

## **Ralph Phipps**

Most of you now know the very sad news: Ralph died early Sunday afternoon (August 9, 2009) in Atlanta, Georgia. After spending many years here on the Shasta-Trinity (1978-2007), Ralph moved to South Carolina as Deputy Forest Manager on the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site (managed by the Forest Service).

Below is a brief history of Ralph's career on the forest and a picture of him and his daughter Becky. Ralph sent me the picture in 2007 capturing the last leg of their journey from California through Nevada, Utah, ..., Tennessee and then North Carolina before going into South Carolina. He said they made it in four nights and five days!

**Cards, letters, etc. can be addressed to his wife Debbie at 750 Wythe Drive, Graniteville, SC 29829.**

*-Sharon Heywood, Forest Supervisor-*



### **Ralph's History on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest**

Ralph was hired as a forester on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in 1978 on the McCloud Ranger District. He was in charge of timber stand improvement for ten years, and as would happen so many times with Ralph, he accomplished twice as much work as most people and always loved to bring innovative ideas into motion. He treated over 50,000 acres during this time and brought machine planting back to the district. In 1989 Ralph took a promotion to the

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Hayfork Ranger District and headed up a huge reforestation program in the wake of fires known as the Siege of 1987. Within six years he was responsible for reforesting more than 60,000 acres.

No matter where Ralph was working, he always found time to play in a blues band. He was a talented, enthusiastic drummer and loved to play on the weekends. He never made much money, but he said it was a good gig if it paid for gas and they got a free meal. Many of Ralph's friends would often show up at the establishments where he was playing on a Friday or Saturday night because the music was great and it was fun to see Ralph so happy playing his drums.

The last move Ralph made on the Forest was in 1992 when he came into the Planning shop at the Supervisor's Office in Redding as the Environmental Coordinator. Benefiting from all his field experience, Ralph became an outstanding planner and had a key role in completing the Forest Plan in 1995. He was known for his ability to negotiate difficult problems. His supervisor said he could mediate solutions to difficult projects better than anyone he has ever known. He also served on a detail in the Regional Office assisting with analysis and editing of the Sierra Nevada Framework. Ralph was in the planning shop on the Forest until 2007 when he transferred to Region 8.

Ralph is remembered for his friendly smile, his warm personality, his ability to get along with everyone and his amazing ability to get things done, no matter how difficult. But most people that knew Ralph knew that more than anything Ralph loved his family: his wife Debbie, his three girls, Lily, Becky and Anna and his son Daniel. One of his favorite things every year was planning a special family vacation. He would love to come back and tell us about all their adventures camping and sightseeing in new and unusual places on the west coast. He was also active in Cub Scouts with his son and for a year or two was a co-leader in a very active local troop. Those close to him also know that Ralph was a man of strong faith. He was active in his church and in the church school his children attended. Many people here on the Shasta-Trinity will truly miss Ralph. We send our sympathy and prayers to his family and friends in South Carolina.

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The memorial services will be at 12:15 p.m., Eastern Time Zone, Friday, August 14, at the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, 811 Telfair, Augusta, GA. Arrangements are handled by Hatcher Funeral Home and Cremation Service, 3464 Jefferson Davis Highway, Langley, SC 29834, (803) 593-8778. There will be no visitation. However, beginning tomorrow, individuals may sign the Guestbook for the family via the *Augusta Chronicle*,

<http://www.legacy.com/augustachronicle/Obituaries.asp?Page=GBGateway>

If you desire to send flowers for the services, please have them delivered by Friday morning to the Hatcher Funeral Home. If you wish to send a card to the family, Ralph's wife, Debbie, and son, Daniel, reside at: 750 Wythe Drive, Graniteville, SC 29829

Employees wishing to wear the Forest Service uniform to the service are encouraged to do so.

R-8 is working with the family to learn how the FS can help them through this time and in the future. If you would like to find a way to help, please contact Stephanie Johnson in R-8 at 803.725.0006. A college fund will be established to help with Danny's education, but the details are not yet available to share.