



Little Tujunga Hot Shots
ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST
Alumni Newsletter

HOLIDAY GREETINGS FROM THE STAFF OF THE NEW LTHS ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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THE PHOENIX HAS RISEN...AGAIN!

Walt Sniegowski

After 28 years of silence, many of you maybe aware that the Little "T" Hotshot Crew was reactivated in the summer of 2008. Originally established on July 1st 1970, the crew was in service for a decade before being disbanded in or around 1980. We are still researching the specifics of that action.

The current crew and its supervisors have expressed a strong interest in learning more about the crews' early origins, history and activities. For this purpose, the new crew built a display case at Little T's barracks to house some of our memorabilia; hard hats, vests, patches, etc. Another wall displays photographs of many of the past crews and we are actively seeking those crew members names and articles for the display as well. One elusive rascal is our original 1970 Little T Hot Shot patch.

On several occasions during the past year, Little T alumni have accepted invitations from and traveled to Little T Station to share their stories of the past with the current crew and staff. On one such visit many of us were taken on a tour of the recent Station Fire burn and were treated to that special "Hotshot" hospitality in the mess hall.

What you are reading and holding in your hands is an outgrowth of these Little T Station visits. A strong interest exists in documenting the crews' past and present history; it's wildfire records; personal stories etc. Even talk about publishing a "coffee table" book recording our written and photographic history has been mentioned. This newsletter will also function as a means to contact your old crew mates and relive your memories of the past....

Where any of these ideas go from here will depend on the interest shown, and most importantly, the assistance of past crew members.

The first job at hand will be to locate as many past crew members as we can. You can ask questions and see crew photo's by contacting Larry Sall at (ldsall@att.net). Check out the photo's and help us identify the year the photo's were taken and the crew members in them as well as locating those who are still MIA's.

An informal organization is evolving. Rod Wrench, our first crew superintendent, is taking the lead in documenting our photographic history. We've been sending Rod our photo's and slides to be archived. Rod has the means to enhance these items where necessary and place them on CD or video disc. Our goal is to make these photo's available to anyone who wants them. If any of you have photo's and would like to add them to our growing archives, we will provide contact information at the end of this article.

Larry Sall has been our informal secretary and communications center. As we locate "lost sheep", Larry adds their contact information to the master list and periodically sends out news, requests, and other information as it develops.

My role has been to build up files of data based on your questionnaires. If you didn't get the questionnaire, please contact Larry and he will send you one. This information will include email addresses, phone numbers and street address for each Hotshot, Foremen and Superintendent on the master list. We also need a lot of help in developing each crews line-up (cutting order) for as many crews as possible.

Now for the fun stuff! The collection of stories (as remembered by the crewmen) that made each "season" so unique and special. Start with your "Firsts". Your first day; first fire; crew truck; off forest assignment; crew song; patch or "Colors"; overhead etc. Then expand into the directions you took for a career. Don't forget to include "Awards" "Close Calls" and "Jail Time".

Where will this effort go from here? We would like to hear from you. Does the idea of an regular alumni newsletter sound like a worthwhile endeavor? Would you like to help with the newsletter effort? Is there a Web Page designer out there? If we could get one guy to cover one year on the Hotshots and be a "reporter" responsible for identifying crew mates and Mia's, it would help immensely. If you have any idea's pass them on to us.

Walt

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IN THE BEGINNING...GOD

No, our history doesn't go back quite that far but the Bible does speak to tongues of fire and burning bushes. Philistine Hotshots? Israelite Hotshots?....hmmmm.

I've taken a bit of liberty in going back a little beyond the first crews' establishment on July 1st 1970. As you may or may not know, a hotshot site currently exists. Googling "Little Tujunga Hotshots" brings up several sites. One site for "California Hotshot crews" lists the Little Tujunga Hotshots as disbanded and within this site an inaccurate crew history has been submitted containing factual errors. Rod Wrench has provided an accurate re-write of our initial history. However to date, this corrected version is still not in place.

Rod Wrench's re-write brought a number of things to light. So much of our "Story" is not written down. Who were the Little Tujunga Hotshots of the Tujunga District on the Angeles National Forest? Who are those guys in the pictures on the wall? How did they fight fire? Things are changing like they always do as witnessed on the sign out front of little T Station. It reads, "Los Angeles River Ranger District, a merger of the Arroyo Seco and Tujunga Districts of old". Eventually our history will disappear like the signs unless we take the time to do something about it. So let's write it down while we can.

The Angeles National Forest has some interesting history in its own right. Following is an interesting bit of chronology:

- 1877 John Muir first visits the San Gabriel Mountains
- 1892 President Benjamin Harrison creates the San Gabriel Timberland Reserves on December 20th. The Reserve was the eighth created in the U.S and the First in California.
- 1908 San Gabriel National Forest is renamed Angeles National Forest. The forest is divided into the Arroyo Seco, Mt. Baldy and Valyermo Ranger Districts. San Bernardino and Angeles National Forests were combined for administrative purposes.
- 1925 Saugus Ranger District added to the Angeles National Forest (it had been a part of the Santa Barbara National Forest). The San Bernardino National Forest once again becomes a separate entity.
- 1964 Tujunga Ranger District created from portions of the Arroyo Seco, Saugus, and Valyermo Districts.
- 1970 Little Tujunga Hotshots established on July 1st.
- 200? Arroyo Seco and Tujunga Ranger Districts merged to create the Los Angeles River Ranger District.

