

TWO MORE CHAINS

Spring 2018 ▲ Vol. 8 Issue 1 ▲ Produced and distributed quarterly by the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center



Bad Apples?

By Travis Dotson

- R**emember the Cerro Grande Fire in May of 2000?
- ❖ 230+ Homes Destroyed.
 - ❖ More Than 18,000 People Evacuated.
 - ❖ Nuclear Facility Threatened.
 - ❖ Damage Cost: One BILLION Dollars.

Nothing too outrageous by today's standards I suppose. But consider this: It was an escaped prescribed fire.

That's a huge deal.

So, who were these clowns playing with matches on the doorstep of a nuclear laboratory right in the middle of the southwest spring winds? Well, here is one member of this lousy light-it, fight-it, and lose-it team—in fact, this goofball was in charge when the fire went over the hill: **Paul Gleason**.



Paul Gleason

Hmmmm . . . Paul Gleason. Why does that name ring a bell? I feel like there's some sort of big-deal significance associated with that name. Oh, wait. Isn't that the dude who came up with LCES?

It can be argued that there are only two universally known wildland fire heroes: Ed Pulaski and Paul Gleason. Both of these gentlemen invented a tool (the pulaski and LCES respectively). Both of these tools are used every day on our firelines.

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One Podcast episode and three Blog Posts are part of this *Two More Chains*.



Podcast

[Listen to Brit Rosso and Travis Dotson discuss how we use the "Bad Apple" concept in the fire service.](#)

For the URL links to the Podcast and the Blogs, please see page 9.



Blog

Read three separate posts about Paul Gleason:

- [Underslung Heroes](#)
- [Paul Gleason – Up Close and Personal](#)
- [Paul Gleason's Influence Went Way Beyond Wildland Fire](#)

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The Bad Apple Theory

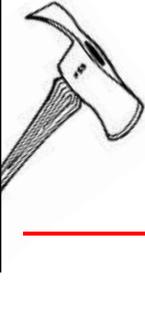
"When faced with a human error problem you may be tempted to ask: 'Why didn't they watch out better? How could they not have noticed?' You think you can solve your human error problem by telling people to be more careful, by reprimanding the miscreants, by issuing a new rule or procedure. They are all expressions of the 'Bad Apple Theory' where you believe your system is basically safe if it were not for those few unreliable people in it. This old view of human error is increasingly outdated and will lead you nowhere."

Sidney Dekker, Human Factors Scholar and Author

Do Your Part for the Greater Good!

Participate in the Wildland Firefighter Health and Behavior Study

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GROUND TRUTHS

By Travis Dotson
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The Mirror Works

I am all the mistakes I make. I am all the success I stumble into. I own the unpredictable combination of skill, luck, and the miracle of wind shifts. Some call it grace.

We all tend to put faith in the existence of a merit-based system—good outcomes as rewards for good decisions. This does exist, but it's not absolute nor consistent.

We pat ourselves on the back for the expertise and sound decisions involved in a favorable wind shift. We shake our heads disapprovingly at the dead whose unclever choices weren't powerful enough to shift the wind.

It's all made up with an obstructed glimpse through a broken rearview mirror.

I mixed the fuel wrong. I nicked my chaps. I cut the holding wood. I put too much fire down. I didn't see the spot. I didn't hear the radio. I didn't ask about a safety zone. I took the assignment. I didn't have a medical plan.

I make assumptions. I use stereotypes. I'm unfair. I exclude people.

I, we, you.

A Spectrum of Skill

Nothing separates us. We are one big collection of flaws in a series of short-straw situations, and yet things tend to work out OK.

Chance? Providence? A bit of both mixed up in an ever-changing recipe of complexity?

I'm not saying good firefighters don't exist. I actually think, on balance, we are all amazing for going out there time and time again and somehow making it home to stock-up for the next roll. There most certainly is a spectrum of skill.

There are more than a few out there who have worked extremely hard to hone their proficiency to a fine point. I would follow them without hesitation up a narrow-assy overgrown two-track to nowhere with the freight train roaring just because it's them.

There's also one or two I wouldn't follow through a flower-filled rainbow garden because they would find a way to complain while they unintentionally burn it down, piss off the locals, endanger everyone, and look back at the aftermath with pride, already loudly telling anyone who will listen how they saved the day (again). Everyone knows who that dip-sh*t is, except that dip-sh*t. It's like they're a vampire. The mirror just doesn't work for them.

Use the Mirror

But the mirror works for me. The mirror works for you.

