

Fallen, Remembered, and Appreciated!

By Dennis Watkins

I recently attended a memorial service for Randy Harmon, a contract helicopter pilot with Superior Helicopter. Randy was flying on the McGinnis Fire, on the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington. Randy's helicopter crashed after making a water drop on the fire.

There was something that happened at the memorial service that I wanted to talk about. Self admittedly, I am not a person who is easily impressed. What I heard and observed at that service made a deep impression on me. There was a man who spoke at the service who represented the Colville Tribe. This man spoke of the fact that this pilot left his home and family, and sacrificed his life, in the attempt to save lives and property of people he didn't even know. Randy didn't know anyone in the Colville Tribe, and didn't have any ties to the tribe. Yet, there he was.

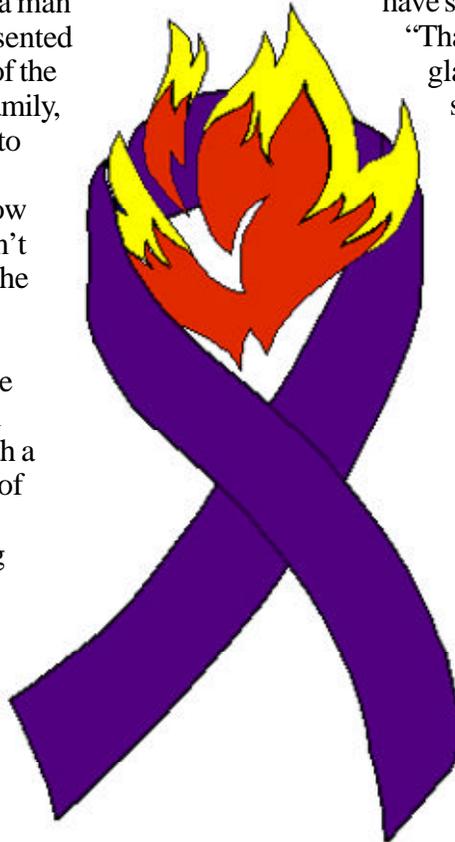
At the conclusion of the talk, the tribe presented the family, wife Linda, son Logan, and daughter Cassandra, with a blanket and an eagle feather. Some of you may not know, but the eagle feather has a very significant meaning

to Native Americans. For the tribe to make this gesture to Randy's family, struck something deep inside me. Growing up around the Nez Perce Reservation, and going to school with friends who lived on the reservation, I understand the importance and significance of what the tribe did.

So often I hear firefighters say that no one cares that we are out there doing what we do. That they aren't appreciated for the work they do. In the last couple of years, I have been on several fires where I have seen signs up saying things like:

"Thank you firefighters" and "We are glad you came." I was glad that someone went to the effort. But I have to admit that, even though I saw the signs, in my mind, I didn't think there was a lot of meaning behind it.

What I saw, and heard, and felt, during that presentation, made me realize that there are in fact a lot of people out there that do truly appreciate the work that we do, and in some cases, the sacrifices that are made.



In memory of those who lost their lives.



Oshkosh, b'gosh!

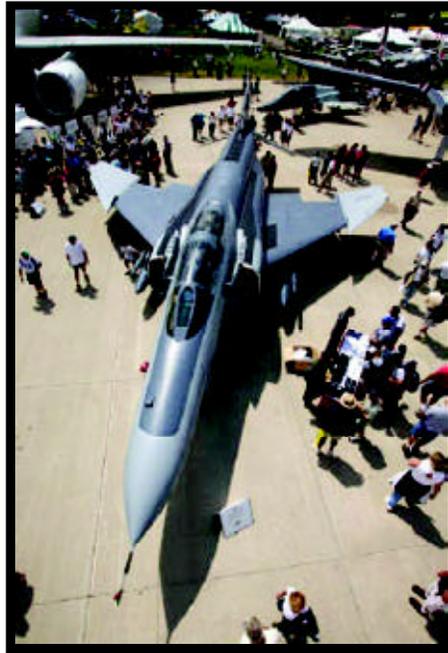
The Department of the Interior (DOI) soared into Oshkosh, Wisconsin, on July 28, 2003, for the nation's largest aviation air show, the Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) AirVenture. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service staffed a booth and provided public contact for DOI aviation.

