



Cowlitz Chaplaincy PO Box 2578, Longview, WA. 98632

Website: www.cowlitzchaplaincy.org

A non-profit organization serving emergency service responders and citizens of Cowlitz County since 1983

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Winter Is Here

The month of December was an exciting month as we prepared for the birthday of our Lord Jesus. It also was a month that brought tremendous sorrow as members of some families tried to put sense to tragedy that encompassed them during a time when they were expecting joy and laughter.

The Lure of the High Country

It was the last day of Elk hunting for the Bow Hunters of our region. As the night gave way to the dim light of early morning it was a perfect day for hunting. The woods would be quiet because of the intense rain that had fallen during the week. High in the back- country, northwest of Mt. St. Helen, the air was cold and the wind was blowing. A day that was ideal for the hardy men of the Northwest to stalk their wood wise Big Game. It really is a cat and mouse game, as these magnificent animals try to out maneuver the hunter. For the Elk it is a life or death game to be played

every year when the days are short and the winds chill in the Northwest.

Two friends who were avid hunters and love the outdoors suddenly experience the adrenalin

rush when finally, after hours of searching and tracking, there in front of them was the trophy,



the magnificent elk.

The hunter and the hunted see each other simultaneously and off with the speed that defies logic the elk runs for safety and the hunter hurries to get an advantage shot. It was in this scenario that one of our citizens found himself; the time was late in the afternoon. With age and a weakening heart, he had to sit down for a few moments of rest.

The members of Cowlitz County Search and Rescue are brave and selfless men and women.

They volunteer their time and energy to search for those who are lost. The Teams received the call to search for a missing hunter. The call came in at about six PM. They entered their vehicles and headed to the high country near Mt. St Helens to search for the lost hunter. It was dark, cold and steep terrain, but these brave people organized by top leaders formed the grids that were to be searched. It was about 1AM when one of the teams found the hunter lying on grassy clear-cut hillside. The chase had ended for this hunter; the end of a sport he loved as he stepped into the regions of eternity. The night gave way to a new day that brought sorrow to a family as they tried to process the news from this Chaplain, that their loved one died doing what he loved to do, and that was to enjoy the wilderness with all its treasures.

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JUST SOME THOUGHTS

As life goes, there are times of “ups and downs” – times of “good and bad” – times of “fun and sad” – times of “positive and negative.” Sandwiched in between are all sorts of other ‘life moments.’ This month I want to share thoughts from two events that demonstrate the extremes in life.

First the positive. On December 21st I had the privilege of seeing our first **“Shop with a Cop”** event in

Longview. 20 of my LPD officers volunteered their time to come to Wal Mart and “shop til they dropped” with 20 needy kids in our community. Thanks to a generous donation from our local Wal Mart and the Longview Police Benefit Association, each kid had \$60.00 to spend however they wanted. The officers were there to assist and just ‘hang out with’ the kids for a while. Trust me, this stretched the heartstrings of some of my officers as they reached into their own pockets to add to the money their kid had. Another surprise was having store customers see the activity and donate money to the kids as well!

Youth & Family Link (a local support organization) helped



Rock PD.

me out by selecting which kids would participate in the activity. Their assistance both prior to and at the event was most helpful. All the time and effort spent organizing and recruiting officers and managing the event was well worth it as I saw smile after smile on both the kids and the officers faces that day. I told some of my officers later that this “made” my Christmas this year. I am so blessed to work with so many wonderful folks

and look forward to Christmas 2008 when we will expand the program to include Kelso PD and Castle

On the other side of life’s scale, I was called on to assist 3 “family groups” when one of our local volunteer firefighters was tragically killed in an industrial accident on January 18th. These kind of incidents are always full of pain and heartache, but this one went deep into the entire Fire Service Community. Losing one of your own is the most difficult of all calls. One aspect that made this call extremely difficult was that the medics who rushed to the scene knew and worked with this firefighter. The medic crew did their job admirably, but when the reality of the event hit home, the grieving process began. This particular volunteer was described by Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue (C2F/R) Chief Dave LaFave as a “fire chief’s

firefighter.” This young man was ALWAYS ready to go when the bell went off – always willing to do whatever he could to help others (including taking time from work to go to California this past summer to fight wild-land fires). The church was packed as we all said farewell to one of our own. It’s been said that “*It’s not how you die that makes you a hero, it’s how you live.*” Gary Wagner was a ‘hero’ and for that we join the Wagner family, C2F/R family & the R.D. Olson Mfgr family in grieving this tragic loss. Please keep them in your prayers...

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “*There is a time and a season for every activity under heaven...*” I am thankful for the lessons in both the ‘good times and bad’. May I never forget that YOU make this ministry possible – God Bless You in 2008!

(Next time: a report on the visit with my ‘Nam buddy, “Poncho”)

Shalom!

Chap Steve



In Memory of Gary Wagner
“A Fire Chief’s Firefighter”

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Family celebration was a delight at my home this year as my children except for my oldest son and his family gathered at Miriam's and my home for Christmas. It was also Miriam and my first Christmas as husband and wife. Food, presents and the closeness of children and grand-children and enjoying the remembrance of the birth of our Lord Jesus made our holiday a time to remember. I am a blessed man.

Steve and I want to thank you for your faithfulness in your support for 2007. We pray that your generosity will continue throughout this new year. May our partnership continue to enjoy success in reaching those who find their life altered by a crisis. Please keep your faithful prayers and financial support coming for the Chaplains Program.

Your friend

Chaplain Lyle

A Community of Kindness

One of our faithful donors who wanted to be anonymous gave a sum of money with which we were able to help three families at Christmas time. We received a wonderful thanks letter from Catlin Elementary School:

Dear Lyle Prather and the Cowlitz Chaplaincy, The staff and families of Catlin thank you for your wonderful donations at Christmas. As you know many of our families struggle to cover basic needs of a family and the holidays can make this more difficult. We at Catlin very much

appreciate you thinking of our families during this time. I know this opportunity was very much appreciated by the recipients. One mother expressed that she could hardly believe how fortunate she was to be helped out of a difficult situation by your generosity. I hope you know how much you touched the lives of these families. Thanks again for considering and supporting our Catlin families. We wish you all the best in 2008. Sincerely, Michelle Mueller Intervention Specialist Mrs. Nancy Gill Principal

Then the 3 Rivers Women's Golf Assoc. also gave a donation and we were able to help two other families to have Christmas this year. It was heart-warming to see and know five families were helped and to witness the gratitude that they expressed. We were over whelmed with the kindness shared with these two donations that totaled \$876.00. We want to acknowledge you folks and say "Thank You."

Expanding our knowledge

Cannon Beach Conference Center provided a wonderful setting for our annual ongoing education with International Conference of Police Chaplains. Lyle and Steve (along with their wives) attended this years training. Topics included subjects such as; "Burnout" (for both Chaplains & Emergency Responders), "Coroner/ME &

the Chaplain", and "Officer Injury & Death."



The Prather's and the White's enjoy a class together

Lyle's favorites were "Integrity" and "Qualities of Effective Leadership" (setting priorities). Steve's favorites were "Post-Shooting Syndrome" & "Psychological Body Armor." These conferences provide much needed educational knowledge and opportunity to 'network' with other chaplains from the NW.

**25th Anniversary
Fundraiser**

Plans are underway to celebrate the Chaplaincy's 25th Anniversary on April 26, 2008, at the Regional Conference Center.

This will also be our 3rd Annual Fundraiser Breakfast event with speakers and special recognitions. For further info contact our office.

Reservations MUST be made by April 1st!! (no fooling!)

Check us out on the WEB:

www.cowlitzchaplaincy.org