We can see our finest features blending right into our messy little short-comings and blind spots. OK, I guess you technically can't see your blind spots. (One of my shortcomings is useful metaphors.) But I/you/we know they exist.

The point is, use the mirror. Look hard. Look often. When a bad deal goes down, get compassionate before you get conceited.

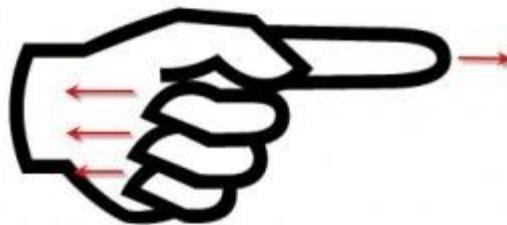
The people in the bulls-eye are just like you and me. They mixed the fuel wrong, cut the holding wood, or weren't powerful enough to shift the wind.

Luck counts, but you have to count it—good or bad.

An honest accounting of everything involved is a step toward clarity. Clarity is useful when preparing for tough decisions.

Get humble. Get honest. Get better.

Reflect, Tool Swingers.



[Continued from Page 1]

Yep. Paul Gleason was right there on site when they lit the match on that prescribed fire back in May 2000. He wasn't in charge initially, but when the wagon started to wobble, the Burn Boss gave the reins over to Gleason (why wouldn't you).

How did this happen? Like any other tough day on the line, there's one slop-over kicking their ass and the Burn Boss (Gleason) suggests they make the magic name change (convert from Rx to Wildfire—the most oppressive game of semantics we play).

So, they convert it. Now it's a wildfire and Gleason is the Type 3 IC. Next comes the most common of all common tactical decisions. Direct or indirect?

We all know the direct or indirect dilemma is a fairly standard operational decision that needs to be made, just like it was that day. In the context of what eventually happened, this particular direct/indirect decision has gotten quite a bit of scrutiny. (If you want to hear Paul Gleason explain his decision, go watch this video: <https://youtu.be/kRJTNpq4mQA>.)

Are You Really Willing to Go There?

The “Bad Apple”. There's one in every bunch, right?

Are you really willing to go there? Are you willing to boil this entire series of events down to a simple case of: “*They should've turned left*”?

Are you willing to say you would have made a better tactical decision than Paul Gleason?

In reference to that particular direct or indirect line decision, Gleason said: “*I had a preconceived bias against underslung line.*”

I don't like underslung line, either. Do you?



This photo shows some of the more than 230 homes that were destroyed by the Cerro Grande Fire.

Who cares if they went direct or indirect if no houses burned down?

Crucial Decision Points

Yet, this is exactly the type of decision we love to crucify folks with, using the perception-twisting kaleidoscope of retrospect omniscience.

As we look back at bad outcomes we create a story and in that story are critical turning points. Of course, these turning points are given significance only through reference to the eventual

outcome. Who cares if they went direct or indirect if no houses burned down?

So now we have the story and identified the crucial decision points. We all love to customize these crucial points in our never-ending quest for the adoration of our peers via gaudy display of operational virility. Peacocks we are. We all want to be recognized for our “unique insight.” (If you hadn't noticed, I'm on this quest myself right here within this article. But everything I'm saying has been said before. Damn it, now I have to find another route to self-esteem!)

What I'm really saying here is we love to parry the “*They should have gone direct!*” blow with the oh-so-clever “*Well they never should have lit it!*” mindset. Touchdown! The Monday morning quarterback brings home the bacon every single time!

Newsflash: That is not a clever insight. Neither is its simple sister: “*Why were they even there in the first place?*” Oh, how we love to toss that one out in relation to the latest entrapment, especially if it is related to structure defense. Again, not clever or even remotely insightful. We all know exactly how we get where we get because we all get there on every fire. We just walk away by the grace of Big Ernie.

The Comfort of Finding Fault

Let's see here, where were we? Oh yeah, throwing rocks at Paul Gleason for making the wrong decision. Or not stopping the ignition. Or not listening to the weather service. Or listening to the weather service. Or not praying hard enough. **[Continued on Page 4]**

[Continued from Page 3] Maybe it wasn't Gleason. Maybe it was somebody else.

Did you just feel the relief as we moved the crosshairs? Ahhhh, the comfort of finding fault—it feels so natural. I mean, who are we kidding? A prescribed fire that torches a town? SOMEBODY must have screwed-up. It's not like that was the plan! Please feel free to pause here and let the comfort of that last sentence wash over you.

It should be unsettling to acknowledge how cozy that self-righteousness feels.

The Bad Apple, there's one in every bunch.

Paul Gleason and Eric Marsh

Let's time travel our target shooting session.