When the original Little Tujunga Hotshots showed up on July 1, 1970,



William Dresser was the Forest Supervisor and Bill Beatty was the Fire Control Officer. The Tujunga District was still relatively new at six years old and the Little T Hotshots were welcomed by the following:

District Staff

District Ranger	Jess Barton
Assistant D.R.	Len Graf
Fire Control Officer	Hugh Masterson
Assistant FCO/FPO	Cal Yarbrough
Forester	Bob Day
District Clerk	Marilyn Wrenne became Wilson in '71 & Rea in '76
Clerk Typist	Juanita Cass
Receptionist	Veronica Malinski

Field Fire Staff:

Little T Station	Little Tujunga Hotshots
Superintendent	Rod Wrench
Foreman	Walt Sniegowski
Assistant Foreman	Gary Glotfelty

<u>Engine Station</u>	<u>I.D.</u>	<u>Foreman</u>	<u>Fire Prevention Tech</u>
Little T	E 5-4	Robert Kline	P 5-4 John Moore
Big T	E 5-5	Henry Smith	P 5-5 Mel Alexander
Mill Creek	E 5-6	Ed Few	P 5-6 Tom Kaylor
Monte Cristo	E 5-7	George Scribner	P 5-7 Jim Pearson
Bear Divide	E 5-10	Bob Goodman	P 5-10 Charlie Covell
North Fork	E 5-11	Richard Grandalski	P 5-11 Bob Brady
Soledad	None		P 5-9 Ken Reveley
Lopez	None		P 5-8 Dave Kremer
Bear Divide Helitack	Helitack 5	John Bowser	
Mendenhall Lookout		Peggy Hotchkis	

As you may have noticed all of the engines and prevention units have a #5 designation (i.e. Little T Engine is E 5-4 and Little T Prevention is P 5-4). How did this come about? Prior to 1962 there were four Ranger Districts on the Angeles National Forest. They were the Arroyo Seco, Mt. Baldy, Saugus, and Valyermo. District numbers were simply assigned alphabetically. When the Tujunga District was created in 1962 it became the fifth District. Thus Rod Wrench was Superintendent 5 and the Little T Hotshots radio call sign was Crew 5.

The Angeles National Forest is unique in another way worth mentioning for historical purposes. I don't believe any other National Forest in the Nation has equaled the number of Hotshot crews based on one Forest at one time. The Angeles National Forest, at its peak strength in 1976 (?), claimed to have six (6) Hotshot crews protecting its natural resources. They were located and established as follows:

Arroyo Seco Ranger District.....	Crew 1	Oak Grove Hotshots	1950
Arroyo Seco Ranger District.....	Crew 4	Chilao Hotshots	1949
Mt. Baldy Ranger District.....	Crew 2	Dalton Hotshots	1953
Saugus Ranger District.....	Crew 3	Texas Canyon Hotshots	1954
Tujunga Ranger District.....	Crew 5	Little Tujunga Hotshots	1970
Tujunga Ranger District.....	Crew 6	Bear Divide Hotshots	1976

I'm not sure that there were any Ranger Districts in the Nation that had two Hotshot crews based on one District let alone two Hotshot crews based on two Districts on one National Forest at the same time! A quick search on Google revealed that there are currently sixty five (65) Hotshot crews in the U.S. These Hotshot crews are not all U.S. Forest Service Hotshot crews. In this total are Hotshot crews from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the National Park Service (NPS). A break down by Agency was not available.

Future articles will attempt to answer the following questions:

- Where did the name “Hotshots” come from?
- Where was the first “Hotshot” crew located and when was it established?
- Can any crew add the word “Hotshots” to their name?

Stay tuned!!!



AND NOW YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY

What is the origin of the name “Hotshots”? Do we know when the name first appeared? Who was the first crew(s) to be called Hotshots? Inquiring minds want to know!

I and others have been told a number of versions over the years. One thing is certain and that is uncertainty. This article is my attempt to finally set the record straight...that is until a more convincing version comes along.

Most of the key players in this story are currently residing in the “Big-Fire-Camp-In the-Sky”. Those still with us are suffering an assortment of maladies including: Dementia, senility, erectile dysfunction, etc. etc. The bottom line is, most are not too swift as of this writing.

Computer searches are of questionable accuracy (refer to our current web-site as an example)...Anyone is free to write whatever they feel is appropriate with very little risk of censorship.

Nevertheless, I began my search by Googling “Hotshot Crews”, origins, etc. The search revealed that the first “Hotshot” crews began on the Cleveland and Angeles National Forests. No dates were provided. Keep in mind from a previous article, that in the early days, the boundaries and names of Southern California National Forests were frequently being revised.

