

EASTERN OREGON OUTDOORS



by Mark Baggett



To watch a crew of tired, dirty fire fighters return to camp after a long day on the fire line can be rather humbling—especially if you've spent the entire day in the sanctity of a centered camp, observing the comings and goings there and only imagining what it must be like beneath that huge, billowing cloud of black and orange smoke mushrooming like a nuclear explosion from the far ridge.

Exhausted as they are, the grimy crew proudly assembles as a unit and silently trudges single-file through camp to stow their gear and be dismissed; their solemn, blackened young faces staring straight ahead as they walk.

But later, from the portable showers, emerge different creatures. Young guys with freckles, older guys with tattoos and from other showers, women—quite a lot of them in fact, from 18 to 30 years old and wearing anything from boots and blue jeans to shorts and flip-flops as they step smartly over to the chow line. The faces that a moment ago were undistinguishable from the men's now look just like the ones that smile back at you from behind the cash register at the grocery store.

Why are so many young women fighting forest fires these days? According to several of the women who fought the 10,000-acre-plus Glacier Complex blaze on the Malheur National Forest, it's mostly for the money, although many say they enjoy the excitement as well.

"It's the challenge," says Tina Racy of Oakridge. "You've got to stay with it—it's heads up all the time."

To Marjean Lowas of the Mackenzie River river crew, fire fighting is an opportunity to earn more money for college during the relatively short period of summer.

"It's a great way to save money for school and to do something your girlfriends aren't doing. Gosh, my friends won't believe it when I get home and tell them about (fighting fire)."

"Really," agrees companion Tracy Joy, also of the Mackenzie crew. "People honestly don't think you're telling the truth. You know, your friends are working in department stores or pizza parlors for the summer, but you can say, 'Yeah, I fought fire!'"

Meanwhile, Lisa Cook from Rogue River No. 5 fire crew says she chose the work for the dollars. "The only reason I do this is for the money—that's the only reason," Lisa explained. "It's not like I'm into women's lib or anything, I just want to go to a special private school this fall, but it's going to be really expensive."

As far as a conflict or competition between the men and women on the line, both sexes agree that it is not a problem. "You have to carry your own weight," says Tracy, "and if you don't, they'll let you know that you're not."

"I think sometimes it's more of a challenge for the women," Tracy continued, "just because people don't expect you (women) to be able to do what you're doing. One of the first things you hear is that you can't do it. My husband said that to me my first year. He said, 'You know, you'll try, but I don't think you're going to make it...'. Then at the end of the season, we were on a fire together and I was walking his rear off. I was more than pulling my weight."

Common to all the girls was an expressed sense of achievement after having faced something as large and phenomenal as a wildfire.

"What's neat is to see what you've accomplished," Marjean said, "that you're really getting something done. Maybe you saved a bunch of old growth timber that can now stay here a little longer."

Opportunity Lures Females to the Fire Line

Sheriff's Report

The Sheriff's office at the courthouse in Heppner reports handling the following business during the past week:

July 31: Morrow County Sheriff's office dispatched the Morrow County ambulance to Lone. One 60 year old male with an unknown illness was transported to Pioneer Memorial Hospital;

Morrow County deputy responded to Lone to investigate a report of an animal problem.

August 1: Morrow County Sheriff's office dispatched the Lone fire department, assisted by Morrow County Grain Growers to a grass fire on Baseline road;

Morrow County deputy responded to Lexington in reference to an animal problem.

August 2: Morrow County deputy investigated a suspicious vehicle at Boardman Farms. Deputy was unable to locate vehicle, investigation is continuing;

Morrow County Sheriff's office dispatched the Heppner ambulance to St. Patrick's Hotel. One female was transported to Pioneer Memorial Hospital with an unknown illness;

Morrow County deputy responded to the Irrigon area to a report of some kids on a 3-wheeler and motorcycle.

August 3: Morrow County deputy responded to a call of animal abandonment out at Little Butter Creek. Investigation is continuing.

August 5: Morrow County Sheriff's office dispatched the Boardman ambulance to His Place Cafe/Motel in Boardman. One female was transported to Good Shepherd Hospital with an unknown injury;

Morrow County deputy responded to the Irrigon area to investigate the report of a suspicious circumstances situation resolved;

Morrow County deputy made contact with subject in the Irrigon area in reference to an animal problem;

Morrow County Sheriff's office dispatched the Boardman ambulance to a residence in rural Boardman for an unknown illness. One subject was transported to Good Shepherd Hospital;

Morrow County deputy responded to the Irrigon area to investigate an animal problem.

Births

Vanessa Colette Devine, a daughter Vanessa, was born July 26, 1989 to Coleman and Carrie Devine of Hermiston at Kennewick General Hospital in Kennewick, WA. The baby weighed 7 lbs. 3 ozs.

Grandparents are Jim and Barbara Bloodworth, Heppner; Jim and Vicky Devine, Madras; Darlene Ostrander, Fernley, WA.

Great-grandparents are Evelyn Warren, Heppner; Eula Bloodworth, Lexington and Ella Rae Ostrander, Hermiston.

Nicholaus Chad Amick, a son, Nicholaus, was born July 25, 1989 to Eldridge and Elizabeth Amick of Irrigon at Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston. The baby weighed 8 lbs. 1 oz.

Heather Marie Green, a daughter Heather, was born July 26, 1989 to Gary and Lisa Green of Redmond, WA. The baby weighed 6 lbs. 6 ozs.

Grandparents are Tom and Dorothy Wilson, Heppner and Doug and Margaret Green, Pendleton.

Great-grandparents are Lydia Wilson, Heppner; Suzanne Vinson, Snohomish, WA and Charley Green, Pendleton.

The baby joins one sister Amber, 15 mo. at home.

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Gridley gets hole-in-one

Bob Gridley, Redmond, scored a hole-in-one Sunday, August 6 at the Willow Creek Country Club in Heppner.

He made his score on hole number 3.

Bob is married to the former Jan Ekstrom of Lone.

Chief Rathbun's Tips

Parents: Please advise your children that bicycle riding is prohibited on city sidewalks.

Heppner City Police Department will be citing those who continue this practice.

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