients' a toll taken upon us too. And while day after day we do not haul the refuse off the streets and clear the roads of waste, we carry a human load emotionally as well as physically and not a person in need is ever*

*left behind by our force. We struggle out here too, and we must demand and fight for the rights and wages of the other three columns that hold up this city for our sacrifice is not matched in compensation as our other brothers and sisters that toil in the cities vital services.*

## 7. Constant abuse of the 911 system strains resources and moral.

The old adage goes that if not for the wild abuse of the 911 system we would need a lot less crews on the street, volume would



drop and they would half our work force. This is a strange misconception. The reason CFRs can get on scene so quickly is not just limited to their advance notification within the system. The other reason is that there is an engine company virtually every ten blocks. Were all units only responding to priorities 1 through 4; all nonsense weeded out via a system of co-pays and abuse summons as well as tighter dispatching our units could focus on emergencies and do the job we've been trained for. This is not only a question of resources it is a vital question of morale.

**Critical Aspect:** *First, people need to stop calling for hospital appointments, stable medical transports, headaches, stomach cramps and spot checks for blood pressure, just to be sure. People with Medicare ought to be utilizing clinics and preventive health-care, not falling back on 911 because they are lazy and spoiled. And we'll come out and say it; welfare as it is designed breeds laziness and retards any meaningful hope for social or economic development. And it is widely abused.*

*Second, if a co-pay for a stable 911 call was only slightly higher than a cab ride and could be charged to EBT; then stable patients would call cabs to hospitals.*

*Third, if any time a frequent flyer or habitual caller was issued a summons, an EBT dock or any other penalizing measure then everyone would call less. 311 is designed for a wide range of city resources; referring patients to a transport ambulance company could be one of them. Fourth, we are an emergency service, if a person has called a 911 ambulance off its 89 they ought to be going to the closest receiving hospital without any questions or complaints, unless emergency specialty referral to say a stroke or trauma center is warranted. We should eliminate choice and cab drivery by taking only to the most proximal location. In this scenario units citywide would not ever do more than three calls a day, but all three would be serious medical or traumatic calls priorities 1-4 with enough resources for adequate dual response, unit back up and a roll back of CFR response in scale with their lesser degree of training and enthusiasm.*

## **8. Fire Fighter promotionals and general attrition keeps the work force inexperienced and eager to leave the field.**

Unlike virtually every urban EMS system in the world a paramedic or EMT promotes to Fire Suppression not vice versa. This is unusual because the level of expertise in dealing with live saving intervention is obviously less, yet not only is pay and respect an obvious draw, the work load is certainly far less and the days committed are only two a week. As EMS is now the back door to fire cutting the massive open competitive list it is now established as a constant drain of our most physically fit and daring members. As it stands every two to three years we stand

to lose approximately 100 women and men to fire suppression, both EMTs and Paramedics who will be no longer applying the bulk of their training to the service of the city. Fire fighting and EMS are performed by single agencies throughout the world, but obviously paramedic training is the highest degree of skill in the preservation of human life and EMT is certainly more skilled than an un-willing CFR. General attrition of the ranks happens because of a host of systemic and internal problems within the force, but none as direct as the loss of 100 plus of our most physically able members any time a Fire Academy class is assembled.

***Critical Aspect:** One should not have to promote to Fire Suppression just to have a normal life and a living wage. We ought to equalize EMT base pay with FF-CFR five year pay. Any FF willing to undergo EMT training and man ambulances should be able to obtain equal pay with a fifth year EMT. Paramedic base pay ought to be equal to a member of a rescue company. EMS Lieutenants ought to be manning units and have equal pay to FF lieutenants. We need to plug the drain by making CFR FF the base FDNY position, this way core BLS and ALS personnel will be best that promote or come in specifically to do emergency medical work and do not leave as soon as they are able pursuing higher wages and better work conditions. Fire fighting and the emergency medical service are not necessary mutually exclusive lines of work, but specialization is needed and we need to stop the drain of young, fit and eager personnel.*

## **9. Meritocracy and Financial Incentive are integral to a healthy business.**

Let us speak plainly. Law enforcement, fire suppression and sanitation are necessary to the survival of the urban metropol-





lis, but they are not profitable; they are incorporated in municipal taxes as an integral part of city infrastructure. EMS however is hugely profitable. A single transport might run an insurance company as much as \$475.00 before even administering oxygen, applying c-spine stabilization or any ALS interventions. The bill can get quite high. And while the FDNY might come a close second to money brought in NYPD Traffic summons; we are making the city more money than they spend paying or outfitting us.

