Two More Chains

Summer 2013 ▲ Vol. 3 Issue 2 ▲ Produced and distributed quarterly by the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center Established 2002

I bet you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing when you heard about the tragedy at Yarnell Hill. I sure do, and I will never forget it.

We are dedicating our Summer Issue of *Two More Chains* to our 19 fallen Granite Mountain Hotshot Crew brothers who lost their lives on June 30, 2013, on the Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona.

This tragic loss has shaken the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (LLC) team to our knees. We are struggling—just like you—with what we can do to assist the families and our fellow firefighters during such a difficult time.

Three LLC team members were able to attend the July 9th memorial service in Prescott Valley to show our support and pay our respects.

May our fallen brothers rest in eternal peace.

Brit Rosso
Lessons Learned Center Manager

The 2013 Granite Mountain Hotshots

"Our deepest sympathies to the families, friends, and coworkers of the Granite Mountain IHC. We are the safety net of the wildland community and we will continue to be there during these dark hours."

The Wildland Firefighter Foundation
www.wffoundation.org
Phone: 208-336-2996

How You Can Help

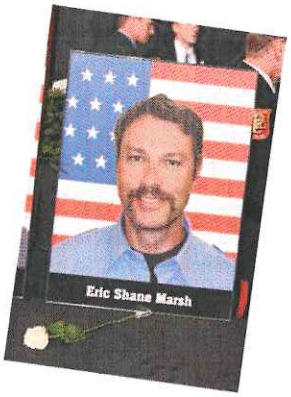
The Wildland Firefighter Foundation's main focus is to help families of firefighters killed in the line of duty and to assist injured firefighters and their families. The link below provides info on how you can help this effort.

bitly.com/wffdonate

Granite Mountain Hot Shots

"Esse Quam Videri"

Darrell Willis, Division Chief of the Prescott Fire Department, informs us that the following is a letter written earlier this year by Eric Marsh, Superintendent of the Granite Mountain Hotshots, who perished with 18 of his fellow crewmembers on the Yarnell Hill Fire. "Eric," says Division Chief Willis, "wanted to let others know about who GMIHC is."



Memorial service photo by Wade Ward.

Who are the Granite Mountain Hotshots? This is a simple question with a complex answer. We are many things to many different people.

To our peers, the 111 other Interagency Hotshot Crews in the nation, we are an oddity. In a workforce dominated by Forest Service and other federal crews, we have managed to do the impossible; establish a fully certified IHC program hosted by a municipal fire department. As remarkable and hard-won as this achievement is, we are odd for other reasons, too. We look different. Not because our buggies are white instead of green, but because we smile a lot. We act different. We are positive people. We take a lot of pride in being friendly and working together, not just amongst ourselves, but with other crews, citizens, etc. We are problem solvers. We like to show up to a chaotic and challenging event, and immediately break it down into manageable objectives and present a solution. Quite often, we solve problems for people that they don't even know they have. These things are possible because our folks are smart, motivated, and highly trained professionals that don't see any task as "beneath" them.

To our city coworkers, we are a bit of a mystery. Guys that work in the woods a lot. We are nice, professional, and can assist many different departments with all manner of tasks. We show up when it snows, when something needs to be moved or set up, when it floods, when there are fireworks, when something needs a chainsaw. Most folks might not know we've been around for almost 12 years. Our first six years were spent in a building that had no heat or bathrooms, but lots of squirrels and mice. We didn't complain too much, we just accepted it as necessary in order to fulfill our crazy dream of someday being a hotshot crew. We do a lot of fuels management, both on private property and city owned open space. We use chainsaws to cut the vegetation and then physically drag it to a chipper. It's loud and dusty. This is a daily occurrence unless we are fighting fire or bad weather. We lead the nation with our fuels management program, having accomplished more than anyone else.

To our families and friends, we're crazy. Why do we want to be away from home so much, work such long hours, risk our lives, and sleep on the ground 100 nights a year? Simply, it's the most fulfilling thing any of us have ever done. It is difficult to explain the attraction of such a demanding job. We can show our wives and girlfriends pictures or videos, recount events and tell stories, but we all invariably receive the same blank stare and the obligatory "that's nice sweetheart" response. It's not because they don't care. Our families are the most wonderful, supportive people in the world. It's just difficult for anyone to grasp the magnitude of suffering and joy that we experience during a given fire season, unless you have been there yourself.

To each other, we are chameleons. On the job, we are workers and supervisors, from no experience to 19 years of 'hotshotting' all over the country. Some of us are highly skilled with chainsaws; some have the stamina to swing a hand tool all day. Many of us have lots of experience with helicopters. When on a fire, we average 16 hours a day on shift, every day, for two weeks. We may hike with all of our gear for one to two hours before we get to our piece of fireline where we will start work. We don't have bathrooms or showers and we eat a lot of bad food. We love it. Off the job, we are husbands, fathers, and boyfriends. We are cowboys, hot rodders, rock climbers, hunters, marathoners and bicycle racers. Due to our work, we have to fit a year's worth of normal life into a six month period during our winters. It really makes us appreciate the time with our families and pursuing our hobbies.

