

**What Was Learned**  
**Loop Fire Memorial Ceremony**  
November 1, 1996

I am honored to have been asked to participate in this memorial ceremony. I am especially honored to have been asked by my first hotshot superintendent and mentor, with whom I stood 30 years ago today at the top of this notorious chimney - Chuck Hartley.

Unfortunately, much of our knowledge and lessons learned about wildland fire have been gained only through the high costs of firefighters' lives. To honor those who suffered and those who lost their lives on November 1, 1966 I would like to highlight the lessons their tragedy continues to share with us today.

- 30 years ago today we were made to realize the need for downhill line operations guidelines.

Today, every firefighter should be consulting a checklist to identify the critical factors which must all be favorably aligned before line construction begins down a slope.

- 30 years ago today we were shown the importance of fireline intelligence, especially along critical fireline segments.

Today we should not hesitate to post lookouts, use field observers or to call for an aerial observation before we commit our firefighters to potentially hazardous situations.

- 30 years ago today we were made aware of the absolute necessity of lightweight radio communications.

Today each crew engaged in fire management activities should be able to communicate among themselves as well as to every crew they work with in the fire environment.

- 30 years ago today we were reminded of the importance of lightweight fire protective clothing and shelter.

Today countless numbers of lives have been saved because we are required to carry and use this equipment. And, today the effort continues to find the appropriate balance between lightweight and adequate personal protective equipment for use in a life-threatening situation should our judgment fail.

- 30 years ago today we were compelled to re-examine the full array of presuppression activities to include modifying fuel profiles to make fire suppression safer.

Today we should move aggressively forward with fuel management programs as an integral part of fire management.

- 30 years ago today we were given a graphic illustration of fire behavior in a chimney.

Today we should make it crystal clear in fire suppression training the potential danger of these and other extreme topographic features.

- 30 years ago today I saw, through the Loop Fire and those who fought to suppress it, the critical importance of ensuring lookouts, communications, escape routes, and safety zones were always in place as a safety system in a hazardous fire environment.

And I saw how there must be a constant vigilance against casualness, distraction, and the lack of knowledge in wildland fire operations.

For all those firefighters whose tragedy taught me these lessons, I am thankful.

We as firefighters can most honor them by recognizing and cherishing the lessons they have imparted to us at the greatest price.

Paul Gleason