

## Incident Summary Page for the Smokejumper Line of Duty Death

<b>Name of Smokejumper LODD:</b> Thomas J Regennitter (RDD-67)	<b>Incident Name:</b> Oak Fire
	<b>Incident Date &amp; Time:</b> June 3, 1970
<b>Smokejumper Base:</b> Redding	<b>Incident Location:</b> Shasta Trinity National Forest, California
<b>Personal Information</b>	
<p>Tom Regennitter 26, a native of Southern California, was born in Montebello and was attending Pasadena City College at the time of the accident. Rich Grandalski (RDD-64) good friend and fellow college student with Tom noted, <i>"Tom was a quiet guy with many great qualities. He was a hardworking and dedicated Forest Service employee who chose a career in what, at that time, we called fire control. There were no movies or books ever written about Tom Regennitter, and I expect that is the way he would have wanted it."</i></p> <p>At the time of his death Tom was an employee of the Angeles National Forest with 33 jumps and was assigned as part of the Redding "Retread" program. Tom served in the US Army with the 82nd Artillery. He was survived by four brothers, three sisters, his mother and step-father and is buried in Whittier CA.</p>	
<b>Brief description</b>	
<p>On June 3rd a crew of 12 smokejumpers were sent to the Oak Fire, Big Bar Ranger District, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, west of Redding California, providing reinforcement to three smokejumpers already on the fire.</p> <p>Tom was the third jumper, in a stick of three, that included Earl Pike (RDD-68) and Jerry Vice (RDD-69). Larry Boggs (RDD-63) was in the aircraft in the stick behind Regennitter. He saw Tom's feet entangled in his own static line and watched him stumble as he approached the door. Boggs recalled that Tom then tripped into a semi-crouched position and fell out of the door in a head down position, scraping his shins on the door threshold. Assistant spotter Bob Kersh also saw Regennitter appear to stumble and after striking both sides of the aircraft door tumbled headfirst out of the aircraft. Following his departure from the aircraft Kersh saw a helmet flying through the air and a smokejumper he identified as Regennitter hanging limp from a parachute.</p> <p>Jumpers Pike and Vice, in the air with Tom, tried to make verbal contact but had no success. They then followed him to the jump spot. Jim Craig (RDD-67) found Tom in a semi-sitting position, his head at an awkward angle. Vice and Craig released the parachute from the harness and laid Tom on the ground. They both checked for a pulse and found none. James Frakes (RDD-65) helped remove Tom's jumpsuit and checked for other injuries. He also checked for a pulse and watched for movement of his chest; none was found.</p> <p>A helispot was constructed and a doctor was flown in from Weaverville California. Tom was pronounced dead at 3:00 pm.</p> <p>The investigation revealed that Tom's entanglement in his static line was a key factor in the accident. In his stumble headfirst out the door, the static line may have crossed the front grill of his helmet and the deployment of the parachute exerted extreme pressure and force on his head.</p>	
<b>Links to more information on this incident:</b>	
<a href="https://wlfalwaysremember.net/1970/06/03/tom-reginnitter/">https://wlfalwaysremember.net/1970/06/03/tom-reginnitter/</a>	

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Back Row: (standing) Dave Nelson, Bob Kersh, Kev Hodgins, Bill Theisen, Bill Price, Bob Boyer, John Parker, Don Weter, Pete Sturman, Dave Nani

Middle Row: (standing) Brian Shaffer, Duane Jeppson, Dick Williamson, Bud Rotroff, Ned Davis, Ed Day, Rich Patton, Dale Wilson, Russ Gripp, Ken Roeloffs, Paul Sohler

Front Row: (kneeling) Vern Stevenson, Tom Regennitter, Bill Henry, Mike Paull, Dave Atwood, Jimmy Roads, Collin Kruschke, Ed Morris, Keith Anderson, Forrest Moore

Not Pictured: Leas Dickey, Bob Karr, Larry Wright, Jim Craig



## Parachutist dies at fire

WEAVERVILLE — A young Southern California smoke jumper died Wednesday afternoon while fighting a raging brush and timber fire in the Big French Creek drainage, north of Big Bar.

Pronounced dead at the scene of the six-acre fire was Thomas James Regennitter, 26, an employe of the Arroyo-Seco Ranger District of the Angeles National Forest.

Regennitter had been detailed to the Redding Smokejumper Base along with a group of other firefighters to help quell the fire that was caused by lightning Tuesday afternoon.

Regennitter and about 12 other jumpers had been dropped in the area as reinforcements for U.S. Forest Service crews that battled the flames. He was found unconscious by fellow firefighters and a physician was flown in to examine him. He was pronounced dead at 3 p.m.

A USFS team from San Francisco arrived here today and were at the scene investigating the cause of Regennitter's death, which is also under investigation by Trinity County Coroner George Files.

Regennitter was single and from La Canada. He leaves his mother and seven brothers, who are also Southern California residents.

He was born Aug. 21, 1943, in Montebello.

Funeral services are being arranged by McDonald-Files Chapel here.

The fire that Regennitter was fighting at the time of his death was brought under control sometime Wednesday night but is still burning. A crew of 20 men were able to get a fire line around it and today were trying to extinguish the flames, a spokesman for the USFS said.