Hmmm, what year should we jump to? How about 2013? It's so easy. Eric Marsh might not have been Paul Gleason, but he'd led his crew on a hike off a fire more than once. Bad Outcome = Bad Apple? Try giving Marsh the leeway you give Gleason.

Does it feel any different?

Apples and oranges, you might say. (Ha ha.)

But is it *really* that different? An operational decision with an unintended outcome. What if the personalities were reversed? What if Eric Marsh was the Burn Boss/ICT3 at the House Burner Rx and Paul Gleason was hiking his crew to the ranch when they were overrun by fire?

**We are all amazing firefighters.
We are all bad firefighters. It just
depends on the day and the
circumstances. And the outcome.**

Stand Accountable

We are all amazing firefighters. We are all bad firefighters. It just depends on the day and the circumstances. And the outcome.

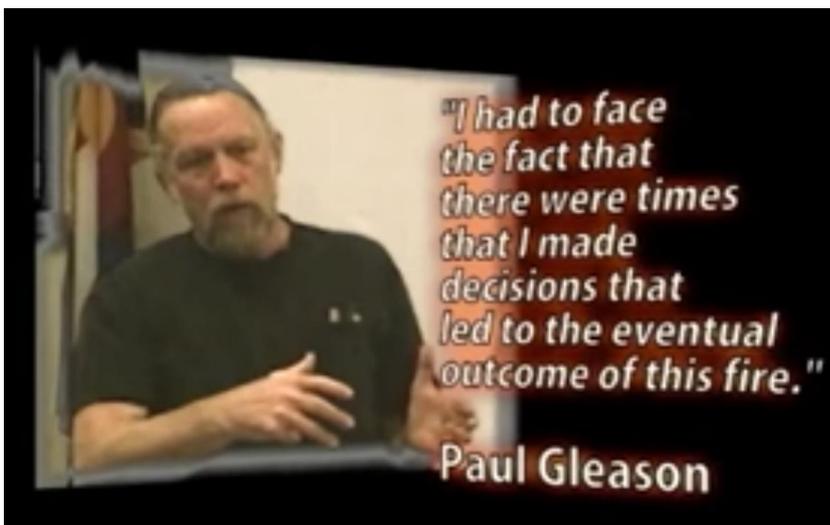
I know the Bad Apple theory is appealing. And it might even be true sometimes. But don't get lazy and use it without putting genuine heartfelt inquiry and introspection into the matter. Acknowledge the fire shifts where *you* were the Bad Apple. Acknowledge the future shifts where *you will be* the Bad Apple.

Everyone says: "*We all make mistakes.*" I think we all make decisions using everything we have learned and experienced to this point. I think we all care deeply about the people next to us. I think we all want to learn from tragedy and heartbreak. I think we can do better.

Stand accountable for your beliefs. Stand accountable for your expectations. Stand accountable for how you judge the decisions of others, whether you know them or not. Stand accountable for your contribution to our collective learning.

***"There is no way to get around how uncomfortable it is
to stand accountable for your decisions."***

Paul Gleason



Screen shot from the video "Standing Accountable – Lessons Learned from Cerro Grande" in which Paul Gleason provides insights into his role in this fire. To see this video: <https://youtu.be/kRJTNpg4mQA>.

Would you make sense of those outcomes differently than you currently do?

I'm guessing you would. You might try a little harder to see what you aren't seeing, actively asking yourself: "*What am I missing here?*" But that Bad Apple bucket is enticing isn't it? It's a lot less work to just toss the bad operator in and move on. Especially if they are dead. Especially if they weren't "Agency". Especially if they didn't have the right kind of buckle. Especially if, especially if, especially if . . .



One of Our Own

Ed Hiatt

He'll Never Forget What Happened That Day

By Alex Viktora and Paul Keller

Ed Hiatt has a whole lot of wildland fire experience under his belt.

