

Jeff Ruddell used his EMT training to save three lives, plus his own

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

Jeff Ruddell was born in Raymond in 1958 to Ellis and Betty Ruddell. He grew up and attended school in Raymond. Jeff graduated from Raymond High School in 1976 in a class of 76 students

Jeff says, "While growing up and attending RHS, I was not too active in school activities. I spent my time being very studious—for my goal in life was to learn all I could and be able to attain an enjoyable and great job!"

After graduation, Jeff attended Grays Harbor Community College, receiving an Associate in Applied Sciences degree. He then attended Green River Community College and received a Forest Technology Degree.

Jeff works for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources in Spokane, Washington, and has been there for over 19 years. He is in the Forest Fire Control Division as a Fire Control Technician.

He says, "I have worked on and fought major forest fires in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. I am a member of The Northeast Region Washington State Incident Management Team #1 as a Food Unit Leader, meaning that I am responsible for the feeding of all the fire troops!" From 1992 to 2000, Jeff was also an Emergency Medical Technician for the all-volunteer ambulance company in Deer Park, Washington. He says, "During my time there I was the elected vice-president of the company's administrative board."

On July 2, 1998, Jeff was on duty as a fire crew supervisor for the Department of Natural Resource Arcadia District when he was called to a fire in Tyler, near Cheney, off Interstate 90. While on his way to the fire, he came upon a scene that would call on all his training and knowledge as an emergency medical technician—to help the victims and then himself. The Tyler fire would have to wait. The scene was a total mayhem—a head-on collision.

Jeff was the first and only medically trained person to arrive at the scene so he took charge, aided by some bystanders. There were three critical victims: a woman was trapped in her car, semi-conscious; and a second man was not as critical. He had one bystander in the car comforting the trapped woman, who would have to be pried free by the personnel. Another bystander tended to the less critical man, while Jeff sent his DNR co-worker to tend to the most critical victim, the semi-conscious man. While he was talking to the fire dispatchers summoning help, the semi-conscious man stopped breathing; he had gone into "traumatic arrest" from his injuries. Ruddell performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation. His efforts saved the man's life.

After ambulance/fire crews arrived and the victims were transported, Jeff became ill. He was put in an ambulance and soon his symptoms indicated he was having a heart attack. He was transported to the hospital where he underwent angioplasty. He was off work a month and then was right back with the DNR and Deer Park Ambulance.

Because of patient confidentiality laws, Jeff never knew the identity of the victims and they never knew their rescuer. But his actions didn't go unnoticed. He was nominated for the Governor's Life Saving Award, which he received from Gov. Locke in Oct. of 1999.

Jeff says, "The one bad thing about the accident was that at the end of my rescue and treatment attempts, I too became injured. I had a heart attack, but I survived."

He adds, "Spokane is a great community and a great place to live. My life here is serene, quiet and enjoyable. I am single but have some of the greatest dogs in the world, Spencer and Tracey, two miniature schnauzers."

Jeff's parents and his sister and niece still live in Raymond. They keep him informed of the happenings. He tries to get over for the events and for the holidays.

When asked his advice for this year's seniors, Jeff says "All I have to say to students today is LEARN Learn all you can; stay in school be trustful, honest and have lots of integrity and respect for all people. Pick your goals and always to attain them!"



RHS Alumnus Jeff Ruddell, 1976, (left) received an award from Gov. Locke for his lifesaving efforts in the summer of '98.