Maybe to answer the question of who are we, it would be helpful to explore who or what we are not. We are not nameless or faceless, we are not expendable, we are not satisfied with mediocrity, we are not willing to accept being average, we are not quitters.

Is this an all-inclusive answer to the question of who are we? No. Hopefully this is at least a beginning. We are approachable and we have no secrets. We are proud and passionate about our program. These things will show through during a discussion with any of our crewmembers. We don't just call ourselves hotshots, we are hotshots in everything that we do.

Granite Mountain Interagency Hotshot Crew
1700 Iron Springs Road, Prescott, AZ 86305

This crew history was written by members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots for publication in "Hotshot Crew History of America" that is currently in production. Its release date is unknown.

GMIHC History

In the spring of 1990, the City Manager of Prescott, Forest Supervisor of the Prescott National Forest, and Prescott Fire Department Staff met to discuss the potential for a devastating wildfire that could affect the community. The ideas that came out of the meeting were for the community to come together with the agencies to prepare for and mitigate this potential problem. The Prescott City Council, Yavapai County, Arizona State Land Department, and Prescott National Forest signed a joint resolution creating the Prescott Area Wildland Urban Interface Commission (PAWUIC), which is a citizen-led, agency-supported group that continues today as a national model in coordinating and mitigating the risk of wildfire in the Prescott area.

This is the last known group photo taken of this year's Granite Mountain Hotshot Crew. Eric Marsh and Chris MacKenzie are not pictured.

The year 2000 saw the implementation of the National Fire Plan. Prescott was well on its way with PAWUIC to take advantage of the resources in this plan. The problem was that the public education was happening, but we could not get the work done on the ground to protect the community.

In 2001, with the support of PAWUIC and the City of Prescott, the Prescott Fire Department created a Wildland Division. The first order of business for the Wildland Division was to conduct a risk assessment and to develop a community-wide Vegetation Management Plan for the City of Prescott. The risk assessment found that Prescott was "living on the edge" and was designated as one of nine communities in the southwestern United States at risk of catastrophic wildfire. The Vegetation Management Plan addressed the need for fuels reduction and the adoption of a Wildland Urban Interface Fire Code. The Division then took on the task of creating defensible space on private and City owned property via mechanical treatment carried out by a grant funded Fuels Management Crew of five to ten personnel.

On May 15, 2002, the Indian Fire burned 1,300 acres and seven structures adjacent to and within the City of Prescott and forced the evacuation of 2,500 residents. This incident had a profound effect on public opinion surrounding the Fire Department's new fuels management program and also planted the seed for an expansion of the duties of the Fuels Management Crew.

In the spring of 2004, the Fuels Management Crew evolved into Crew 7, a Type 2 Initial Attack Crew, which not only continued the fuels reduction work, but also responded to wildfire and all-risk incidents both regionally and nationally. The Crew took the name "Crew 7" based on the number 7 being the common designator for all of the Prescott Fire Department's stations and engines. The original logo was a pair of "flaming dice" that, of course, always came up seven.

A short "ceremony" ensued where the 't' that stood for 'trainee' on the back of the Superintendent's truck was scraped off, finally reading: Granite Mountain IHC.

The crew overhead consisted of Crew Boss Tim McElwee, along with Marty Cole, Duane Steinbrink, Todd Rhines, Dan Bauman and Eric Marsh. Seasonals made up the rest, with some members having previous Hotshot experience. From the beginning, the idea that it would be possible to develop a Type I IHC was considered, and every attempt was made to meet IHC requirements in both policy and professionalism.

Prior to the beginning of the 2007 season, Crew 7 was granted IHC trainee status by the Southwest Coordinating Group. This prompted a name change. Local landmarks provided choices such as Iron Springs, Sierra Prieta, and Whisky Row, but Granite Mountain Hotshots won out and the crew was named after the dominating land feature just northwest of Prescott.

By this time, the crew had eight full-time permanent positions with the balance still being filled with seasonal employees. A tradition began of hiring three or four "overhires" which allowed for the fuels projects to continue while the crew was off district, and also allowed for some extra depth of employees in case of injuries or performance issues.

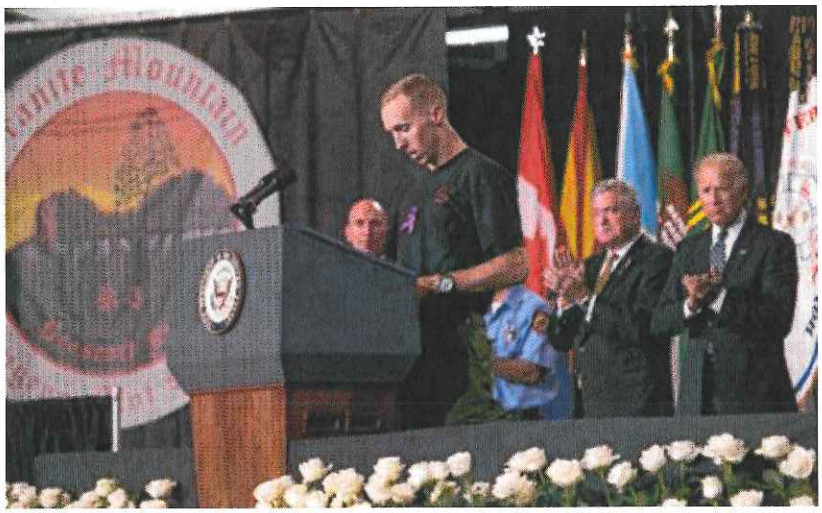
The IHC certification process was challenging, partly because no non-federal crew had ever been certified in Region 3 before.