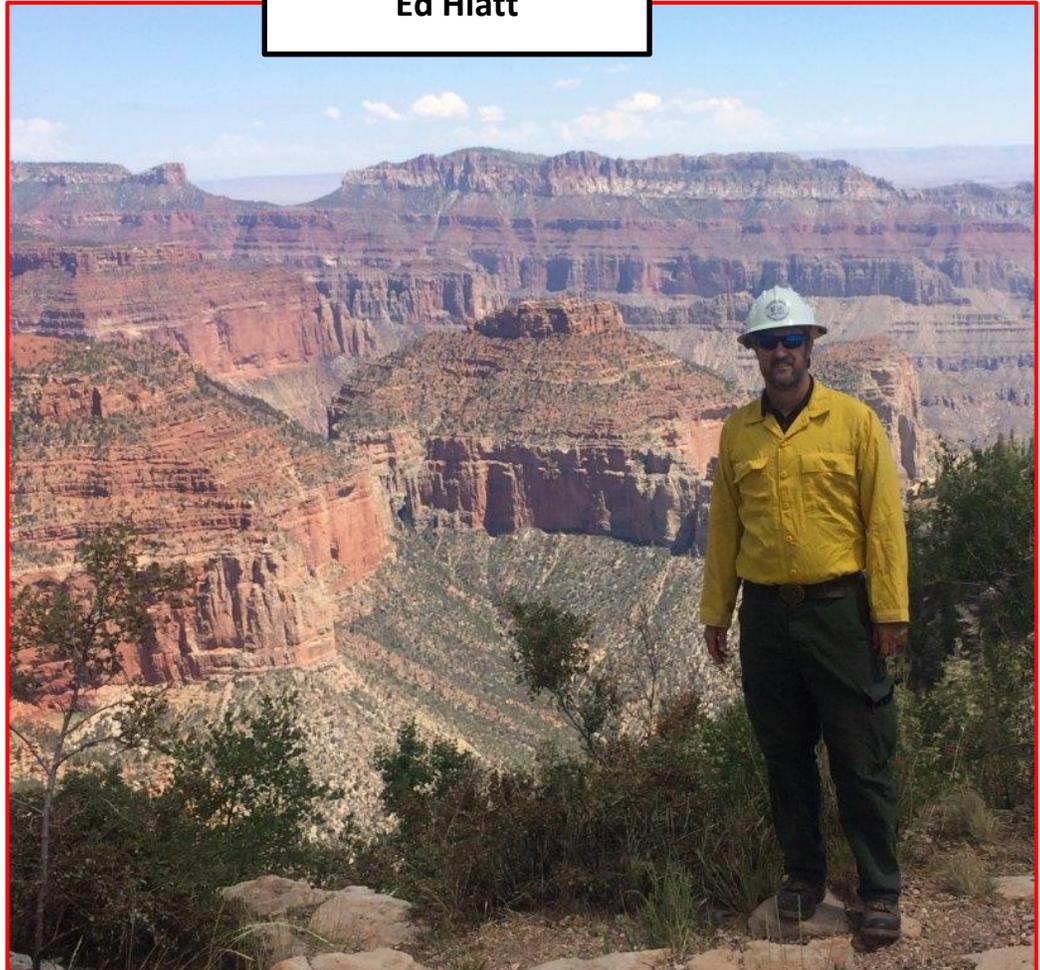
Now entering his 29th year in this professional pursuit, Ed is currently the Interagency Fire Staff Officer for the Willamette and Siuslaw national forests and the Bureau of Land Management's Northwest Oregon District. In this position, he's also responsible for eight U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service coastal refuges in Northwest Oregon. (Ed points out that his work on these refuges is "very minimal".)

During his ongoing almost three decades of wildland fire work, Ed has worn various agency hats, including: Cal Fire; several national forests (in Regions 3, 6, and 5); Saguaro National Park, Bandelier National Monument, and Grand Canyon National Park. And he's also worked on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina.

Positions on his impressive resume include: Engine Crew, Hotshot Crew, Fire Use Module, Module Leader, Fire Use Specialist, and District FMO. His incident positions/qualifications include: Deputy IC for the Southwest Area IMT4, Operations Section Chief 2, Planning Section Chief 2, and Type 2 Incident Commander.

Over the course of this man's vast and varied experiences from coast to coast in wildland fire, there's one particular date that stands out to Ed Hiatt: May 4, 2000. This wildland firefighter will never forget what happened on this day 18 years ago.

"At times it seems like yesterday," Ed assures. "The memories are still very fresh—all the challenges that we all went through."



Grand Canyon National Park is one of the many places where Ed has worked during his 29-year wildland fire career. But during the course of these almost three decades, there is one date that stands out to Ed: May 4, 2000.

[Continued on Page 6]

[Continued from Page 5] On that Thursday night, May 4, 2000, the 300-acre prescribed fire ignition that Ed was working on with 18 others inside New Mexico's Bandelier National Monument escaped its planned containment boundaries. At the time, Ed was the Lead Crewmember on Bandelier's Fire Use Module.

After working on this prescribed fire throughout the night, at approximately 1300 the next afternoon, their Upper Frijoles Unit I Prescribed Fire is declared a wildfire. It is given the name Cerro Grande Fire. ("Cerro Grande" is "big hill" in Spanish. The top of Cerro Grande is 10,200 feet. The prescribed fire's project area was from 9 to 10,000 feet.)

