

OBITUARIES

David Calahan

October 23, 1948 – September 8, 2020

David Calahan, 71, died of cancer on September 8 in the home that he built in the Applegate.

Born October 23, 1948, in Lebanon, Oregon, David loved Barbara, his wife of 24 years, and their family they joined together. He loved the outdoors and working on his property.

David was a retired Medford Fire Fighter, an Army veteran, and the founding chairman of the Applegate Trails Association. He enjoyed adventure, travel, deep-sea diving, white-water rafting, and ultralight aircraft.

David believed that living in the Applegate was paradise. In lieu of flowers, the family encourages donations to Applegate Trails Association (applegatetrails.org) and Save Wellington Wildlands (savewildlands.org).



David Calahan showing a piece of moss.

~ In Memoriam ~

The Applegate Valley has lost a leader

The Applegate Valley has lost a community leader. David Calahan was known for his creation of the Applegate Trails Association (ATA) and his decades-long fight to save the Wellington Wildlands. He was known for his balanced, reasonable approach to the issues and his ability to organize people.

But I write this not in awe of David's leadership, true though that may be. I write in praise of my friend of fifty years, Dave Calahan. We met in the early '70s, shortly after I took up residence on my family land after serving in Vietnam. As fellow veterans of a similar age, we soon became fast friends. Our friendship survived my years-long sojourn in Seattle for a career. Right after I came home, he showed up and gifted me with a brand-new pair of high-quality gloves.

Together we both lent shovels and muscles to the fire at Logtown and the one on Old Blue. Together we explored the Applegate valley, from the lake to Grants Pass. We stood together at Jackson County hearings to implement land-use planning as passed in Senate Bill 100. Many of the meetings in the Applegate, at both Ruch and Applegate schools, pitted the "old-timers" against the "newcomers." While many people new to the Applegate were from far away, Dave was a native Oregonian. He had better luck talking to the old-timers than most of the rest of us.

At one point in the '70s a miner on Forest Creek Road sought a Conditional Use Permit to operate a gravel operation that would have resulted in 20 double-dump belly trucks coming up and down the narrow, windy road. The County issued the permit, and residents appealed. We mainly argued against the traffic and impacts to Forest Creek, many of us aware that the true goal was to excavate gravel down to bedrock, hoping to find gold. Dave, living on Bishop Creek at the time, was working for Ramsay Realty. Old man Ramsay testified at the hearing that the gravel was critically needed for

building in the Applegate. Dave testified next, citing facts and figures about how many gravel pits with how many yards of rock were already in operation and sufficient to serve the Applegate's needs. He stood up against his employer for people not of his neighborhood. He was a brave man. The issue eventually went to court and the Forest Creek residents prevailed.

One of the things we shared was our great love of the beautiful Applegate Valley. The first time I accompanied Dave to the ridge behind Mount Isabelle and looked down on the Wellington Wildlands, I understood his desire to keep this rare jewel from disappearing under the saws that had already decimated all the legacy lands in the Middle Applegate. The son of a logger, Dave was never opposed to logging and logged his own land on Long Gulch more than once. He was, however, a native who opposed the plans of federal government to treat public lands as only a source of timber, not as the forest environments we all appreciate.

Dave liked to travel and often returned with a gift for me. I now have three heavy-duty long brush knives that would have served me well in the jungles of Vietnam. Dave understood what I'd been through in 'Nam and gave me shelter more than once when things got bad. His care as a friend continued when I returned from Seattle, more than once being a good listener when I explored my own emotional state(s).

One time, after being in town for a few hours, I came home to a note on the door telling me Dave had helped himself to one of my five-gallon gas cans. I can no longer recall the circumstances, but the trust we shared was unique and everlasting.

His body may have left us, but I believe his Spirit still lingers in the Wellington Wildlands and will come visit you every time you think of him. Rest well, my friend.

Jack Duggan
shanachie@hughes.net



A tribute to David Calahan, an Applegate idealist and visionary

Karen Giese and Audrey Eldridge had their first contact with David Calahan in 2014, answering one of the many calls to action that come across one's inbox. This one was a request to plan and implement a fundraiser for Applegate Trails Association (ATA). This appeal was so beautifully written, explaining the mission of ATA and why this event was needed, that it compelled them to volunteer to help. Little did they know the work they were in for! However, the fundraiser ended well, bringing in needed funds and raising awareness of ATA's work.

This is just one example of how David Calahan was able to share his vision and find willing partners to help with the missions he organized.

David's enthusiastic willingness to share his love and knowledge of Applegate Valley's wilderness, his passion for the incredible trail systems both in place and planned for the community, and especially his zeal for the work of protecting Wellington Wildlands was infectious. He connected hundreds of people to these lands and trails with education and fervor. He helped them understand the complicated dance between federal land management and the need to protect the valuable recreational resources of our valley and mountains. And he walked his talk, leading many guided hikes through the Applegate, including his last one, during late fall 2019, when he took a few brave souls racing through an unmarked trail originating at Wellington Butte and ending at his house.

David's vision, combined with that of the board members of the Applegate Trails Association, made possible the plans, installation, and maintenance of a trail

system that is a true Applegate gem. In his last few years, he extended his vision to preserve the Wellington Wildlands. Many of you readers are likely among the more than 1000 area residents who saw the movie *Saving Wellington* (filmed by residents Greeley Wells and Ed Keller), perhaps at a community meeting hosted by David as chair of the Wellington Wildlands Council. He would talk about the challenges for Wellington at length during those meetings, to the total engagement of the audience. At the end of the event David would still be in deep



David Calahan on the trail.

Photo: Jes Burns/Oregon Public Broadcasting.

conversation with those who were not ready to stop learning about Wellington Wildlands, even as the venues were closing. His commitment for preserving this area was shared by many, as can be evidenced by the *Save Wellington Wildlands* lawn signs throughout the valley.

David, we are thankful for all you gave, for your passion to preserve the wildlands of our area, and for being such a charismatic and synergistic force of nature. You have blazed many trails, both physical and metaphorical, that will be used for generations. We are profoundly grateful for all you have done for us, for the environment, for the earth.

Jeanette LeTourneux, Audrey Eldridge,
Stuart Heaslet, Karen Giese,
Barbara Chasteen and the rest of the
Wellington Wildlands Council
savewildlands.org

Tribute to David Calahan

Editor's note: David Calahan and Tom Carstens met as firefighters, when David was retired and Tom a volunteer. Years later, Tom helped David found the Applegate Trails Association. David died Sept. 8, the day of the Alameda Fire. Tom remembers his friend with this poem (his first, he says).



David Calahan on the East Applegate Ridge Trail.

My Firebrand Friend

A fire in your forest . . .

We doused it.

A friendship struck.

Boy, could we talk!

Yak . . . yak . . . yak.

We learned a lot.

(Or did we?)

We bushwhacked and sweated and cursed and laughed.

And then there were trails.

I helped you calm.

(Or did I?)

You helped us all, frenzied idea man.

Big heart! Big ideas!

Patience? There isn't any.

Another fire . . .

It couldn't be doused.

Then you left us.

Rest in peace, David Calahan.

Forest leaves fall on your grave

Like tears.

—Tom Carstens