

David Noel

By LeeAnn Walker

September 2005

When I met Dave in the summer of 1976, he was the director of the YCC camp in Dutch John. He was always very busy thinking of ways to make the kids want to do their work well and making it more than just a job. I remember that he made up a contest for them to see who could collect the most pull tabs from pop cans. They each were given a string, I think it was bailer twine, with one tab tied to the bottom, and they were to string the tabs like beads on the twine. All of the kids went around all summer with their strings dragging from belt loops so they could add tabs whenever they found them. Dave decided that he was going to win the contest, so we went to the Western Park right after the Dinosaur Roundup Rodeo and picked up tabs from under the bleachers. The result was about 15 feet of tabs. Needless to say, Dave won, but he gave prizes to all the kids anyway.

We were married in January of 1977, and we spent our honeymoon at a YCC training. Dave would go to classes during the day, and we would go out to eat or to a movie in the evening. In February, we went to another training in Phoenix. It was fun to go with him to these things because he was always so upbeat about the new ideas he was getting and the ways he could do his job better.

Dave enjoyed fighting fires. I don't know whether it was the challenge of stopping the unstoppable, or just the hazardous duty pay, but he always wanted to be included on any fire crew that was sent out. One time, my brother, sister-in-law, Dave, and I were going up the mountain to Dutch John from Vernal, and we saw a little tendril of smoke about 100 yards off the road. Lightning had struck a tree and started a small fire. We stopped and put out the fire. It was nice to have someone there who knew what to do. When Dave reported the fire, he tried to get the helicopter pilot to give us a ride as payment for our services, but it was against regulations, so we couldn't. That's just the way Dave was, he wanted us to have something fun as a reward for doing a good job.

On the morning of the fire that took his life, we were on the way to Vernal to take some friends home who had spent the night at our house. As we were crossing Cart Creek, Dave saw the smoke and commented that the fire looked like it was going to be a "big one," and they would need all the help they could get to put it out. We turned around and took Dave back to the house so he could get his fire gear and go to the fire. I continued on to Vernal to take our friends home and spent some time visiting. When I was headed back up the mountain, I was stopped about halfway and was told that Dave had been killed helping another fire fighter escape the flames. That was Dave, helping and giving all the way.

