

July 29, 2021

Grand Canyon History Tidbit by Kim Besom

Grand Canyon's Fallen Rangers

A tidbit in honor of **World Ranger Day**, a day to celebrate the work done in the protection of the 'planet's natural treasures and cultural heritage', while commemorating those killed or injured while in service of those duties.



Excerpted from the NPS Employee Memorial website, at <http://npshistory.com/employee-memorial/>:

“It has been said that our National Park System is America's "best idea." Unfortunately, these beautiful and historic places do not come without sacrifices. NPS employees work to preserve and protect our national treasures while working in some of the most challenging environments and remote locations in the U.S. They often work in places with little cell or radio reception; encounter challenging wildlife interactions; work under stressful, adverse weather, and environmental conditions; and interact with park visitors in places where the employees have little help. The Department of Labor and FBI have identified [NPS] law enforcement officers as being the most assaulted or killed in the line of duty... The women and men [killed] have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving the American people and working to preserve and protect our nation's ‘Crown Jewels’ ...The NPS is not alone in this tragedy, for in the last 130 years over 3,000 protected area workers have died at work across the world.” -Jeff Ohlfs, Retired NPS Chief Ranger

The Grand Canyon NP and Albright Training Center employees who have died while on duty include:

Rees Griffiths, 49, Trail Foreman

Died February 6, 1922, after being hit by a falling rock while working on the construction of the lower South Kaibab Trail. Griffiths is buried near Phantom Ranch.

Glen Sturdevant, 33, Park Naturalist

Drowned February 20, 1929, in the Colorado River when his boat capsized in Horn Creek Rapid, returning from an exploration and collecting expedition on the north side of the river. Sturdevant is buried in the Grand Canyon Pioneer Cemetery.

Fred Johnson, 30, Park Ranger

Drowned February 20, 1929, in the Colorado River when his boat capsized in Horn Creek Rapid, returning from an exploration and collecting expedition on the north side of the river. Johnson's body was never found but he has a headstone in the Grand Canyon Pioneer Cemetery.

James Hopkins, 28, Electrician

Died June 5, 1933, when the light pole he was climbing, in order to change out some wires, broke, causing him to fall. He is buried in the Grand Canyon Pioneer Cemetery.

Ronald Berg, 22, Seasonal Ranger

Died July 30, 1954, in a fall on the Tanner Trail, while hiking solo. Berg had only been in service for about a month.

James Vaughn, 28, Park Ranger

Died April 26, 1958, in a head-on car accident, in California, while returning from training in Yosemite.

Donald Welborn, 24, Roads & Trails Crew

Died March 7, 1972, while working on a road improvement project, after falling from the back of a water truck and being crushed by a roller being pulled behind the truck.

Ward (Bill) Hall, 24, Seasonal Ranger

Died July 16, 1979, in a collision with a dump truck, while responding to a motorcycle accident on the North Rim. The Bill Hall Trail is named for Hall.

Anthony Dean, 43, Training Specialist, Albright Training Center

Died November 1, 1980, after falling from a cliff on Horseshoe Mesa, during the night, while leading a multi-day training hike.

William Holland, 57, Maintenance Worker

Died January 31, 1990, of a heart attack, while walking from his snowmobile to the North Kaibab Trailhead.

Randy Thompson, 49, Trails Supervisor

Died February 26, 1996, after getting struck by a rock while engaged in trail maintenance in the Tapeats Creek area. A street in The Pines is named for Thompson.

Eric York, 37, Wildlife Biologist

Died November 2, 2007, after contracting pneumonic plague while performing a necropsy on a mountain lion.

A good reminder to stay safe out there!