

Honor

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Klopfenstein was one of four Oregon firefighters who died in the line of duty in 2021. He was memorialized Thursday with his name added to the Oregon Fallen Fire Fighters Memorial at the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training in Salem.

When a firefighter like Klopfenstein dies within 24 hours of responding to a call, they are considered to have died in the line of duty.

"He epitomized what it meant to be a volunteer," Silverton fire chief Bill Miles said. "He's running a busy farming business operation, and yet in the midst of that, he's willing to drop that and go help people. I think that was kind of in his DNA anyway, helping people, helping strangers. That's what we're about, too, but I think he went above and beyond."

Local farmer turns firefighter

Klopfenstein was a graduate of Silverton High School and spent most of his life in the area. He married Deloris and they had five sons. He owned a farm and had a business, KS Seeds.

In 1988, Silverton's fire chief, Carl Brown, came out to Klopfenstein's farm and asked him if he was interested in becoming a volunteer firefighter for the department. He had a young family and had lots going on in his life. Yet he agreed.

"He was so honored to be asked," Deloris said in a letter to the department. "We were young and just starting a family, and so busy making ends meet. But together, we knew he should join. And he loved the department and the people from the beginning."

He participated in Silverton's first training academy that year and found a passion. For the next 33 years, he was a presence in Silverton's fire service.

Klopfenstein answered thousands of calls for service, everything from structure fires to fires in farmer's fields to car accidents. And he didn't get paid for it.

Klopfenstein thought up and executed multiple training exercises, including live fire trainings to get other firefighters prepared.

He once bought the fuselage of an airplane so he could put together a drill to teach firefighters what to do if they encountered a plane crash, a real-world situation that rarely happens.

Miles got used to Klopfenstein calling him at unexpected hours and laying out an idea for a new training exercise.

"He was always thinking about that kind of stuff," said Miles, who has been Silverton's chief for 14 years. "He orchestrated some live-fire trainings. He was the instigator of a lot of that."

Like a lot of small-town fire departments, Silverton relies heavily on volunteers. Miles said Silverton currently has about 65 – including Klopfenstein's youngest son, Anthony – to augment its staff of seven paid firefighters who work 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

That means a lot of the calls are taken by volunteers like Klopfenstein.

The rise to Captain to help his community

Klopfenstein loved a good gathering and good food.

Miles tells of the time that Klopfenstein held a training burn of an old house on his farm south of Silverton.

In a nearby barn, however, was a feast.

For most of that day, firefighters rotated from the training exercise to the barn – where Klopfenstein was serving steaks right off the grill and a table overflowing with desserts including pies – and the house they were having the practice burn on.

"He was just a great host," Miles said. Miles said if the department needed

a truck or piece of equipment, Klopfenstein would drop what he was doing and bring it.

"I'll be right there," Klopfenstein would inevitably answer.

Miles said he saw people involved in an accident who needed a ride, and Klopfenstein drove them wherever they needed to go in his truck. Klopfenstein loaned people money without ever expecting the debt to be repaid.

The Victor Point station is about five miles from Klopfenstein's home. It houses a fire engine and a water tender – which is necessary as there are many farms in the area. It's a remote station that has the potential to save critical seconds when a call comes in in the area.

Klopfenstein rose to the rank of Captain. He was in charge at the station at Victor Point.

The department's paid firefighters in the department's main station in south Silverton arrive for calls in the southernmost edge of the 106 square mile district. But the volunteers based at the Victor Point station who were under Klopfenstein's command saved critical time for hundreds of people in distress over the years.

The final call for help

Klopfenstein took thousands of calls for service over his decades of service.

On that Friday afternoon in September, the call came in about 5:40 p.m. that two cars had crashed on Cascade Highway about two miles south of Silverton.

The impact between the two cars was heavy. The three occupants had sustained some injuries. Klopfenstein tended to them, though they all declined to be taken to a hospital in an ambulance.

The cars sustained enough damage that hazardous materials spilled onto the roadway. One of the cars was blocking the highway.

"He helped push the vehicle off the roadway," Grambusch said.

In all, it took about 45 minutes until the accident scene was cleaned up and everyone left.

The next day, September 25, 2021, the department received the call that someone had collapsed and needed medical attention. The people who arrived to help Klopfenstein were the ones he supervised.

"His crew that he supervised had the nightmare scenario and had to respond on the call," Miles said. "That was pretty horrific, still leaves a pretty heavy hole in our heart."

Four of Klopfenstein's five sons followed in his footsteps and served as volunteer firefighters.