Through the use of the Region 5 IHC certification process, which later became the template for the national standard, and tremendous support from the fire community, Granite Mountain persevered.

In September of 2008, while on an assignment on the Klamath National Forest, the crew received a phone call from their home unit stating that they had just received certification as an Interagency Hotshot Crew. A short "ceremony" ensued where the 't' that stood for 'trainee' on the back of the Superintendent's truck was scraped off, finally reading: Granite Mountain IHC.

"Esse Quam Videri"

"To be, rather than to seem"



Brendan McDonough, the surviving member of the 2013 Granite Mountain Hotshots, read the poem "The Hotshot's Prayer" at the memorial service for his fallen brothers that was held in Prescott Valley nine days after the Yarnell Hill Fire tragedy.

Photo by Karl Greer

Andrew Sterling Ashcraft

Andrew Sterling Ashcraft was born on February 15, 1984, to parents Debrah Pfingston and Thomas Aschcraft in Orange, California. At the age of five, Andrew moved to Prescott with his family, where he spent the next 24 years of his life with his brother Thomas James (T.J.) Ashcraft II and his sister Shelby Laura Pfingston. Growing up in Prescott, Andrew attended Abia Judd Elementary School, Mile High Middle School and graduated from Prescott High School in 2003. It was at Prescott High that he met the love of his life, Juliann Crockett Ashcraft. The two were married on July 22, 2006, in Prescott, and have four children: Ryder Sterling 6, Shiloh 4, Tate Andrew 2, and Choice Crockett 18 months.

Andrew became a member of the Granite Mountain Hotshots in 2011, and was awarded "Rookie of the Year" honors for that fire season. He loved every second of his time on the crew and had dreamt of being a firefighter since he was a boy. Andrew was known for his contagious smile, his heart of gold, his genuinely kind spirit, and for loving his mustache. He was an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Most importantly, he was a loving husband, a tender father and a friend to all.

Robert E. Caldwell

"I'd rather die in my boots than live in a suit." Robert Caldwell lived by these words, and was always a man true to his word. He died with honor with his brothers in the line of duty with his boots tight on his feet.

Compassionate, sensitive and never afraid to show his true emotions to those he loved and held close to his heart, Robert was unquestionably the most amazing husband, son, brother, father and friend. He is survived by his wife, Claire, son Zion, his mother and father Dave and Linda Caldwell, and his sister Taylor Caldwell.

His wife, Claire, says: "I am fortunate to be Robert's wife. While I didn't have him in my life long enough, each moment that we shared was a blessing. The night we met, we knew it in our hearts that we were soul mates. We had known each other for a thousand years before and would know each other for another thousand years. Robert was the kind of man every man strives to be—he was the husband every woman dreams of and a father a child could look up to. We were all so blessed to have him in our lives and I will carry him in my heart for the rest of my life. There simply aren't enough words to explain the love and gratitude I feel for him."

Travis Clay Carter

Travis Carter was born on August 7, 1982, in Prescott, Arizona, to Tripp Carter and Glenna Echol. As a little boy, he loved to work on the Necktie Ranch in Walnut Grove with his dad, Tripp Carter and grandpa, Arden Carter.

He rode tractors, played in the snow and loved Christmas time with his extended family at the ranch. As he grew older, Travis began to become a real help on the ranch and, according to his dad, he was a good hand and worked, branded and shipped cattle, drove the large equipment and was a great horse shoer.

Approaching high school, Travis was an outstanding athlete and in 2000 began school at Orme in Dewey, Arizona where he played football and was an all-state, all-conference football player. He scored 16 touchdowns his senior year as tailback.

Married in 2005 to Krista Smalley, the couple has two children, Brayden and Brielle.

His firefighting career began in 2005 where he worked for the Prescott National Forest as a hotshot and worked on the Rodeo-Chediski Fire and many others until 2009. In 2009 he was chosen to be among the elite Granite Mountain Hotshot Crew through the City of Prescott. In 2009, the City received a grant from FEMA for firefighting, which provided a full-time career for each member of the crew. Their job was, in the off season, to trim brush and limbs to protect the areas in and around Prescott. They are known as Prescott's Finest and were professionals with a great deal of training.

Travis has said that one of his favorite places on earth is the fishing pond at the ranch. His family is grateful to the Lord for Travis' life and for the time they had with him. He will be greatly missed but we know he is finally home with the Lord, whom he loved.