Yet, we have buses with two man stretchers that are a throwback to the early 90's. Half of our stations are in Fire Suppression throw always or dirty squalor from the H&H days. Our uniforms, our equipment and everything else are lowest bid. Yet anytime we transport we earn the city at least three times our daily salary and some of our units are running 8-12 jobs a day. Our wage certainly does not reflect this. While we did not come here for money, if you do not pay us we will leave for the privates where Voluntary Hospitals and Transport fully realize what a unit generates in capital daily. Or join the field of nursing to outright triple our wage. Or promote to Fire suppression, or ultimately degenerate into the burn out or the skell and no longer care who we serve or why we ended up here. But this is avoidable and unnecessary.

**Critical Aspect:** *Even Fire Suppression Chiefs have to take and pass a promotional exam. Above wage or service self respect and citywide recognition; the FDNY Engine and Ladder companies know that their service rewards the bravest, toughest, and hardest among them and that everything is a bottom to top climb toward meritocracy. The EMS meritocracy drops off right after Lieutenant. And the kinds of people making it up rank are hardly our innovators and our proven leaders. Promotional exams must*

*be re-issued on every level of command. This is not the age of the Irish-Italian-Jew triumvirate; yet he command does not reflect that. We are a West Indian Service, a Dominicano Service, a Boriquen Service, and everything else this world encompasses composes our ranks. And the best should rise; not the cronies and the number crunchers. But just as meritocracy must return so must financial incentive. We must award life saving interventions regularly made with a differential, not just pre-hospital cardiac saves but trauma expedited, tight asthmatics, child deliveries and all meritorious acts. Not with a letter and bar, but with a differential. These saves paid bills of the Department.*

*Differentials ought to be awarded for regular accurate billing information, percentage of time at 89, and prompt log on. Our society is a capitalist society; it rewards things that are meritorious and also profitable. But the FDNY asks us to slave for \$13 an hour and love them for wearing the Fire man's patch. most private transport companies pays most their employees little more than \$10 an hour, yet reaps massive annual profits. If given a cut for hard work we will thrive. If you treat the skell and the buff with equal reward nothing shall improve, observe the lesson of the former Soviet Union. Why should we work hard when we will be paid the same as someone who aims to do nothing? The answer is we won't; that's simply irrational.*

## **10. If you work a person to death they will inevitably break.**

How many fallen soldiers do we have cut down not in conducting saves, but off the job more ignobly, without fanfare when one day the stress took its cumulative toll. Suicide, COPD, coronary problems, domestic fighting, and in the end, total burn out come as the reaper takes his toll upon the life savers. Wracked by shamelessly low wages and meager savings; worked **25 plus ignoble years**, in the end the forefathers and birthmothers of our proud calling are reduced to naught; haunted by the years in the trenches, the lives they couldn't save and human tragedies to which whisper to them in their sleep like ghosts. These once eager life savers are rewarded with a pension not nearly what is needed to retire in any measure of security and comfort. And this shall be our lot too if vast changes are not made to the very structure of our trade both internal and systemic.

**Critical Aspect:** *The streets will take a toll on you my brothers and my sisters. We will not save them all and at some point a weight will come to bear upon you which you will not be able to bear alone. We do not fight fire, we do not fight crime; it is death*

*itself we battle with all our training, abilities and iron will. Sick Leave surprisingly is not unlimited although daily we are surrounded by the dying and the infirm. Sick Leave, LODI, and AFLAC systemically therefore become the poor man's vacation, a thing vastly abused. Those of us irreparably injured, will be shortly taken off payroll and their AFLAC will dry up. And their health benefits will cease. Police and Fire have unlimited sick leave and they use it under a tighter, more liberally regulated system in which their respective BHS is the sole arbiter of time out sick. To us it is a silly trick, a game if you will for unscheduled leave. Rather than Advanced Leave be so meager we ought grant more of it. We ought to embrace a schedule of 8, 12, 16 or 24 hour overnights to accommodate a wide range of human need. Supplemental AL or COMP ought to be used as a reward for quick log-ons, meritorious acts, saves and punctual arrival. Seniority will be the gold standard still, but every woman and man of our trade ought to equate good work with more rest time, time to heal one's mind of the horrors we encounter. Structurally we must adjust our service to the life the single parent, the student, the family man, the baby's mother, the MOS caring for a sick parent, as well as the Buff and the Skell. Everyone should be aware that a savings account with MCU is always preferable to the AFLAC racket, and overtime taken half as COMP will gain you the time you need to be with those you love at the same rate as time and half cash upfront. If you let them,*

