

Presentation Remarks for the 2003 International Wildland Fire Safety Award

International Association of Wildland Fire, 7th International Wildland Fire Safety Summit

November, 19, 2003, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

By Charles L. Bushey,

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Starting seven years ago at the first Wildland Fire Safety Summit held in Rossland, British Columbia the International Association of Wildland Fire started presenting the annual Wildland Fire Safety Award. The award is now given to an individual selected from nominees picked by the host country (the annual conference is rotated between Canada, Australia, Europe and the United States), and then reviewed by the IAWF Safety Award committee composed of previous recipients and the Chair.

The award is given to someone in the wildland firefighting community who has made a significant contribution to wildland firefighter safety, either directly on the fireline; or indirectly through management, cultural changes, or through fire research.

This year's recipient, Martin (Marty) E. Alexander, falls in the later category for his contributions to research in fuel and fire behavior (including landscape level crown fire modeling in the "International Crown Fire Experiment" in the NWT) in Australia, Canada and the United States. For his efforts in promoting and developing FBAN training in Canada, and his never ceasing efforts to collect and analyze anything relating to fuel, weather, fire danger and the resulting potential or actual fire behavior that each year threatens not only firefighter but also the general public. His prodigious efforts has made firefighting not only safer across Canada but has had influence worldwide.

Marty is a Senior Fire Behavior Research Officer, Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forestry Service, Northern Forestry Centre in Edmonton, Alberta

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Acceptance Speech Delivered on behalf of Marty Alexander

By Dave Marek, B. C. Forest Service, Smithers, British Columbia

Because I was advised of this award in advance, I've had the luxury of reflecting on its significance.

First of all, I sincerely regret that I am not able to be with you this evening to personally receive this prestigious award. I wish to wholeheartedly thank the International Association of Wildland Fire for bestowing this most gracious honour upon me. Trust me to cherish this – there is no greater honour than being recognized by your peers. I'm deeply humbled when I think of the individuals who have previously received this award and those people in /Canada and elsewhere who have yet to be honoured for their contributions to improving wildland firefighter safety.

I find it somewhat interesting that I have personally known all of the previous recipients of this award: Chuck Hartley (who I first met on a fire in southern California in 1972 when I was but a young “hotshot”), the late Paul Gleason (who I first met at a fire behavior Workshop in Missoula in 1994 and kept in touch with until his untimely death this year), the late Harry Luke (who I first met in 1989 while pursuing a Ph.D. at the Australian National University), Al Beaver (who I consider a good friend and colleague), and Dick Rothermel (who I first met in 1972 while attending Colorado State University and have had frequent contact with over the intervening years).

Many people have had a profound effect on my thinking about fire behavior and firefighting safety over the years and I'd like to publicly acknowledge their influence. In Canada, there's Brian Stocks, Bruce Lawson, Rob Thorburn, Al Beaver, Dennis Quintilio, Terry Van Nest, Rick Lanoville and Judy Beck. In New Zealand, there's Liam Fogarty (formerly with the New Zealand Forest Research Institute, now living in Australia). In Australia, I'm especially indebted to Phil Cheney for this insight and wisdom. In the United States, there's the late Jack Barrows, Bob Mutch, Dave Thomas, Carl Wilson, Ted Putnam and the late Paul Gleason, and more recently Doug Campbell. Finally, I'd like to thank my wife Heather and my children, Neal, Evan, Graeme and Wynne for their support over the years.

As a wildland fire behavior researcher, I've always had a keen interest in firefighter safety and issues related to fire behavior. A visit to the site of the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire in June 1994 followed by the South Canyon Fire tragedy 11 days later, has had a

profound effect on me. As a result, I've acquired an even deeper sense of dedication to ensuring that I'm doing all I can possibly do to improve wildland firefighter safety now and in the future. As a result of being awarded the 2003 International Wildland Fire Safety Award I have now developed an even stronger conviction and commitment as to the role that wildland fire research can and should play in regards to the safety and well-being of both firefighters and the public with respect to wildland fires.

Again, thank-you one and all. I'm very touched. This means more to me than you can imagine. – Marty Alexander