Dustin James DeFord

Dustin James DeFord, 24, was born December 13, 1988, in Baltimore, Maryland, to Steve and Celeste (Crago) DeFord. Dustin joined brothers Brandon, Darren, Jonathan and Ryan. Later, Kenton, Stephen, Rebecca, Nathaniel and Heidi completed the family. The family moved to Columbus, Montana, in 1990 and later to Ekalaka, Montana in 1996.

Like his siblings, Dustin was homeschooled through elementary and high school, graduating in 2007. He attended Cornerstone Bible Institute in Hot Springs, South Dakota, graduating in 2010. Dustin decisively put his trust in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior as a young boy. In 2011, he took a short-term mission trip to Northern Alberta, Canada. Through college and after, Dustin worked for the Carter County Fire and Mitigation crew in Ekalaka. His ambition was to be a hotshot firefighter, so he was thrilled when he was accepted this spring with the Granite Mountain Hotshots.

Dustin was the "life of the party" at any gathering of friends or family. He loved entertaining with his goofy humor, hunting, spotlighting, espresso coffee, noise of any kind, social life and life in general. He could be seen reading his Bible every morning.

Dustin is survived by his parents, Steve and Celeste DeFord, seven brothers—SSgt Brandon DeFord, Jonathan and Rachel (Anderson) DeFord, Darren and Becky (King) DeFord, Ryan DeFord, Kenton DeFord, Stephen DeFord and Nathaniel DeFord—two sisters, Rebecca DeFord and Heidi DeFord; one nephew, Tucker DeFord; three nieces, Sage Deford, April Deford, and Samantha DeFord; grandparents, Lyle and Emily DeFord and Bill and Flo Crago; and too many aunts, uncles and cousins to list.

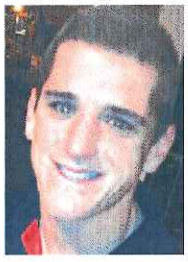
Christopher A. MacKenzie

Chris MacKenzie was born September 12, 1982 with eyelashes that women would die for. He was taken home to San Bernardino to meet his 17-month-old brother, Aaron. When he was three, his family moved to Hemet where he attended elementary, middle and high school. He was in the GATE program when in elementary school for exceptional students and a Boy Scout who earned his Eagle Scout. He was a big kid and played football at Hemet High for four years. After high school, Chris developed a passion for snowboarding and moved to Big Bear to work for Snow Summit for four seasons, where he became an excellent snowboarder. His next adventure began when he applied to be a seasonal firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service, and served on the Taquitz crew in the San Bernardino National Forest. He went on to serve on a helicopter crew for the Bureau of Land Management and the Mill Creek Hotshots in the San Bernardino National Forest. He was invited to apply to the Granite Mountain Hotshots by Aaron Stevens, one of his former captains, and had just started his third season as a fulltime employee of Prescott Fire Department as a lead crew member.

Chris lived his life to the fullest and collected friendships like people collect shot glasses. He loved fighting wildfires and said "it was a way to see the most beautiful country in America." He was loved by everyone who knew him and will forever have a place in their hearts.

Christopher is survived by his mother, Lauri Goralski; father, Michael MacKenzie; brother, Aaron MacKenzie; stepmother, Janice MacKenzie; and stepsisters, Janae Gier and Jill Allison.

Grant Quinn McKee



Grant Quinn McKee was a true brave heart. To say he had the heart of a lion falls short of whom he was. Grant was born May 18, 1992, in Newport Beach, California, to Marcia and G. Scott McKee. Everything he did was threaded with respect and care for other people's feelings. Grant honored those around him. He loved his mother, father and grandmother.

Grant moved to Prescott and met the love of his life, Leah Fine. Leah is like an angel. She made Grant complete and together they exemplified what love is. Grant wanted to travel the world with Leah.

He enjoyed wrestling in high school and running marathons. His competitive nature, coupled with his desire to help others, was from where others drew strength. Always loving, kind and respectful. Fear was never part of the equation. Grant brought light into a sometimes dark world. He saw the crew as what they will always be—brothers.

While attending Prescott High School, Grant spoke at other high schools in Yavapai County, spreading the anti-drug message with the D.A.R.E. program. He received his EMT from Yavapai College and joined his cousin, Robert Caldwell, on the Granite Mountain Hotshots in 2013.

Eric S. Marsh

A loving husband and dedicated son, Eric Shane Marsh was born and raised in the mountains of North Carolina. He graduated with honors from Ashe Central High, where he was a running back on the football team. He graduated from Appalachian State with a degree as a biologist/naturalist, and worked and excelled at several jobs, but the one he really loved was wildland firefighting. He worked for several years with the Globe Hotshots out of Tonto National Forest. Eric had a great love for the outdoors. He was a rock and ice climber who proposed to his wife on an ice climbing trip to Ouray, Colorado. He was also an equestrian with a great love for his horse "Shorty," a skier and a member of the ski patrol at Sunrise Mountain, a fisherman, motorcyclist, and avid cyclist and mountain biker. He competed in endurance mountain bike races and recently completed a 24-hour race as a part of a four-person relay team. He and a friend made a pact to compete in the next 24-hour race as solo competitors.