Lucky to Meet Paul Gleason

At that time, Paul Gleason was the Wildland Fire Management Specialist for the National Park Service's Intermountain Regional Office. The day of the prescribed fire ignition, he had traveled down from his Denver office to Bandelier for a "show me" tour of some other prescribed fire units that had been identified for future burning. Ed was chosen to take Gleason on this tour.

"It was kind of lucky for me to get to meet Paul," Ed recalls. "I'd never met him before. I didn't really know anything about his background. I didn't know that he had developed LCES. Basically, he was just another guy coming down from the regional office to see what we were doing. Because I'd been helping prep units, I knew the overall layout. So they chose me to be the one to take Paul around."

As it coincidentally turned out, later that day they were in prescription to light their Upper Frijoles Unit I. Gleason was asked if he'd like to stick around and be a "fire observer" on their burn that evening. The veteran fire dog, of course, said: "You bet!"

"So Gleason hung around with us up on Cerro Grande for the burn," Ed informs. "He helped us pack supplies and bladder bags and jerry cans of fuel up the hill—all that kind of necessary stuff for a prescribed fire."

"The guy was an animal," marvels Ed about Gleason. "That old hotshot supt. could hike up anything you'd ask for." Ed says Gleason even made one of his one-half mile trips up the hill carrying both a full jerry can and a full bladder bag at the same time. (And, remember, this was at 9,000 feet-plus above sea level.)

Cerro Grande Fire Burns Into Los Alamos

At approximately 8 p.m., they lit the match for their prescribed fire.

"There was still sunlight up on the hill," Ed recalls. "I remember we had this amazing view from on top of Cerro Grande looking out over the Valles Caldera, the Rio Grande River Valley, and up at the Sangre De Christos. You know, absolutely nobody was saying: 'Hey man, we shouldn't do this.' Everyone felt great. Everything was set. Everything was in alignment."

Fourteen hours after ignition, due to extenuating circumstances, the unit's FMO and the Burn Boss decide to transition Gleason to Burn Boss. Later that second day of the prescribed fire when it transitioned to a Type 3 wildfire incident, Gleason becomes the IC.



Paul Gleason

1946-2003

Paul Gleason died of colon cancer at 57. During his remarkable four-decade wildland fire career—with 20 years of hotshot crew leadership experience—Gleason made numerous contributions to the wildland fire service, including developing LCES. He will always be known for his passionate crusade for propelling his "Student of Fire" philosophy.



Ed Hiatt (on right) was a stand presenter on the first Cerro Grande Staff Ride in May 2004. Al King (on left) was the Fire Management Officer at Bandelier National Monument when their prescribed fire converted to the Cerro Grande Fire in May 2000. The image in the center of this picture—the layout of the Upper Frijoles Unit 1—is featured on the wall in Ed's office today.

"Everyone felt great.

Everything was set.

Everything was in alignment."

"When the sh*t hit the fan, it's almost like Paul got more calm the more intense the situation got," Ed recalls. "He's just a very steady, strong man. He listens to you. He made decisions with an understanding of fire and the severity of the situation that was occurring up there."

Gleason and his Type 3 Team manage the fire until 6 a.m. on Monday when a Type 1 Team takes over the incident.

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"We thought we were doing the right thing," Ed says of their prescribed fire that escaped. "We were working hard and there was no intent to do anything wrong or have such a terrible outcome with all the losses that occurred."

[Continued from Page 6] The subsequent 47,000-acre Cerro Grande Fire burns for 16 days, causes severe private property damage and natural resource loss, evacuates more than 18,000 people, destroys 235 homes, and threatens and impacts high-value resources, including: property and developments in Bandelier National Monument and the Santa Fe National Forest; Los Alamos National Laboratory (where 7,500 acres burn, causing significant damage to structures and property); and the towns of Los Alamos, White Rock, Santa Clara Pueblo, and San Ildefonso Pueblo.

More than 1,600 individuals and businesses file claims under the Cerro Grande Fire Assistance Act.

In response to this colossal fire event, the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture issue a moratorium on prescribed fire applications throughout the West.

"I remember when the fire first made a substantial run down toward Los Alamos—and the night that houses starting burning there," Ed says. "Even though that was 18 years ago, it feels like yesterday. It's pretty traumatic when you're seeing and hearing the emotions of folks you work with and know—and you realize that this event is going to be one that lasts with them a long time."

