

Nomination of Art Sallee

by Sgt. Curtice
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I would like to take this opportunity to nominate Mr. Art Sallee for consideration as a recipient of the Peabody award for 2010. Art is currently a member of the Fresno County Sheriff's Office Volunteer Search and Rescue Mountaineering Team, and he has been a part of Fresno County Search and Rescue for over 23 years.

In polling Arts peers and protégés in regards to this nomination, it has become clear that gaining a full understanding of his contribution to California Search and Rescue is going to be difficult because Art is such a modest and humble man. Art will never brag about his accomplishments or talk about missions he has participated in. He instead gains his sense of personal achievement by quietly contributing all he can towards locating lost persons and rescuing those in distress. None of us will ever truly know all that Art has done for others because he does so quietly and without any expectation of personal gain. I have no doubt that what little I have to offer here is only a fraction of Art's overall contributions.

Roughly 55 years ago Art was working as a Police Officer in southern California . A fisherman was reported missing to his agency, and at that time there were no Search and Rescue services in his jurisdiction. His agency utilized the services of a mountain lion hunter to track the missing subject, and Art followed the hunter along to carry the radio. Art watched as the hunter crawled around the fisherman's vehicle on his hands and knees, then set off in a particular direction searching for the lost man. After tracking the fisherman for a short time the hunter found the fisherman deceased at the base of a cliff. This turned out to be the pivotal incident that started Art's interest in Search and Rescue, particularly in the field of mantracking.

Art worked at a variety of different agencies and eventually wound up in Fresno County , CA as a Search and Rescue volunteer. Art is one of the founding members of the volunteer mountaineering team that is still in existence today. He remained active in the field hiking long distances over hard terrain until age and hard use caught up with him. For the last decade Art has transitioned from a field searcher to that of an overhead person working in and around the command post. We Incident Commanders have gained immensely from having his expertise close by. Art never stopped responding to call outs, he just responded in a different manner. Art has remained active in Fresno County SAR for the past 23 years, he has never received compensation, and he has wanted nothing more than to serve the community and help victims. Art currently is over 80 years old, and he continues to respond without complaint or expectation.

About the time Art made the transition from field work to overhead work, he recognized a need for better communications in some remote areas of our county. Art then pulled together resources (many of which he supplied himself) to design, build and maintain a communications trailer for use by Fresno County SAR. Art personally stocks this trailer after every deployment, and he makes certain that every detail of it is attended to. From the standard items like ICS forms, coffee and maps, to the "ahhh, that's a good idea" items like stuffed animals (for children victims), a wind sock for Air Ops, and a cell phone booster, Art is personally responsible. He has not left a single detail overlooked, and he restocks it himself after every deployment. On

many occasions Art has driven the trailer 3 hours to a remote SAR site, only to drop it off for our use before turning around to head to another commitment.

During the early 1990's Art took his interest in mantracking to a new level by becoming involved with the Pacific Mantracking Association of California. He began to host courses in the Fresno area, and he coordinated the training of tracking instructors in our area. By the 2000's Art was working on developing curriculum to certify mantracking courses through the California State office of Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST). Art is the sole person responsible for ultimately having a mantracking class become the first such course in the state of California to attain POST certification. To my knowledge, Art's course remains the only POST certified mantracking class in California at this time. Art is the lead instructor for this course, and he continues to coordinate and teach two to three such classes per year (did I mention he is over 80 years old....?).

Art is the sole organizer of the Hug-A-Tree program for the volunteer SAR team. The Hug-A-Tree program is a program designed to teach youth what to do in the event they ever become lost in the wilderness. I have never known Art to turn down a request for a Hug-A-Tree presentation. The Hug-A-Tree program truly is a valuable and worthwhile component of preventative SAR, and Art takes this job very seriously.

Art also has historically been an organizer and driving force behind a local Christmas Family drive. This program is one in which Fresno County SAR volunteers pool their time, resources and money to provide a better Christmas to a few families who otherwise would not have a tree, a good meal or presents for the family. Last year alone Art was pivotal in helping to raise over \$1,000.00 to help a local family that was displaced by a house fire. One condition of this program is that the SAR volunteers responsible for it's success insist on receiving no public recognition for it. Art and his helpers do it only under condition of anonymity with the true feeling of "giving" in their hearts.

Art also is the primary organizer for a local program known as the "High Trails Reunion". This program takes disabled and underprivileged children camping into the high country of the Sierra Nevada mountains for the opportunity to experience the mountains in ways that would otherwise be impossible for them due to disabilities or social situations. Art coordinates all of the resources for this event which include: arranging transportation, securing camping and fishing equipment, arranging boat transportation, and most importantly- arranging for adequate help and support for the campers. As recently as today I saw an email from Art coordinating this year's event at which he will be hosting children with spinal injuries. (I can't help but mention it again—he is over 80 years old....).

In talking to other SAR folks who know Art, they universally describe him as being absolutely selfless and giving. There is not a local SAR person around to whom Art has not given something. He gives to our overall effort by being the "go-to" guy who has all the information and knowledge to share. He gives to individuals by providing training, insight and mentorship to SAR volunteers. He gives to the community by being the organizer and burden carrier for numerous programs that aid in making the outdoors safer and more enjoyable for all. He gives his time, effort and heart to the victims who need his help.

I recently asked Art's current team leader (a position which Art himself has held in the past) to quantify Art's participation in missions and other requests. His response back to me was, "How do you quantify 'always'?" He went on to explain that Art "always" drops what he's doing to assist on missions. He "always" organizes last minute trainings when he recognizes interest or a need. He "always" responds to middle of the night callouts, and he "always" makes whatever sacrifices are necessary so that others might have a better life.

I did not personally know Larry Peabody, but every time I hear mention of him or I read about him I cannot help but notice similarities between his selfless dedication to California Search and Rescue and Art's own selfless dedication. I respectfully request that the deciding board consider Art Sallee for receipt of this prestigious award. Knowing Art as I do, this award is appropriate as well as deserved. Thank you for the consideration.