Eric was also a talented tile setter, stone mason and gifted welder/fabricator. He joined the City of Prescott in 2003 as part of the Fuels Management Crew and worked to build a city-sponsored wildland team. He was an instrumental part of the Granite Mountain Hotshots organization. He helped start the Arizona Wildfire Academy (from his living room), where he taught basic firefighting, Squad Boss and leadership classes. He liked to say that working on the crew "turned boys into men." He was so well known for his quotes and sayings that his crew wrote down his "Ericisms." Eric's wife, Amanda, and his parents, John and Jane, want Eric remembered as a compassionate, good-hearted, loyal and generous man of integrity who loved his family, his life, and being a Granite Mountain Hotshot.

Sean M. Misner

Sean Michael Misner was born April 8th 1987, in Goleta, California. He attended Santa Ynez High School and played high school football and ran track. From the age of 10, Sean played football, baseball and soccer. Because of his size, his nickname on the high school football team was "Mighty Mouse." He was also known as Spiderman because of how the ball would stick to his hands. Sean always wanted to play professional football for the Dallas Cowboys, but quickly realized his true passion was to be a firefighter like his grandfather, great grandfather, uncles and cousin. He loved to be outdoors—at Red Rock River, the ocean, hiking and snowboarding. At Santa Barbara City College, he played football. He moved to Wyoming with his best friend, Jason Lambert, but returned to Santa Ynez after only three months. He became an assistant football coach for Dunn High School, and also worked at Los Olivos grocery where he met his wife, Amanda Misner (Wilkinson) in 2010. He moved to Auburn, Alabama—again with Jason. This time, it was his love for a girl he had just met that brought him home. Sean proposed on April 8th, 2012 (his birthday) and was married Sept. 15, 2012. The couple moved to Prescott Valley, where Sean worked with Mountain West Aviation as a line tech while pursuing his dream and passion of becoming a wildland firefighter. On Jan. 1, 2013, Sean learned he was going to be a father for the first time to a son. April 8th was his first day with the Granite Mountain Hotshots. Sean spoke highly of all his crew members, and he trusted every single one of them to have his back. Sean's smile could light up a room and he became instant friends with people he met. Everyone who knew the devoted husband, father-to-be, son, brother, grandson, nephew, cousin and friend, could count on him. Sean will be missed, but we know our angel in heaven will be watching over his family with his grandpa, "Smokey."

Scott Daniel Norris

For one so young, Scott Daniel Norris, 28, led a full, adventurous life. He was born October 12, 1984, and was a resident of the Prescott area all his life. He attended Liberty Traditional School and Bradshaw Mountain High School, graduating in 2003. He then attended Yavapai College, where he received his firefighter certification. He has worked for Pro Water Irrigation, NAU Biology Dept., Payson Hotshots, and most recently Bucky O'Neil's Gun Store and the Granite Mountain Hotshots. Scott had served as a hotshot for five years.

He loved people, great food, and a good challenge. He was clear-thinking, thoughtful, witty, hard-working, courageous and had a true talent for making others laugh and enjoy life. He had a passion for God's nature, and spent much of his time outdoors—hiking, biking, climbing, backpacking, and snowboarding.

He made several backpacking excursions in the Grand Canyon, and in 2010 was trip leader for a 230-mile, 20-day private raft trip down the Colorado River with his parents and close friends. He also travelled to Thailand, Cambodia and Central America. Scott made it a priority to spend time with family, friends, his girlfriend Heather, and their dogs. Scott and Heather made trips to Beaver Creek, Clear Creek, Fossil Creek, and were regulars at IHOP and Toi Thai.

Scott was an exceptional writer. While traveling he sent descriptive, entertaining emails, and once in a while penned a poem. He enjoyed learning—from dog training to firearms, and was passionate about weather watching, especially thunderstorms and snowstorms. Scott was a brother to his fellow Hotshots. He had a magnetic personality and brilliant mind. Payson Hotshot Evan Whetten said Scott was "one of the toughest, most unbreakable guys. He had the biggest and sweetest heart of anyone I'd ever known. He would do absolutely anything for a friend."

Wade S. Parker

Wade Scott Parker was born October 30, 1990, in Prescott. He was raised in Chino Valley, and graduated from Chino Valley High School in 2009. Wade was a motivated and driven young man. He loved competition and always gave 110 percent. He grew up an athlete playing baseball and football from the time he was five years old, winning championships in youth football and Little League. His father coached him and was the influence that made him the great player he was. He played shortstop and was captain of the Chino Valley Baseball team, earning numerous awards and becoming a four-year letterman in baseball, making the All-State team. Wade played at Lamar Community College on a scholarship. He also lettered in football and recorded the second-highest number of interceptions in a single season and high school career.

His first job was at In-N-Out Burger in Prescott—his favorite place to eat. A Christian man, Wade worshipped Jesus and wanted to lead worship someday.

