

# Buttons, Knobs, and Levers

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## Los Angeles County Fire Department

### Pumping Apparatus Training Manual

#### Buttons, Knobs and Levers

The little girl giggled as Stoker took her by the hand and led her around the engine to the pump panel. Roy DeSoto followed languidly behind them with a gentle grin, watching with a father's pride. Leaning an elbow on the front of the squad, Roy watched his daughter's wide-eyed curiosity light up her face at the fire engine's shiny intake valve.

Jennifer peered at it, scrunching up her nose and watching her reflection. "What is *this* for?" she asked, giggling at herself and the funny faces she was making.

"Well, that's where we hook up the hose to the hydrant to put water inside the engine," Stoker proudly patted Big Red in explanation.

The funny faces morphed into a pout and shoulders sagged a mite at Stoker's mundane and ho-hum answer. Curiosity somewhat deflated, she nevertheless raised her head, the bright glint muted in her eyes as they roamed the panel's confusing collection of levers, knobs and switches hoping to find something that would elicit a response with greater flamboyance and hutzpah. "What does that one do?" she pointed then reeled her hand in as if worried she'd touch the engine and it'd feel all ooky.

"This here?" Stoker tapped a gauge.

Jennifer vigorously nodded making her pony-tail flop up and down with her gyrations.

"This just tells me the pressure of the water being pumped out of the engine. It doesn't actually make anything happen."

"Oh." Jennifer's face scrunched up in disappointment at that wholly pedestrian and unimpressive explanation and she looked around some more, suddenly realizing that this fire engine business was starting to sound like boring boy stuff. "What does that one do?" she pointed, elbow down, finger and voice drooped with bare interest.

Mike noted Jennifer's waning enthusiasm and glanced out of the corner of his eye at Roy, who spiked an eyebrow in shared observation. "Well," Mike kneeled next to the 3-year old and leaned in, a glint in his eye, "that one causes rainbows to appear."

Jennifer breathed in, eyes bright again and round with delight. She peered at the pump panel. Now *that* wasn't boring boy stuff at all! "What does *that* one do?"

Roy shook his head and rubbed his brow. He crossed his arms in silent watchful vigil over the mischievous road his colleague was suddenly taking and where, more importantly, it was eventually going to lead *him*.

“This makes marshmallows,” Mike answered, pointing to the vacuum switch.

Jennifer’s mouth rounded in surprise. “What does *that* one do?” she continued, her voice rising in earnest, eyes big with hope and wonder, eager to hear what grand and fun stuff Uncle Mike was going to come up with, next.

“This one shoots glitter out into the sky.”

Jennifer inhaled deeply at that amazing idea.

“Fantastic,” Roy scolded.

“Can you make it shoot glitter now?” Jennifer was nearly beside herself with excitement.

“Yeah, Stoker, when are you going to glitter up my engine?” Cap asked, stealthily appearing on the driver’s side of the squad, leaning on the hood, and shooting Mike an expectant look.

Roy threw his captain a disdainful look. “Don’t you start.”

Raised eyebrows, a finger pointed inward, and a questioning look of pure innocence was returned to the rescue paramedic.

Roy’s eyes narrowed. “Uh huh. You know, sometimes you two are worse than Johnny and Chet,” he scolded.

Captain Stanley chuckled.

“Sorry, Jennifer,” Mike flicked an answering glance in his captain’s direction before turning to his young charge. “The engine has to be turned on and the captain, here, won’t let me do that.”

“Awwww, how come?”

“Because he hasn’t finished his chores, yet,” Captain Stanley answered for his wayward engineer, eyebrows spiking in amusement.

“It’s too bad we don’t have a foam truck,” Mike said thoughtfully, rubbing his chin.

“Whats-a foam truck?” came Jennifer’s squeaky voice as she craned her head all the way back to take in the full height of the engineer.

“A foam truck makes cotton candy to feed the unicorns.”

Jennifer squealed with that notion then ran to her father and nearly leaped into his arms.

“Daddy! We need to get a foam truck so we can feed the unicorns!”

Roy groaned at the shrieking battering ram his daughter had suddenly become and he shifted her weight as he held her in his arms, stealing a long-suffering glare at Stoker. “Well, we don’t have any unicorns to feed, honey.”

“Can we get one?”

“You have to catch one, first. And they’re awfully hard to catch.”

“How hard, Daddy?”

“Ever try to catch a rainbow?”

Jennifer shook her head and pouted.

“Well, try catching one and you’ll know how hard it is to catch a unicorn. C’mon, let’s go home. Mommy’s waiting for us.”

Roy loosened his hold and he helped Jennifer slide down. Gripping her hand in his, Roy led Jennifer out through the back of the bay and turned back to the lean engineer. “Thanks a lot, Mike,” he said drily.

“Yeah. No problem, Roy,” Mike replied in a business-like tone, grabbing a rag from a compartment.

“Enjoy the rest of your vacation, Roy,” Cap waved.

“Yeah. No thanks to Stoker.” Roy threw Mike a wry grin and soon father and daughter were in the car and headed for home.

“Cotton candy to feed the unicorns,” Captain Stanley snorted, shook his head with a soft smile and retreated back to his office.

Hiding his smirk, Mike returned his attention back to polishing his beloved Big Red.