Ed also remembers how after the Cerro Grande Fire event, during the initial investigation process, everything in their fire module's offices were packed up and taken away by federal law enforcement officers. Many of their work folders and records were never seen by these module members again.

"It didn't matter if it had to do with prescribed fire or your personnel files," Ed says. "Anything and everything in our office was taken away in boxes. Even entire filing cabinets were hauled away. The way that everything was done to us like this was not comforting."

Turned Their Backs on Us

To say that this experience impacted Ed Hiatt's life would be a tremendous understatement.

"There were some very, very good folks in our agency who supported us," Ed informs. "And there were some people who, quite frankly, turned their backs on us in a time of need. I don't need to name names, but it's something that folks, when they're coming up and they're saying that they've got your back—I sure hope they mean it."

Ed says that he and the others who had been a part of the original prescribed fire implementation were faced with a ton of challenges.

"My landlord's home in Los Alamos burned down as a result of Cerro Grande," Ed says. "So, you know, there was always that personal sense of responsibility, that what we had started ended up having such an impact on so many people we knew."

Ed continues, "We thought we were doing the right thing. We were working hard and there was no intent to do anything wrong or have such a terrible outcome with all the losses that occurred."

Ed totally vouches for the original Burn Boss. "He was a great guy with lots of experience. He was one of the smartest guys you'd ever meet.

He had a great understanding of fire behavior. He was a great supervisor, a great coach."

Ed explains how this Burn Boss took the Cerro Grande Fire outcome very personally. "I know it hit him very hard."

When the fire began burning into Los Alamos, actual threats were being made to the Burn Boss. "He had to have plainclothes unmarked law enforcement personnel at his home to provide protection," Ed says. "He was basically under guard at his own home with his wife and young daughter. At that point, I can only imagine how he was feeling."

Negative Encounters with the Public

In the aftermath of the Cerro Grande Fire, Ed also had negative encounters with local residents.

"Even though that was 18 years ago, it feels like yesterday. It's pretty traumatic when you're seeing and hearing the emotions of folks you work with and know—and you realize that this event is going to be one that lasts with them a long time."

[Continued from Page 7] “There were a few times I’d be getting gas (in his government rig) in Los Alamos or White Rock and folks would have some unkind words for us,” Ed says. “When you have an agency vehicle with the Park Service emblem, you’re a pretty easy target, you’re easy to identify.”

Ed says he recognized that arguing at a gas station wasn’t going to accomplish anything.

“And I realized that those folks weren’t personally blaming me. They were just upset about what had happened and just needed to vent. I never really felt like anybody was pointing a finger directly at me. We were part of team. It was all of us who had worked on that prescribed fire. It was the Park Service, it was Bandelier, it was the fire program in general.”

No CISM

Ed reminds us that 18 years ago there wasn’t a whole lot being done with CISM—Critical Incident Stress Management.

“We were directed to go to a practitioner in Santa Fe and talk about our feelings. I don’t even know who that was. None of us really wanted to be there. We wanted to be out working. We wanted to get back to work at Bandelier. We wanted to be out on the line.”

When the fire made its run through Bandelier National Monument, it was evacuated. Afterwards, Bandelier employees, including Ed and his fire module, couldn’t get back up to their work site.

“It wasn’t because we didn’t want too,” Ed explains. “It was because we were physically blocked by the National Guard with Humvees and large caliber weaponry on top. They secured the facility. For at least ten days we couldn’t go back up there or be engaged or help with the fire.”

When Bandelier and Los Alamos were evacuated, Ed put the word out that folks could stay at his place. “So we had about 15 people camped out in our little one-bedroom guest house for a couple weeks.”

He says it was around that time when somebody came by his house and asked him and his fire module what they wanted. “We said we wanted to go back to work. We can’t sit here at the house and linger. We need to go to work.”

An arrangement was made for the module to go to Yellowstone National Park for a few weeks—to get out of town—to do project work or whatever the folks at Yellowstone needed.

“So we camped out at Yellowstone,” Ed says. “It allowed us to get back to work, which is really what we needed.”

Ed explains that getting back to it at Yellowstone was good medicine for those folks who had been involved in the Upper Frijoles Unit 1 prescribed burn.

“That ended up being a pretty fun decompression time working up there with the Yellowstone folks. Those guys were so supportive of us. They did everything they could to make us, you know, feel like we were back being productive again.

“Just getting back to work was probably what saved most of us and got us back on track.”

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Ed with his wife, Molly, children Samuel and Audrey, and family dog (and Ed’s running partner) Moki.

Two More Chains, published quarterly by the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, is dedicated to sharing information with wildland firefighters. For story tips, questions, or comments, please contact: Paul Keller, prkeller@fs.fed.us, 503-622-4861.