*our bosses will break us, not out of cruelty but out of indifference. We say to all those number crunching company men, the good of the service should never be a "fuck you" to the working woman and man.*

**Oh, my brothers and my sisters, the time to act is now. Stand behind your Unions, and do not let the streets break your will, nor the Department or these 'Company Men'. THE BANSHEE HOWLS FOR YOU!**



*Photo from website of STEVE SPAC*

# Fable of the Rod and Star

prepared by Banshee staff

So a little back story on the Star of Life, the symbol of our service. The image inside the six sided star is the rod and snake, also known as the 'rod of Asclepius', not to be confused with a similar symbol the 'caduceus' as long misunderstood and strangely placed icon with its roots in combat medicine.

The rod of Asclepius is an ancient symbol associated with astrology, the Greek god Asclepius and with healing. It consists of a serpent entwined around a staff. The name of the symbol derives from its early and widespread association with Asclepius, the son of Apollo, who was a practitioner of medicine in ancient Greek mythology. His attributes, the snake and the staff, sometimes depicted separately in antiquity, are combined in this symbol. The Rod of Asclepius also represents the constellation Ophiuchus (or Ophiuchus Serpentarius), the thirteenth sign of the sidereal zodiac.

The caduceus is typically depicted as a short herald's staff entwined by two serpents in the form of a double helix, and is sometimes surmounted by wings. This staff was first borne by Iris, the messenger of Hera. It was also called the wand of Hermes when he superseded Iris in much later myths.

In later Antiquity the caduceus might have provided the basis for the astrological symbol representing the planet Mercury and in Roman iconography was often depicted being carried in the left hand of the Greek god Hermes (Roman god, Mercury), the messenger of the gods, guide of the dead and protector of merchants, shepherds, gamblers, liars and thieves. Which is telling as it is the symbol of the modern healthcare industry. The caduceus is erroneously used as a symbol for medicine, especially in North America, due to confusion with the traditional medical symbol, the rod of Asclepius, which has only a single snake and no wings.

As early as 1910, Dr. William Hayes Ward discovered that symbols similar to the classical caduceus sometimes appeared on Mesopotamian cylinder seals. He suggested the symbol originated some time between 3000 and 4000 BCE, and that it might have been the source of the Greek caduceus. A.L. Frothingham incorporated Dr. Ward's research into his own work, published in 1916, in which he suggested that the prototype of Hermes was an "Oriental deity of Babylonian extraction" represented in his earliest form as a snake god. From this perspective, the caduceus was originally representative of Hermes himself, in his early form as the god Ningishzida, "messenger" of the "Earth Mother". However, more recent classical scholarship makes no mention of Babylonian origin for Hermes or the caduceus.

One Greek myth of origin of the caduceus is part of the story of Tiresias, who found two snakes copulating and killed the female with his staff. Tiresias was immediately turned into a woman, and so remained until he was able to repeat the act with the male snake seven years later. This staff later came in to the possession of the god Hermes, along with its transformative powers. Another myth relates how Hermes played a lyre fashioned from a tortoise shell for Apollo, and in return was appointed ambassador of the gods with the caduceus as a symbol of his office. Another tale suggests that Hermes (or Mercury) saw two serpents entwined in mortal combat. Separating them with his wand he brought about peace between them, and as a result the wand with two serpents came to be seen as a sign of peace.

