

Chief Peter Hayden '64 Acceptance Speech – Stanner Hall of Fame 3/23/19

Some of you may be wondering if i knew jack gremse. The answer is no. I did not... But then again, i knew jack gremse very well. He was like so many of the firefighters that i had the privilege of working with. Men who leave their families every day to go to work and when they walk through those firehouse doors, they are willing to give 100%. they are willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done, including putting their lives at risk. I have seen courage, acts of bravery, many times over the years. But here's the thing. At the end of the tour, the firefighters all expect to go home to their families.

9/11 was a little different. on 9/11 there was a different kind of courage. i had the privilege of working that day. As i responded to the WTC, i could see the damage done to the upper floors of the building by the plane's impact. I had a deep sense that, not only were a lot of people going to die that day, but there were going to be firefighters die that day. This was going to be a dark day for the FDNY. as i entered the lobby, the firefighters were coming in. There were numerous distress calls. As i gave out assignments to the firefighters, I could see it their eyes. They too sensed that they might not make it home that day. A few weeks after the collapse, Mayor Giuliani spoke at one of the many funerals that were occurring throughout the city. At one of the funeral services, he stated that just about every funeral he attended was a Catholic Mass. When i heard that, i caused me to think about that statement. He was right. The Department is predominatly Catholic. Many of the men come from catholic high schools around the city. Some from Molloy. Men like Michael Cawley, Pat Waters, Richie Allen, Tom De Angelis and others. Men like Jack Gremse.

I began to wonder . What lead me to become a firefighter. Upon graduating from Marist, I had a number of opportunities open to me. I had been accepted to law school. I had oportunites to work on Wall street. I could have been an electrician ,like my father. All of these career choices would have provided me with with financial rewards greater than being a firefighter. But the FDNY provides you with different kinds of rewards. Not the kind you place in a bank, but the kind you place in your heart and in your mind. A lifetime of memories. A career full of excitement and laughter, lifelong friendships and at time moments of grief and sorrow. But i can tell you this. There is no greater satisfaction than helping someone in need. There is no greater thrill than helping someone whose life is in danger. It is why firefighters save they love their job.

So, I found the answer to my question right here at Molloy. During my four years here, Molloy was building a foundation for me. Not a foundation beneath me, but a foundation within me. Molloy gave me a great education. They taught me how to learn and understand the material they were giving me. They taught me how to think logically, how to think critically. they taught me how to prepare for exams. Something that certainly benefited my career. They taught me discipline, in a variety of ways. But most importantly, the gave me a Catholic education. One that stressed the importance of generosity and service to others.

Molloy influenced my decision to become a firefighter. Molloy prepared me for my career as a firefighter. They prepared me...not for school, but for life. "Non Scholae sed Vitae"

My Thanks and congratulations to the Marist Brothers, the lay faculty and staff for all they have done for the Molloy students and for all they continue to do on a daily basis