



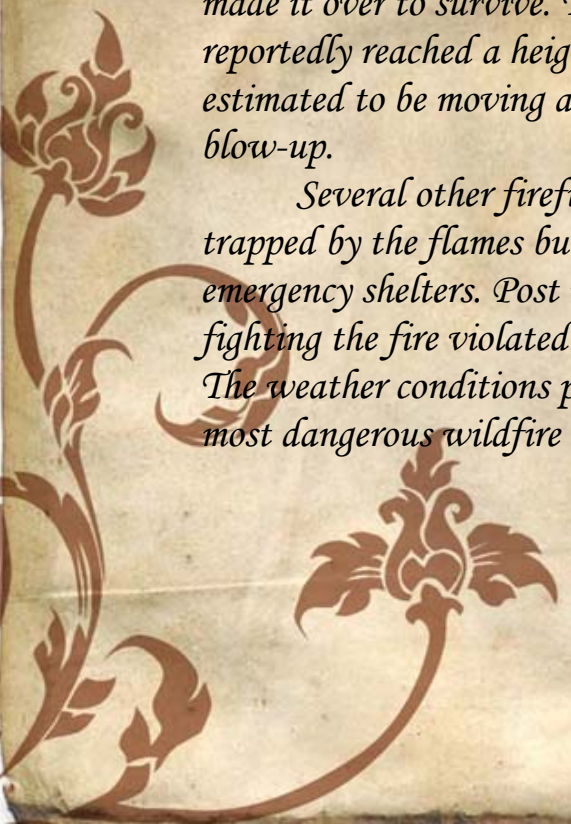
# Jon Roy Kelso

USDA Forest Service, Ochoco National Forest

Date of Death: July 6, 1994

On July 6, fourteen wildland firefighters lost their lives when a wind shift resulted in a blow-up fire condition that trapped them on the uphill and downwind position from the fire on Storm King Mountain, Colorado. The fourteen firefighters included smokejumpers Don Mackey, Roger Roth, and James Thrash; Prineville Hot Shots John Kelso, Kathi Beck, Scott Blecha, Levi Brinkley, Bonnie Holtby, Rob Johnson, Tami Bickett, Doug Dunbar, and Terri Hagen; and helitack crew members Richard Tyler and Robert Browning.

Browning and Tyler were killed when their escape route was cut off by a large drop and they were overrun by the fire. The other firefighters were killed as they moved towards the ridgeline to escape the fire advancing towards them from below. According to witness accounts, the firefighters were unable to see how dangerous their position had become because of a small ridge below them. They had been moving slowly and were still carrying their equipment as the fire blew up behind them to a height of over 100 feet. At this point the crew dropped their tools and made an uphill dash for the top of the mountain but only one person made it over to survive. The fire overran the remaining twelve firefighters and reportedly reached a height of 200 to 300 feet as it crossed over the ridge. It was estimated to be moving at between 10 and 20 miles per hour at the time of the blow-up.



Several other firefighters in various other locations on the mountain became trapped by the flames but were able to make it to safe positions or deploy their emergency shelters. Post incident investigations have determined that the crews fighting the fire violated many safety procedures and standard firefighting orders. The weather conditions prevalent that day had forecast a "red flag" meaning the most dangerous wildfire conditions.