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[Continued from Page 8]

Positive Outcomes

Ed also likes to remember the positive outcomes that can be gleaned from the entire negative Cerro Grande Fire experience.

“Something that got overlooked was the successful evacuation of the entire town of Los Alamos and the Lab (Los Alamos National Laboratory) as well as the subsequent evacuation of the town of White Rock—more than 18,000 folks,” Ed points out. “That represents probably one of the most efficient, quick evacuations that took place within only a few hours.

“The evacuation plan that Los Alamos had absolutely worked. They turned all the roads, all at once, in one direction. We had all five lanes designated for leaving out of Los Alamos down the hill toward the highway to Taos and Santa Fe.”

Ed continues, “A lot of potential loss was prevented by all those people successfully getting out of town. A lot of homes burned in Los Alamos. I can’t imagine what might have happened if there were still people in there when that fire came through.”

Burn Boss Tips

Ed also believes that experiencing and enduring Cerro Grande helped encourage him to be a better burn boss.

He points out that when Cerro Grande occurred he wasn’t yet writing or preparing burn plans. Today he’s climbed up the ranks to be one of the people responsible for reviewing them.

“I’ve moved a long way in my career. Having Cerro Grande in my background, I believe, gives me a chance and maybe even an obligation to give these burn plans and these new burn bosses—and also older burn bosses—give them a critical look and an honest opinion on their burn.”

Ed says he feels it’s his responsibility to provide these burn bosses critical feedback and the reality check of “What ifs”. “Not to scare folks,” he assures. “But every once in a while you’ve got to look at all of the possibilities—including what if the bad happens. Are you prepared for that?”

“You never know what that bad will be. But you’ve got to give it some thought and discuss it with the group. Nobody wants that to happen, but we’ve got to be prepared. We’ve got to.”

Ed also recommends asking others to review your burn plan, to seek outside feedback. “Maybe after you’ve stared at your document for so long, you just don’t see what’s in it anymore.”

Ed’s Promise

Today, Ed says he tries to make it back and assist with the annual Cerro Grande staff rides.

“A long time ago I promised myself that I’d go back and talk about Cerro Grande whenever possible. I think that’s the right thing to do. We need to go back and share what happened way back then.”

“I’ve moved a long way in my career. Having Cerro Grande in my background, I believe, gives me a chance and maybe even an obligation to give these burn plans and these new burn bosses—and also older burn bosses—give them a critical look and an honest opinion on their burn.”



One Podcast episode and three Blog Posts are part of this **Two More Chains**. All of these pieces are essential elements of this issue.



PODCAST

Listen to Brit Rosso and Travis Dotson discuss “Bad Apples.”

<https://wildfirelessons.podbean.com/e/bad-apples/>

BLOGS

- Underslung Heroes
<https://wildfirelessons.wordpress.com/2018/05/29/underslung-heroes/>
- Paul Gleason – Up Close and Personal
<https://wildfirelessons.wordpress.com/2018/05/30/paul-gleason-up-close-and-personal/>
- Paul Gleason’s Influence Went Way Beyond Wildland Fire
<https://wildfirelessons.wordpress.com/2018/05/31/paul-gleasons-influence-went-way-beyond-wildland-fire>

UPDATE

New Dozer Parking Brake Switches to be Installed

The “One of Our Own” feature in our [Two More Chains Winter Issue](#) focused on how U.S. Forest Service Dozer Operator Bryan Baxter’s swamper, Gary Avila, was involved in an accident in which he—fortunately—avoided serious injury.

Bryan and Gary were preparing to winch a Cal Fire dozer up a steep embankment on the Cable Fire last June. Gary had gone down to discuss radio communications with the Cal Fire Dozer Operator. The Cal Fire dozer’s parking brake was set and its blade was grounded.

With the operator’s permission, Gary had climbed up onto the driver’s-side tracks to talk with him. As Gary stood on those tracks, somehow the dozer’s parking brake suddenly released—and the machine starting rolling. “Gary had to quickly jump over the blade to prevent being consumed by the tracks,” Bryan recalled in the “One of Our Own”.

After the dozer had rolled approximately 10 feet, the dozer operator was able to apply the service brake and stop it. When Gary had jumped and dove into the ground on his emergency barrel-roll type dismount, he injured his right hand.



Photo shows the new parking brake switch being installed on the Cal Fire 2015 CAT D6NXL dozers. To release the parking brake after the switch is activated, the operator must depress the red locking tab then rock the switch to the “released” position. Thus, the locking mechanism on this switch will eliminate the parking brake’s accidental release. This switch change will fit all the effected Cal Fire D6NXL machines.