In some vase paintings ancient depictions of the Greek kerukeion are somewhat different from the commonly seen modern representation. These representations feature the two snakes atop the staff (or rod), crossed to create a circle with heads of the snakes resembling horns. This old graphic form, with

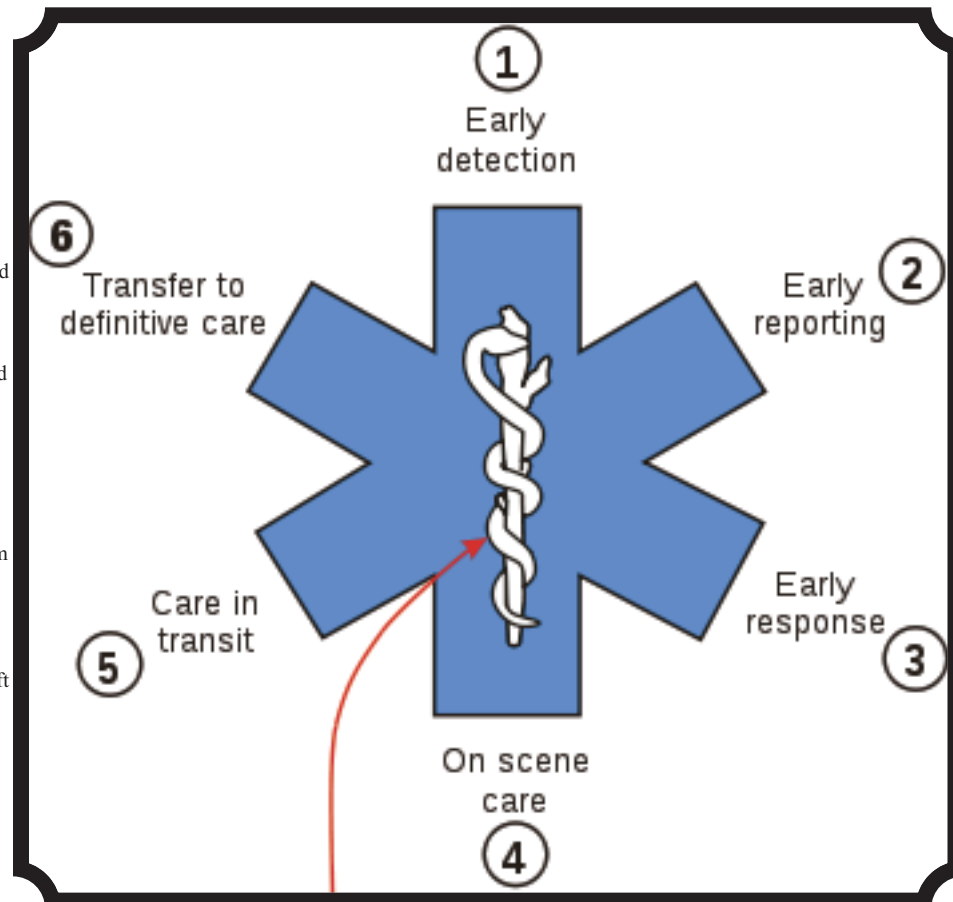
an additional crossbar to the staff, seems to have provided the basis for the graphical sign of Mercury widely used in works on astronomy, astrology and alchemy. Another simplified variant of the caduceus is to be found in dictionaries, indicating a "commercial term" entirely in keeping with the association of Hermes with commerce. In this form the staff is often depicted with two winglets attached and the snakes are omitted (or reduced to a small ring in the middle).

## Confusion with the rod of Asclepius

The caduceus is sometimes used as a symbol for medicine or physicians (instead of the rod of Asclepius) even though the symbol has no connection with Hippocrates and any association with healing arts is something of a stretch; its singularly inappropriate connotations of theft, commerce, deception and death have provided fodder for EMS humor.

The printer's symbol of Johann Froben

"As god of the high-road and the market-place Hermes was perhaps above all else the patron of commerce and the fat purse: as a corollary, he was the special protector of the traveling salesman. As spokesman for the gods, he not only brought peace on earth (occasionally even the peace of death), but his



silver-tongued eloquence could always make the worse appear the better cause. From this latter point of view, would not his symbol be suitable for certain Congressmen, all medical quacks, book agents and purveyors of vacuum cleaners, rather than for the straight-thinking, straight-speaking therapist? As conductor of the dead to their subterranean abode, his emblem would seem more appropriate on a hearse than on a physician's car.

