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Smokejumper Obituary: Greentree, Wallace J. (Missoula 1953)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Greentree, Wallace J. (Missoula 1953)

Wally died on May 28, 2005, while running the final mile of the Prince of Wales Marathon. His teammates carried his racing number the final 300 yards, thus finishing the race. The following was written by his daughter, Diane Greentree Tschirgi, appearing in the USFS SourDough Notes Summer 2005 issue:

My Dad, Wally Greentree, was a man full of life. He started out as a smokejumper and ended as a marathoner, and never slowed down in between. His Forest Service career began with a stint as a smoke jumper in Montana. He loved to tell us how the first 18 times he went up in an airplane he never landed. He started college but dropped out for a while, forgetting there was a draft. He was quickly reminded when he was called up. He served two years in the Army from 1958-59. After returning home, he finished his forestry degree and took a job with the U.S. Forest Service in Berkeley, California.

(Later), he took a research job at a ranger district in Ft. Collins, Colorado in 1976. Tragedy struck in 1978 when his wife, Beth, died of cancer. Suddenly, Dad found himself the sole parent to three teenagers. He took it in stride, working full time, cooking and raising us kids. Sometimes he would bring me along on road trips, though I thought the lime green USFS vehicles were really uncool. We also went on a lot of hikes and camping trips as a family, though I must confess I didn't care to learn all the common and scientific names of all the plants and trees we saw. What I did enjoy was the obvious love he had for the outdoors, of which his work was an extension.

Dad took a position on the Tongass National Forest inventory in 1981. We started in Sitka, and then moved onto Petersburg, and then Ketchikan. That was a lot of moving for a teenager, but I got used to it and even did some moving on my own when I applied for and was accepted as a Rotary exchange student and went to the Philippines for a year. The Rotarians there really enjoyed referring to my dad as "Forester Greentree."

I believe Dad's favorite job was in Thorne Bay managing small timber sales. He retired in 1995, after 32 years with the USFS. He decided to stay in Thorne Bay and bought some property with a lot of old growth trees on Setter Lake. One of the first things he did was to inventory and catalogue his trees. Then clear all the underbrush. Then build some trails. After all that was done, he started building his house. I guess the priorities of an old forester are a little different from the rest of us "civilians." He never did finish that house, but he sure enjoyed living among the trees.

(end of excerpt)