Wade met the love of his life, Alicia Owens, in high school when he was 16. He swept her away to Disneyland and proposed to her in 2012. They were to be married October 19, 2013.

Wade decided at a very young age to follow in his father's footsteps in the fire service. He joined the Granite Mountain Hotshots in 2012 and was Rookie of the Year his first season.

Wade was a man of honor, integrity and wisdom beyond his years. He had a beautiful smile, a great hug and was a wonderful young man.

He will be missed by all.

John J. Percin, Jr.

John Percin loved his family and his beautiful English Lab, Champ, more than anything in the world. John's honesty and loyalty guided him every step of the way, and will continue to touch many forever. John's smile, kindness and warm embrace were unmatched.

All of those who knew John felt the exact same way.

John is forever grateful for the love and support of the Prescott, Arizona community—the tightknit place where he bettered himself and proudly called home. He was forever touched by the love of his friends at the Chapter Five Recovery Center, and he was equally touched by the love of his brothers in the Granite Mountain Hotshots.

John's passion for life was deep. He approached every day with optimism and excitement. John was truly at peace when he was out enjoying the beauty of life. While he shined in everything he did, his true passions were hiking, basketball and family. John is a hero who made us all so very proud.

He and his brothers will never be forgotten.

Anthony M. Rose

Anthony Rose wasn't just a son, fiancé, brother or soon-to-be father—he was a hero to his family, friends, and to his community. He was born in Zion, Illinois, where he spent the early part of his life. He came to Arizona at 16, and lived in Crown King for more than five years with his uncle. He was hired by the Crown King Fire Department when he turned 18. In 2008, the Lane Two Fire broke out in Crown King. After helping with the fire and seeing the hotshots working so hard to save the town he lived in, he decided to become a wildland firefighter. He became Captain on Engine 3 in Crown King almost a year later and then trained with the Granite Mountain Hotshots.

In 2012, he began working for the Granite Mountain Hotshots. He loved his first year with the crew and bonded with everyone in a special way, earning the nickname "Baby G." In January 2013 he and his girlfriend, Tiffany, moved to Prescott Valley and on February 1st found out that they were expecting a girl. He was so excited to be a daddy. Before he left to work the Yarnell Fire, he kissed Tiffany's tummy, and told their baby girl to be good for mommy. He told her he loved her so much and would see her soon, not knowing that he would not be returning. Now they will always have a guardian angel looking down on them and he will always be by their side, forever, until they meet again.

Jesse James Steed

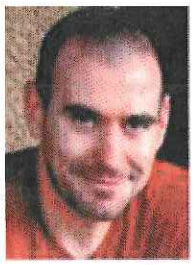
Jesse James Steed was born in Cottonwood, Arizona, September 28, 1976, to Claudia Federwisch. Jesse was the beloved husband of Desiree Steed and amazing father to Caden 4, and Cambria 3. He was the second-oldest of four siblings—Cassidy Steed, Levi Federwisch and Taunya Steed—and grandson to Herman and Reaut Federwisch. Jesse was an amazing individual, husband, father and brother to all. His children and wife were the light of his life; he was a truly dedicated family man.

Jesse grew up in the Southwest, calling the quad city area his home. After Jesse graduated from high school he joined the United States Marine Corps, serving from 1996 to 2000. He joined the Forest Service in 2001, often saying it was the closest thing to military camaraderie that he could find in the civilian world. He worked on the Prescott Hotshot, Helitack and engine crews until he became a part of the Granite Mountain Hotshots in 2009. He proudly served as the Captain to a crew he referred to as a brotherhood.

Jesse enjoyed being outdoors hiking, running and biking. He had a need for speed, whether it be on a street bike, dirt bike or sand rail. He loved spending time with his kids doing whatever they wanted to do. He was a big kid himself, often being called a teddy bear and a gentle giant. He was always the life of the party and the comedian of the group. He loved making people happy.

Jesse had a way of making everyone around him feel like they were the most special person in his life. He would always greet and leave you with a rib crushing hug and never said goodbye to anyone without an "I love you."

Joe B. Thurston



Joe Thurston was a loving father of two and devoted husband of 11 years. He found joy in all he did. A native of Cedar City, Utah, he was born February 5, 1981 and graduated from Cedar High School in 1999. He will be remembered for his bravery and selflessness.

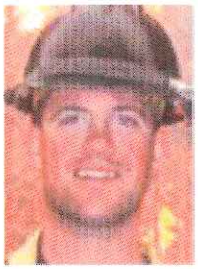
A firefighter and EMT since 2008, Joe was enthusiastic about his work and very service oriented. He was energetic, compassionate, determined, loving, funny, hard-working and extremely kind.

Joe was wildly fun to be around, always rallying the group to the next adventure. He was the type of guy whose smile filled the room. Dependability and decency radiated from him even at a very young age.

A devoted family man, Joe could always be found at the baseball field or on the floor playing with the kids. He was head over heels for Marsena, his high school sweetheart and wife of 11 years. He used every day as a new opportunity to show his love for her.

Joe will be missed and will forever be our hero.