In the weeks that followed his death, a group of local farmers, people who worked in construction and public safety workers held a procession through Silverton.

This was the first time someone in Silverton's fire department died in the line of duty. It hit everyone in the department hard.

"It was really important to Harry that he wanted to help the community," Grambusch said. "He didn't care about the politics of it. He didn't care about who was in charge. It was all about the community with him. Truly about the community with him. He didn't ever insist on being in charge. He didn't have a problem with being in charge, so long as it was for the betterment of the community."

Honoring four firefighters who died

Families and friends of the fallen gathered at the memorial in Salem on Thursday to see their loved ones honored.

In Oregon, 174 firefighters have died in the line of duty, dating back to Portland firefighter James Reed on Aug. 16, 1891.

Klopfenstein and the other three Ore-

sion.

And Follies-goers will want to sit up in their seats when the Flapper Tapper shows up.

Even though Senior Follies has a minimum-age requirement of 50, the Flapper Tapper – a tipoff to her age – nearly has it doubled. Eileen Booth will strut her stuff, dancing and singing on stage at the youthful age of 95 (but, understandably, for only one of the three days of the event).

The Senior Follies will be held at 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, June 17 and 18, with a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, June 19. Doors open 45 minutes ahead of the show and tickets are \$10 and \$5 for children under 10.

As a special treat, all dads get in for half-price on Father's Day.

"I didn't know (the Follies) would be three days," Brockamp admitted, "and I don't think we realized what a big undertaking it would be. But we are committed to more member-driven programs where the member also develops and facilitates their idea."

"No one is in competition at the Follies – they're just showing what they do," she said.

"This is for the community."

Freelance writer/photographer Geoff Parks is based in Salem. Have a Silverton story idea? E-mail him at geoff-parks@gmail.com.

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A bell is rung to honor fallen Oregon firefighters during the Fallen Firefighters Memorial Ceremony on Thursday, June 9, 2022 in Salem, Ore. ABIGAIL DOLLINS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

gon firefighters who died in 2021 were added, along with 170 others, on the state's memorial wall. It was presented to the public on Thursday. The other fallen firefighters who were memorialized were Frumencio Ruiz-Carapia, Richard Ilg and Jerry Richardson.

The engine from the Victor Point Station was there, as were many firefighters from Silverton.

Firefighters from throughout the state, as well as police officers and others in public safety, sat through the wind and rain to honor Klopfenstein and the other fallen firefighters.

They heard speeches about the sacrifices made by the firefighters and paid tribute to them. They heard the Portland Fire Fighters Pipes and Drums play Amazing Grace and the Oregon Fire Service Honor Guard march in precision and keep watch.

Ruiz-Carapia, from Medford, died in the line of duty August 23, 2021 when he was struck by a fallen tree while fighting the Gales Fire in Lane County. He was

56.

Ilg, of Forest Grove, died of work-related brain cancer on Sept. 12, 2021. He was 49.

Richardson, from Portland, died of brain cancer Nov. 19, 2021. He was 56. He also served as a volunteer at Selah Fire Department in Montebello, California, and in Cottage Grove.

Austin Smith of St. Paul, 31, who died Feb. 3, 2022, will be honored in 2023.

"Austin's name will be added to the memorial wall next year," said Brian Henson, director of the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training. "We extend our thoughts and condolences to his family and community."

Henson said 53 firefighters have died in the United States this year in the line of duty.

"We are committed to reducing these losses," Henson said.

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Folies

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Eastern" dance.

Another performer lists "poi spinning" as their talent, which a Google search tells you involves "swinging tethered weights through a variety of rhythmic and geometric patterns."

Interestingly, the description also includes the possibility of singing and dancing in accompaniment.

Also making an appearance are the spritely singers and players that make up the Silverton Ukulele Network. They are a small group of uke devotees who will rock out, Hawai'an-style, with Don Ho standards like "Pearly Shells" and "Tiny Bubbles."

Watch out for lots of brightly colored flowers and shirts – and Terry Kaye's little wooden ukulele earrings.

"We started putting the Follies together back in April because we didn't have a venue then," Pressnall said, noting that they later secured the Silverton High School stage for the performances.

"I'm treating it as a play, which usually has Friday and Saturday performances and a Sunday matinee," Pressnall said. Each daily production on June 17, 18 and 19 is broken into two 20-minute sessions, with a 15-minute intermis-



Annette Ripplinger (cq) and other members of the Silverton Ukulele Network work out a tune ahead of their appearance at the Silverton Senior Follies. GEOFF PARKS / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL