

Marty Schmoker Retires After 32 Years Service to the DOT.

During the winter of 1971-1972, Stevens Pass Washington received 641" of snowfall. The events of this winter would change the life of a 13 year old, Marty Schmoker forever.

One evening, Marty was visiting friends at a cabin in the Yodelin housing development. A short time after he left, an Avalanche destroyed the house he was just in. Marty's knowledge of where in the house the kids had been was instrumental in saving their lives. Regrettably, the children's parents did not survive.

So begins the life of an avalanche professional and as a by-product, an explosive and artillery expert.

Marty began learning all he could about avalanches and the various ways to control them.

When he was old enough, he joined the Stevens Pass Volunteer Ski Patrol. Here he learned the basics that would become the foundation for his life.



Marty at his retirement party

Marty began working for the Washington State Department of Transportation in 1977 at the age of 20. And early on in his career, Marty worked closely with graduate students at the University of Washington studying under Dr. Ed LaChapelle who was one of the founding fathers of Avalanche studies.

In those early days, experimentation was the name of game. They tried everything from putting plastic tarps on the slopes so the snow would not have a chance to build up (worked too well) to a propane device called the thumper which used propane pumped into a big tire and then ignited. This, as it turns out, was the precursor to the now well used GasEx exploder.

His love for the military fueled his interest and his research into anything that he could get his hands on that could be used to control avalanches. He was instrumental in acquiring many out dated (by military standards) pieces of artillery to aid in keeping people safe. These systems included the 105 Recoilless rifle, 106 recoilless rifle, 105 Howitzer and even the M60A3 main



M60A3 Tank on Stevens Pass

battle tank which is still in use today on Washington state's two main mountain passes. Marty's strong desire to seek out new and untested methods has led him to try many different things, including, remote controlled helicopters and rockets shot from the skids of helicopters.

Teaching was another one of Marty's accomplishments. He is a past instructor for the Ski Area Management Program at Wenatchee Valley Community College and over the years has developed and taught hundreds of Explosive and Avalanche courses and classes throughout the U. S. Marty has also served on several committees and boards dealing with explosives and safety.

He is one of two main Artillery Trainers for AAUNAC (Avalanche Artillery Users of North America Committee) this is a group started, in part, by Marty that represents all of the programs in North America using artillery to control Avalanches. These include Departments of Transportation, National Parks, Ski Areas and Railroads. The groups' mission is to act as one voice when dealing with the military on Artillery issues.

In his spare time, Marty is a certified Pyro Technician. He has put on Fireworks shows all around the country including working at the 1976 Bicentennial show in Washington DC.



Precision blasting was a specialty of Marty's

He is a regular at the local homecoming game for the high school and does a variety of festivals for his hometown of Leavenworth, Washington.

In his retirement, Marty's fire is no where near void of irons. His company, Artillery Concepts, is the vehicle for several of his current endeavors. Snow plowing during the winter, Artillery Training in the fall and fire fighting in the summer are just a few of the things Marty will be working on. If you would like to get a hold of Marty, you may catch him floating down the Columbia River on his boat with his wife Sue.



Teaching gun school at Yakima Training Center