— Stuart Tyson, Scientific Monthly

However, attempts have been made to argue that the caduceus is appropriate as a symbol of medicine or of medical practitioners. Apologists have suggested that the sign is appropriate for military medical personnel because of the connotations of neutrality. Some have pointed to the putative origins of the caduceus in Babylonian mythology (as described above), particularly the suggested association with Ishtar as "an awakener of life and vegetation in the spring" as justification for its association with healing, medicine, fertility and potency.

A 1992 survey of American health organizations found that 62% of professional associations used the rod of Asclepius, whereas in commercial organizations, 76% used the caduceus.

The first known use of the caduceus in a medical context was in the printer's vignette used by the Swiss medical printer Johann Frobenius (1460-1527), who used the staff entwined with serpents, not winged but surmounted by a dove, with the biblical epigraph "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves" The caduceus was also apparently used as a symbol by Sir William Butts, physician to Henry VIII. A silver caduceus presented to Caius College, Cambridge by John Caius and carried before him on the cushion he supplied in official visits to the college remains in the College's possession.

But widespread confusion regarding the supposed medical significance of the caduceus appears to have arisen as a result of events in the United States in the 19th century. It had appeared on the chevrons of Army hospital stewards as early as 1856. In 1902 it was added to the uniforms of Army medical officers. This was brought about by one Captain Reynolds, who after having the idea rejected several times by the Surgeon General, persuaded the new incumbent-Brig. Gen.

# LEARN EMS RUSSIAN!

*Translated by Maria Parsheva, Legal Specialist and Russian Language Expert*

Comrade, take your hands off your wife's neck and place the bottle of vodka on the ground.  
**Tova-rish', HE-Vatit doo-shit' jenu, ee Ot-broste Bu-tilku vodka.**

are not the government police we are ambulance men!  
**Mi neh polizia, mi skoraya poh-mosh!**

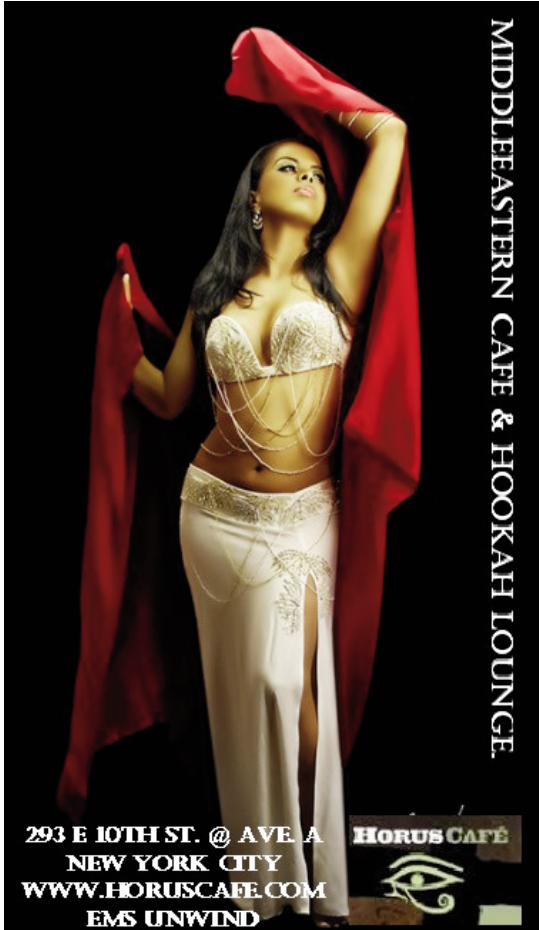
Tell me where is your pain? **Gde bolit?** Do you have any allergies? **Oo vas yest alergiya?**

Have no fear, my partner is a strong man like Comrade Putin.  
**Ne boy-tess, moi tovarish takoi je seal-neyy kak tovarish Putin.**

It is what it is. **Tak-ee beat.** Or **Shtoy Yes Tau-Yest**

The only free cheese is in a mouse trap.  
**Bess-platnee siir, tolka veh mish-elovkeh.**

Next issue: EMS Patoi.