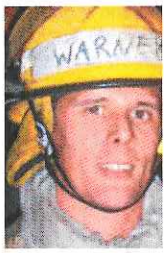
Travis Turbyfill



Travis Turbyfill was born on March 25, 1986 and grew up in beautiful Prescott, Arizona. As a child, he lived in Groom Creek, where his love for the outdoors began. He lived next door to his grandparents and spoke of hunting and fishing with his grandpa on a daily basis from the time he was three years old. Travis was an only child, but began developing friendships at a young age that would last a lifetime.

He graduated from Prescott High School in 2004, and fulfilled a lifelong dream when he began his career as a wildland firefighter in 2005. Travis served in the United States Marine Corps from 2007 to 2010. He then resumed his career as a firefighter with the Granite Mountain Hotshots, a crew of men who were not just coworkers but friends and brothers. Travis' first date with Stephanie was July 22, 2007. He told her just days before he died that he fell in love with her on that night. They were married on August 1, 2009, with their best friends and family surrounding them on the red rocks of Sedona, Arizona. "He was the love of my life, my best friend, and my soul mate," she says. "We loved spending time together, talking, and making each other laugh. We shared a tremendous pride for our two little girls, Brooklyn Elizabeth 2, and Brynley Elizabeth 1. I loved our life together." Travis was a hands-on dad. He changed diapers, painted toenails and played with the girls non-stop. He had a heart of gold and wore it on his sleeve. "Not a day went by that we didn't know how much he loved us, cared for us, and appreciated us," says Stephanie. "He thought he was the luckiest man in the world, but I know we were the lucky ones. He was a strong man, a natural leader and a great firefighter. He loved what he did and did it well.

William Howard 'Billy' Warneke



Born August 13, 1987, in Hemet, California, William Howard "Billy" Warneke was an avid outdoorsman from the very beginning. In fact, he was just six years old when he decided he would one day become a firefighter. The middle child of five, Billy grew up camping, hunting, and fishing with his brothers, Fred and David, and sisters, Melinda and Victoria.

After graduating from Hemet High School in 2005, Billy joined the United States Marine Corps when he was just 17. He deployed twice during his four years as a Marine, including one tour in Iraq. He served with the Second Battalion Fourth Marines, eventually becoming a Scout Sniper. He left the service in October of 2009.

He then began his lifelong dream of becoming a member of the hotshots fire crew. He attended the Fire Science Academy and graduated December 20, 2010, and joined the Granite Mountain Hotshots in April 2013.

Billy will forever be remembered as a man who always put his needs behind the needs of those around him and lived a life devoted to serving others. When asked to describe Billy, family and friends use words such as selfless, confident, heroic, outgoing and courageous. He was never one to shy away from adventure and could often be found having fun on a shooting range or off-roading in his Jeep in the hills of Arizona. Billy married his high school sweetheart, Roxanne Lopez, in December 2008 and the two made a life together in Tucson. Their first child will be born in December. In addition to his wife and his brothers and sisters, Billy is survived by his mother, Kathie Purkey of Homeland, California; his father, Harry Warneke of Hemet, California; and his grandparents, Jack and Nancy Warneke of San Jacinto, California.

Clayton Thomas Whitted

Clayton Thomas Whitted was born June 27, 1985, to Carl and Kathleen Whitted. He was welcomed by his two sisters, Carmen and Cheryl. He was raised in Prescott, Arizona, and from a young age had a strong love for life and the outdoors.

Clayton attended Prescott High School where he played football, basketball and ran track. He loved the friendships that he gained more than the games that they won. Clayton graduated in 2004, and continued his education at Yavapai College and Arizona State University, gaining more knowledge of fire science.

After high school, Clayton pursued his longtime dream of becoming a firefighter and accepted a position with the Prescott Hotshots. When his mother became ill, Clayton took a full time position with the Heights Church Youth and became the junior high pastor, where he mentored hundreds of young teens. Clayton's mom passed away in December 2007, and the next spring Clayton resumed his career and started with the Granite Mountain Hotshots.

Clayton's work with the Granite Mountain Hotshots expanded, as did his responsibility when he became a squad leader. Soon after, he was introduced to Kristi Hoffman, who quickly captured Clayton's attention and his heart. They were married on February 12, 2011.

The more anyone got to know Clayton, he became less like a friend and more like a brother. Clayton's heart was so selfless and he was willing to sacrifice for others as he would for his own family.

Clayton spent his life serving in the community and helping numerous organizations and people alike. Clayton's unique personality and contagious smile, paired with his laughter and hugs, were an example to all who met him of what it meant to love fully.

Though Prescott may mourn the loss of Clayton Whitted, though the nation may mourn the loss of a brave firefighter, and though the world may mourn this tragedy, we will choose to celebrate his time on earth.

Kevin J. Woyjeck

Kevin Woyjeck, 21, died fulfilling a family firefighting legacy. His father, Joe Woyjeck, was a Fire Captain with the Los Angeles County Fire Department. His two uncles were firefighters there as well.