For everyone’s safety and for future learning, Bryan realized that this incident needed more examination and exposure. He became the catalyst for more follow-up on what caused this incident and how it could be prevented from happening again. As Bryan pointed out in the “One of Our Own”, “As the Chair of the Regional Dozer Group, I have a responsibility to look into this because it happened with a newer generation Cat (Caterpillar) that we will be replacing our machines with.”

Cal Fire issued a [Green Sheet](#) on the incident that identified how the throttle control, hydraulic lock, and parking brake control switches are positioned near the steering controls on these dozers. Cal Fire tasked the department’s Mobile Equipment Committee to evaluate the location of the switches and identify the need to either relocate or install a guard cover over these switches.

New Parking Brake Switches will Eliminate Accidental Release

Next, in early April of 2018, Cal Fire released a [“Safety Communication” \(SC2018-03 Dozer Parking Brake Update\)](#) announcement that informed how, in response to this Cable Fire incident, its Mobile Equipment Management and its Mobile Equipment Planning and Advisory Group have now recommended moving or guarding the parking brake switch on all of their 2015 and 2016 model CAT D6NXLs (see photo on left).

Four Individuals Receive Annual Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award

The annual “Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award” was created by the NWCG Leadership Committee to remember Paul Gleason’s contributions to the wildland fire service. During a career spanning four decades, Paul was a dedicated student of fire, a teacher of fire, and a leader of firefighters. The intent of this award is to recognize individuals or groups who exhibit this same spirit and who exemplify the [wildland fire leadership values and principles](#).

It was recently announced that four individuals from across the wildland fire service have been chosen to receive the national 2017 [Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award](#).

Matt Jolly and Larry Bradshaw of the U.S. Forest Service Fire Sciences Laboratory, Honored for “Initiative and Innovation”

In receiving their 2017 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Awards, Matt Jolly and Larry Bradshaw are being recognized for their work transitioning the National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) indices into a valuable decision-support tool.

Their commitment to making things better for firefighters on the ground became a reality with an updated system that better reflects conditions on the ground, resulting in increased safety and the ability to manage risk.

Matt and Larry’s willingness to devote time and effort to this project as a collateral duty exhibits strong leadership. These men saw a gap and filled the need. Thanks to their dedicated work, wildland firefighters across the nation will now be able to easily manage and interpret NFDRS outputs and make sound decisions.



Matt Jolly (left) and Larry Bradshaw receive their 2017 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Awards. (Photo courtesy Rob Chaney, the *Missoulian* newspaper.)

Chris Henry, Assistant Superintendent of the Ruby Mountain Interagency Hotshot Crew, Honored for “Mentoring and Teamwork”

In receiving his 2017 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award, Chris Henry was recognized for his unwavering loyalty to the hotshot program and his Bureau of Land Management agency. By putting personal career goals aside for the greater good, Chris showed the true spirit of wildland fire leadership.

His mentorship and team building efforts contributed to the rebuilding and retention of a quality hotshot crew that will provide benefits throughout the wildland fire service for years to come.

Hector Madrid, New Mexico State Fire Management Officer for the Bureau of Land Management, Honored for “Motivation and Vision”

In receiving his 2017 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award, Hector Madrid was recognized for his strong leadership and unwavering pursuit to improve the Bureau of Land Management line-of-duty death gratuity payment process.

Empathy for our fallen and their families became Hector’s bias for action. Even though he knew this would be a challenging task, Hector did not hesitate to move the effort forward. Hector’s three-year battle ended

with a policy that now allows the agency to make a payment to the family of a line-of-duty death within days of the incident.

This change has had an enormously positive impact on surviving families and our most valuable resource—our people.



Chris Henry with his 2017 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award.



Hector Madrid (center) receives his 2017 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award. On left: Aden Seidlitz, Acting New Mexico State Director, Bureau of Land Management. On right: Eric Walker, New Mexico State Assistant Fire Management Officer, Bureau of Land Management.

Wildland Firefighter Health and Behavior Study

Please Participate

You are invited to participate in an ANONYMOUS survey about the health risks of current and former wildland firefighters.



Why Participate?

The long-term physical, psychological, and behavioral health risks of wildland firefighters are not well-documented in research. By voicing your experiences as a participant in this study, you are making an important contribution toward understanding and improving wildland firefighter health.

**Do Your Part
for the Greater Good!**

Your Input Truly Matters!

To Participate, Simply Click on this Link:

https://umt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_080qdGFTskXOAVD