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		A/E	A/F	B/F	B/E FULL MOON	B/E
6	7 Labor Day	8	9	10	11	12
Juvert C/E	West Indian Parade C/F	C/F	A/E	A/E	8th Anniversary of 911 (Hero's Day) B/F	B/F
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
C/F					Rosh Hashana (Hebrew New Year)	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan)					
27	28	29	30			
Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)			END of 12 Hour Piolet Program			

## Fable of the Rod and Star cont...

William H. Forwood — to adopt it. The inconsistency was noticed several years later by the librarian to the Surgeon General, but the symbol was not changed. In 1901 the French periodical of military medicine was named La Caducée. The caduceus was formally adopted by the Medical Department of the United States Army in 1902. After World War I the caduceus was employed as an emblem by both the Army Medical Department and the Navy Hospital Corps. Even the American Medical Association used the symbol for a time, but in 1912, after considerable discussion, the caduceus was abandoned by the AMA and the rod of Asclepius was adopted instead. There was further confusion caused by the use of the caduceus as a printer's mark (as Hermes was the god of eloquence and messengers), which appeared in many medical textbooks as a printing mark, although subsequently mistaken for a medical symbol.

### Symbolism

The serpent and the staff appear to have been separate symbols that were combined at some point in the development of the Asclepian cult. The significance of the serpent has been interpreted in many ways; sometimes the shedding of skin and renewal is emphasized as symbolizing rejuvenation [4], while other assessments center on the serpent as a symbol that unites and expresses the dual nature of the work of the physician, who deals with life and death, sickness and health.[5] The ambiguity of the serpent as a symbol, and the contradictions it is thought to represent, reflect the ambiguity of the use of drugs[6], which can help or harm, as reflected in the meaning of the term pharmakon, which meant "drug", "medicine" and "poison" in ancient Greek[7]; we know that today antidotes and vaccines are often compounded from precisely the thing that caused the poisoning or illness. Products deriving from the bodies of snakes were known to have medicinal properties in ancient times, and in ancient Greece, at least some were aware that snake venom that might be fatal if it entered the bloodstream could often be imbibed. Snake venom appears to have been 'prescribed' in some cases as a form of therapy.

The staff has also been variously interpreted. One view is that it, like the serpent, "conveyed notions of resurrection and healing", while another (not necessarily incompatible) is that the staff was a walking stick associated with itinerant physicians. Cornutus, a philosopher probably active in the first century CE, in the *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* (Ch. 33) offers a view of the significance of both snake and staff that is worth quoting at length:

Asclepius derived his name from healing soothingly and from deferring the withering that comes with death. For this reason, therefore, they give him a serpent as an attribute, indicating that those who avail themselves of medical science undergo a process similar to the serpent in that they, as it were, grow young again after illnesses and slough off old age; also because the serpent is a sign of attention, much of which is required in medical treatments. The staff also seems to be a symbol of some similar thing. For by means of this it is set before our minds that unless we are supported by such inventions as these, in so far as falling continually into sickness is concerned, stumbling along we would fall even sooner than necessary.

In any case the two symbols certainly merged in antiquity as representations of the snake coiled about the staff are common. It has been claimed that the snake wrapped around the staff was a species of rat snake, *Elaphe longissima*.

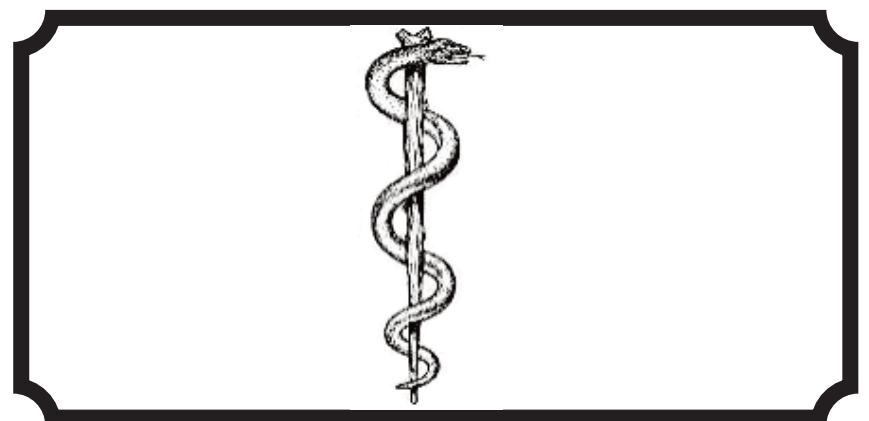
The two symbols were also associated with astrology. Asclepius was so skilled in the medical arts that he was reputed to have brought patients back from the dead. For this, he was punished and placed in the heavens as the constellation Ophiuchus (meaning "serpent-bearer"). This constellation lies between Sagittarius and Libra. In early Christianity, the constellation Ophiuchus was associated with Saint Paul holding the Maltese Viper.