“Wikipedia” says the name is supposedly a reference to the “hottest part of fires”. The US Forest Service “Hotshots.. the origins and work culture of America's elite wildland firefighters” by Lincoln Bramwell and supplied by Chet Ogan ('70), makes a similar statement.. Crews were “Shot” into the hottest part of the fires. The US Forest Service was training and using forty and twenty man crews earlier in history but the Southern California crews were the ones that added “Hotshots” to their crew name.

The Civilian Conservation Corp, part of President Roosevelt's “New Deal”, better know as the three C's or the C.C.C.'s, has been mentioned as a possible source for the name. The C.C.C.'s, established on March 31, 1933, was a public work relief program for young unemployed men during the Depression. Supervised by U.S. Army personnel, some young men were trained in fighting forest fires and were used to fight many fires. As of yet, I have not been able to make the C.C.C. Connection.

Rod Wrench, in a personal conversation with Gene Kemble also suggests a C.C.C. connection. For our readers, Gene Kemble held high level fire control positions on both the San Bernardino and Angeles National Forests. Kemble began his Forest Service career in 1945, about the same time Southern California Hotshot crews were being established (more on this in a future article). Kemble believes, “the C.C.C fire crews used the Hotshot name prior to World War II and the name and it's use continued on with newly organized fire crews in the late 1940's”. “Where the name came from within the C.C.C.'s is another question”.

Walt Sniegowski (Dalton Hotshots '64) recalls a conversation with Mt. Baldy District Ranger Anselmo Lewis. Rather than a conversation it was more of a history lesson given on Selmo's porch at Dalton Station. This was the time period when fire crews were required to remain on "Standby" after regular working hours. Standby pay was calculated at 25% of your base pay. I was earning about 50 cents an hour.

Selmo believed that the name "Hotshot" originated from a very popular comic strip entitled "*Terry and the Pirates*" drawn by Milton Caniff. Caniff was intensely patriotic and penned another military oriented strip "*Steve Canyon*".

In the original strip, Terry joins the U.S. Armed Forces and is based in China with the 1st Air Commando Group. Joining Terry in the comic strip were characters named "The Dragon Lady", Connie the Coolie" and a devil-may-care individual who provides comic relief...you guessed it..."Hotshot Charlie"! (See Attachments)

Caniff created a much racier version of "*Terry and the Pirates*" for the military newspaper "*The Stars and Stripes*" and published it under a Penn name, not his own. The characters remain the same with "Hotshot Charlie" and it's cast of characters. Wow what a "Crew"! Hey wait a minute! I am beginning to see Charlies attraction!

In 1953, Mad Magazine satirized "*Terry and the Pirates*". They called it "*Teddy and the Pirates*". The same cast of characters appear as in the original, however, "Hotshot" is now "Half-shot" Charlie. They encounter the same "Dragon Lady" as well as numerous other *femme fatales*. At least a half dozen of our first year's crew would fit the description of "Half-shot".

When there was serious business to take care of, an enemy to be vanquished, the comic strip flyers, like our crewmen, overachieved and were without equal. But...when the job was done, look out! For it was wine, women and song and not necessarily in that order! Hotshots became "Half-Shots" and I believe the tradition continues!

With this strong evidence in my hands, I defer to the writings of Mr. Noah Webster in his 2009 Webster's Dictionary. Consider the two following definitions:

Hot – Sexually excited; Radioactive; Wanted by the police; Illegally obtained; Emotionally exciting & Hot on the trail.

Shot – A small serving (usually an ounce) of undiluted liquor; A charge of explosives; Stimulus (in the arm); A narcotic injection; An attempted discharge.

"So Hey"! You can't make this stuff up! Did the early crews know what they were doing when they chose our name? Don't the definitions fit?.And what about "Hotshot Charlie"? Here's the "Smoking Gun"--- he's real name is Charles C. Charles and his initials are...**C.C.C.** And now to quote the late Paul Harvey..." And there you have...the rest of the Story"!

Convinced beyond a reasonable doubt, I decided to leave no stone unturned. I went to the source of all things factual...The Encyclopedia Britannica. Under the listing, "Hotshots" I could find no description...However, the following photograph and caption appear.



“An example of a real Hotshot Crew”

Coming Soon!

“Follow the Black Line Damn It”

“Fastest Buck in the West”

“Dump your Water Boys...We're going Home”



1970 Little T Hotshots Roster

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Deceased

Dale Dorman
John "Speedy" Gonzales
John Schofield

Missing in Action: If anyone knows where these guys are!...Let us know!

Larry Beringer Larry's father worked at JPL in the early seventies, lived in La Canada.

Wayne Crow
Robert Dodge
Frank (Franklin?) Helper

Jesse Hill Compton, CA.

Bill Lock
Cliff Rusk

Hopkins? Un-named forestry student, Univ. Washington in Seattle.
2 Un-named crewman, second from left front row ('70 Stake-side picture)

Replacements

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Sawtooth # 1 crewman
Sawtooth #2 crewman
Webster?

Calvin Edwards

Dwayne Weidenhoeft

He is in the front row of the 1970 LTHS Bus Picture 4th from the right.

Deceased

Twin Falls, ID



TERRY

AND THE PIRATES

by **MILTON CANIFF**