This summer was the DOI's second trip to AirVenture. It's a great opportunity to talk to the public about the many ways the DOI uses aircraft. This year was exceptional because it's the 100th year of powered flight. The Wright brothers' first flight took place at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on December 17, 1903. An estimated 770,000 visitors attended, and the show also attracted 11,000 aircraft on the ground at Oshkosh and the surrounding area.

A little history lesson... Wilbur and Orville Wright began their mission to fly in Dayton, Ohio, in 1900. The first step toward the famous Wright Flyer began with the construction of a glider. After the glider was mastered, design and construction began for the air frame, engine, and propellers. Charlie Taylor, a machinist hired to run the Wright brothers' bicycle shop, developed the engine from Wilbur and Orville's ideas and their motor invention that drove the line shaft for the bicycles. Flight testing was conducted at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, because of the secluded location, clear and rain-free days of the fall, favorable winds, and most importantly the mile-wide beach which included a bare hill 80 feet high.



The Wright Flyer was completed in June 1903. The glider weighed just over 600 pounds, with its 179-pound, 12 horsepower engine. The aircraft's wingspan was 40 feet, 4 inches.



F-4 on the runway.

At 10:35 a.m., December 17, 1903, Orville Wright fired up the engine and launched the first manned, sustained, powered flight lasting about 12 seconds and traveling an estimated 120 feet. Wilbur then gave it a try and surpassed his brother's distance by about 75 feet. Wilbur's second flight lasted nearly a full minute and a distance of more than 850 feet. That was the fourth and last flight on this historic day.

Powered flight has changed immensely since the Wright brothers. Aircraft are used for so many different operations in the government and civilian worlds. DOI agencies use aircraft for missions including aerial firefighting operations, disaster response, wildlife surveys, range and forest management, photo mapping, search and rescue, law enforcement,

radio tracking surveys, camp logistics, and reconnaissance, just to name a few. The agencies use several different aircraft including both rotor and fixed wing to accommodate their unique missions.

EAA AirVenture is an impressive air show! All types of aircraft (hence the host's name – Experimental Aircraft Association) are brought in to fly at the show

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Wright Flyer, 1903

Educational Efforts on the Front Line

Recognizing and supporting the national effort to convey the message of fire education, mitigation, and prevention, the DOI has been involved with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) Fire Education Corps teams and interns since 2001.

The SCA Fire Education Corps began as a pilot program in 2001 with seven teams in two states and has grown exponentially to this year's program of 58 teams in 22 states! In 2003, the BIA, BLM, NPS, and FWS funded over 150 internship positions in 54 sites in 21 states! A site either has a team of 3-4 primarily college-aged volunteer interns or one specially trained individual placement intern who work with the hosting agency and community on various site specific objectives.

As trained wildland fire educators and from around the world, the Corps teams bridge the efforts of the

| | Teams | # of Interns |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| BIA | 12 | 40 |
| BLM | 7 | 34 |
| FWS | 4 | 16 |
| NPS | 6 | 28 |
| Anchorage FD | 1 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 30 | 125 |

| Individual Placement Interns | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| BIA | 3 |
| BLM | 2 |
| NPS | 19 |
| Anchorage FD | 1 |
| CSFS | 2 |
| DOI | 1 |
| TOTAL | 28 |

communities, tribes and agencies in taking an active role in the National Fire Plan's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) program. The Corps teams generally work in an area for three months to develop and implement local education and mitigation programs.

With the support of the hosting agency or tribe, SCA joins forces with the local fire departments among other partners to heighten awareness and reduce wildland fire risks.



Claire De Dominicis, Individual Placement intern in Flagstaff, AZ, participated, like the other Corps interns, in a variety of media and local events to communicate directly with the members of the communities.

This year's teams:

- communicated with the public by participating in local events;
- performed fuels reduction demonstration projects;
- gave presentations to community organizations, homeowner associations, and schools;
- performed door-to-door canvassing of communities within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI); and,
- provided free property evaluations.

Team member, Adam Wilson of the third-year site Carson City, Nevada, said, "We recognize the value and importance in what we are doing here and enjoy the work."