### Biblical

A similar symbol, Nehushtan, is mentioned in the Bible in the Book of Numbers (Numbers 21:6). Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

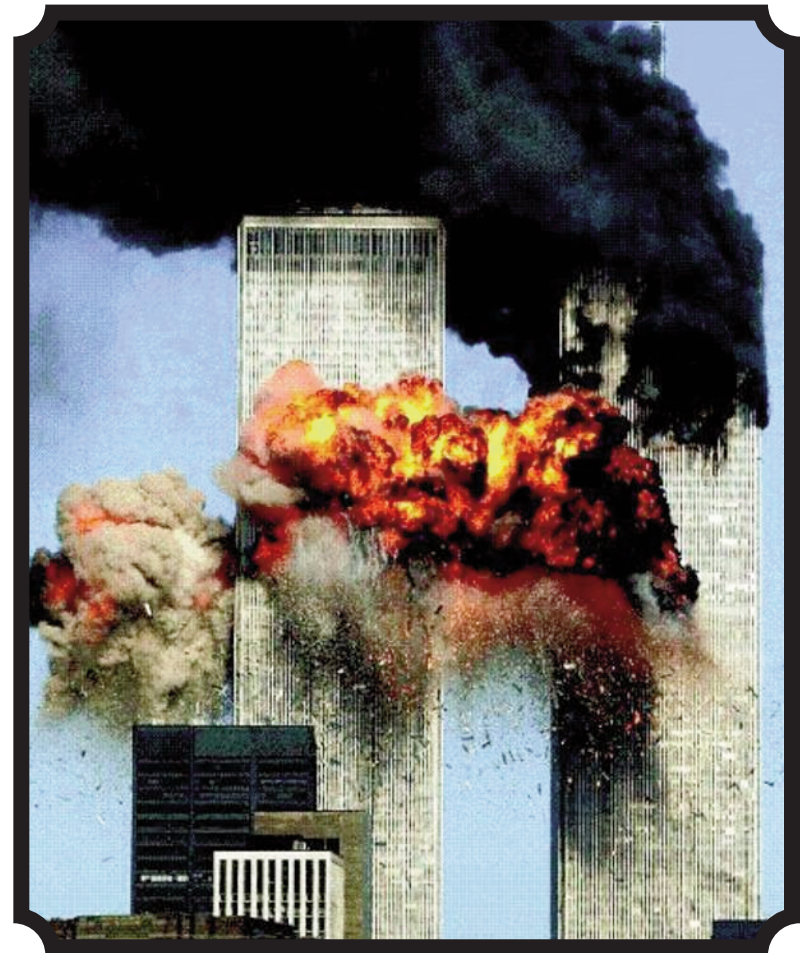
### "Worm" Theory

It has been suggested that the symbol once represented a worm wrapped around a rod; parasitic worms such as the "guinea worm" (*Dracunculus medinensis*) were common in ancient times, and were extracted from beneath the skin by winding them slowly around a stick. According to this theory, physicians might have advertised this common service by posting a sign depicting a worm on a rod. However plausible, no concrete evidence in support of this theory has been adduced.



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<b>EMT Andre Fletcher</b>	FDNY FF
<b>EMT Rodney Gillis</b>	NYPD ESU
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*The 43 EMS Martyrs of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks. Our hearts grieve for our fallen brothers and sisters and ask everyone who reads this to honor them by contacting their families to give support for our fallen angels, each one a hero from our ranks.*



*On this 8th anniversary of the Terror Attacks of September 11, 2001 we here at the EMS Banshee pay tribute to all EMS providers lost on that tragic day and in years that followed as a result of their commitment to help others. We also acknowledge and honor every precious human life lost on that day and in all the days since. Keep in your hearts and minds that WE WILL NEVER FORGET, we pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living. Please show your solidarity and support and honor all of our lost brothers and sisters by posting this small tribute somewhere in your ambulance or station for the month of September.*