Kevin's grandmother, Delores Woyjeck, said her grandson wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, first joining the Los Angeles County Fire Department Explorers Club when he was 15. After working for several years as a firefighter, he joined a hotshot team in South Dakota. From there he joined the Granite Mountain Hotshots in April.

Los Angeles County Fire Chief Daryl Osby stated, "Kevin and I just spoke a few months ago about how excited he was to be a hotshot in Arizona."

Kevin joined the Granite Mountain Hotshots to gain the wildland firefighting experience he needed for his desired job in the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

He is survived by his parents, a brother, 19, and his 16-year-old sister. Maddie says there are so many things she will miss about her brother.

"I'm going to miss his smile, his laugh, the way he said 'I love you'. He was so outgoing, he could walk into a room and just start a fire inside somebody," she said.

Garret Zuppiger

Garret Zuppiger was born December 14, 1985, in Phoenix, Arizona. He graduated Greenway High School and from the University of Arizona with a degree from Eller College of Management in 2008.

As a young boy, he was one of the youngest at that time to receive certification and sail Long Beach harbor in a sabot. He was extremely proud and excited to be accepted as a member of the Granite Mountain Hotshots for the 2012 season, having no prior experience or background in firefighting. During his rookie season as a Hotshot, he attended wildfire training school and was awarded the fire boots for being first in his class.

During the off months of fire season he was a carpenter by trade, which he loved as well. He loved to run, hike, fish, rock climb, travel, cook and play his guitar for his friends and family.

Garret was the most generous, giving, kind and hard working person, using his everlasting abundance of energy to always help others.

He was also an avid reader, a beautiful writer and had a sense of humor like no other. Garret was a free spirit and loved a great adventure. His motto in life was "dream as if you will live forever, live as if you will die tomorrow."

All of these biographies of the 19 fallen Granite Mountain Hotshots are from the "Our Fallen Brothers – A Celebration of Life" memorial program [bit.ly/yarnell19memorial] that was produced by the International Association of Fire Fighters and distributed at the July 9, 2013 memorial service.

Ground Truths

By Travis Dotson
Fire Management Specialist
Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center
Travisdotson@fs.fed.us

Now What ?

The last time I saw Granite Mountain was on the Thompson Ridge Fire in New Mexico a couple weeks before Yarnell Hill. They participated in an AAR about a firing operation that didn't go as planned. I knew Eric and Jesse, mostly from the Arizona Wildfire Academy.

I went to the memorial and hugged lots of folks who feel just as twisted-up inside as I do. We all looked at each other with bloodshot eyes and shook our heads slowly, not knowing what to say. We asked each other "*How are you doing?*" and told each other who's taking it really hard. We patted each other on the back and said: "*Hang in there.*" We all said: "*How does this happen?*" We all wondered about the specifics and our voices trailed off as we tried to discuss them.

Just a few nights ago, I sat straight up from troubled sleep at 3 in the morning and thought: *"There is no way I am a better decision maker than Eric."* Everyone has their own version of this. We are all struggling. Even if you have been out on fires this whole time, it's sitting there in the back of your mind—19 Hotshots gone.

How does this happen? I want the details. I want all the pieces so I can puzzle over them in my constant attempts to make sense of this. I seem to think that if I can just figure out why and how it will somehow relieve the pain. I basically want to skip grief. But we all know that ain't happening—no free pass on that one. I know there are stages and you go through them all at different times and you loop back and it's confusing and it affects your family and all that stuff.

But knowing that doesn't make right now suck any less.

We don't know exactly what happened. We won't know for a long time. We may never know.

It was a month and a half before the investigation report came out on South Canyon. The first phase of the Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study (Tri-Data) was published two years later, in 1996. *Fire Behavior Associated with the South Canyon Fire* didn't come out until 1998. The first Staff Ride for South Canyon happened in 2002. And to this day, every year at the Staff Ride, new details and lessons are revealed.

As I write these words, we are three weeks out from Yarnell Hill. It's going to take some time. So what do we do right now?

Awhile back, someone I had supervised was heading off to work on a hotshot crew for the first time. She asked me if I had any advice. I told her: *"Volunteer for everything and go home before they start tipping cars over."* Eventually, she got to give me that same advice as I prepared for smokejumper rookie training. It came in handy.

My point is we are a group of people who can get carried away and "tip cars over."

I think, right now, there are a lot of us who feel like "tipping cars over." We are angry, frustrated, confused, sad, sick, tired, lonely, scared, tormented, and all kinds of other stuff.

We are not the best at dealing with grief. Most of us are horrible at it. I tell people I'm doing OK, but I still can't sleep at night.

I now change my advice: Don't avoid the "tipping cars over" crowd. Join them, but steer them in a different direction. Help each other through this. Help each other avoid the traps we wander into when we don't know what to do.

They say talking is a good thing; I don't know. I guess at least, that way, no cars get tipped over.

Live on, Tool Swingers.

Two More Chains, published quarterly by the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, is dedicated to sharing information with wildland firefighters. For story tips, questions, or comments, please contact: Paul Keller, prkeller@fs.fed.us, 503-622-4861.