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SCA interns work directly with homeowners during a routine home evaluation. The focus of evaluations is to educate homeowners about creating defensible space around their homes.

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Other specialty teams or individual placement interns worked for 6 – 12 months on specific site objectives such as performing prescribed burns, using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to map entire communities, actively managing, assessing, and reducing fuel loads, among various other projects. Individual placement interns Stephanie Straziser and Jason Gerard are working with the BIA Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes to use GIS technology to map fuel loads and do fire monitoring until June of 2004.

After assisting in the Western Governor's Association's (WGA) Conference held in Missoula, MT by talking about the GIS technology, Gerard said, "I think people are interested in the technology of GIS because the information from the data we collect can be beneficial to many people because of its usefulness and accuracy." The maps generated from the information Gerard and other Corps interns collect will be utilized by the local agencies, tribes, and organizations to replace existing maps or begin efforts to map WUI communities and lands for further mitigation efforts.

In addition to personally communicating with communities about the role fire plays within our natural world, the Corps also promotes the collaborative efforts of local, state, federal, and tribal organizations along with communities and private land owners to mitigate the social, economic, and environmental losses resulting from unwanted fire.

Having led an SCA team working on three FWS Refuges in Minnesota this summer, Jeremy Avegno said, "I would definitely do the program again. It has opened up so many new job opportunities in the fire field for me!" The SCA experience proves to be a growing opportunity for all of the interns, agencies, communities, and organizations involved. Roy Clark, a homeowner who had his Nevada home evaluated by the Corps wrote, "Please take a bow and continue spreading the word. And thanks, from our homeowners, bobcats, deer, about 70 species of birds, mountain lion and raccoons." The cycle continues...



During community fuels reduction projects, SCA interns work side by side with homeowners and community partners to increase the defensible space around homes.



Stephanie Straser, Montana Fuels intern assisting in WGA conference, explains the application of GIS technology for fire management and structural evaluation to Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior.

Third Time's a Charm...

by Jenn D'Emillio

This year marks my third SCA Fire Education Corps internship. In its inaugural season, I was a team member stationed in Boise to educate homeowners about wildland fire and the ways in which they could reduce the potential risk their properties were in. Last year, I was the Lead Media intern for the entire program, which consisted of coordinating the media effort of the teams, handling program-wide media and attending meetings with important political figures when they met in the field with teams. Both of these internships allowed me to gain the knowledge and skills, as well as giving me the opportunity to prove my capabilities, for the position that I currently hold.

As the National Park Service (NPS)'s Fire Communications intern at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), I am surrounded by the inner workings of the wildland fire world. Here, I have many different projects that I work on. One of the first things that I was responsible for was to create a fact sheet for NPS's new Chief of Fire and Aviation, Edy Rhodes. I also received the training necessary to fill in for the webmaster of the Fire and Aviation webpage, for times when she would be on fire duty or out of the office. Traveling to various National Parks has also been a part of my position. I visited Sequoia-Kings Canyon to go through NPS's interpretation training. Most recently, I visited Big



Big Cypress National Preserve in Florida received two GyroTracs to be used for mechanical fuels reduction efforts, fire break construction, removal of exotics and maintenance of roads. D'Emillio attended the arrival and training sessions of these machines.

Cypress National Preserve in order to obtain footage and report back to the folks at NIFC about new mechanical fuels reduction machinery that was received by the Preserve, followed by an in-depth training.

My experiences through SCA's Fire Education Corps will remain with me for all of my life. The things that I have learned, not only skills, but also my own personal development, will help me in fulfilling my career goal, to work as a Fire Ecologist, as well as personal goals.

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or are parked for display. A few of the aircraft include the Airbus (also called the Beluga), fighter jets, warbirds, stunt planes, homebuilt aircraft, classics, antiques, ultralights, and rotorcraft. Every afternoon



DOI aviation booth.



B-17 in-flight during warbird air show.

there is an air show with all types of aircraft, from early air racers to historical airplanes.

The DOI plans to participate in AirVenture again next year. It's a great opportunity to show the missions and capabilities of the DOI aviation program, b'gosh!