

Mr Hopkins,

When Devin was 14, he was a little league all star. He was considered one of the two or three best pothers for his age in the entire state. His skill was born of countless hours of of hard work and practice. He and I spent most of our free time practicing at something together. For both of us, it was a time of friendship, of learning, a time of growth, we truly were living the "American Dream". My biggest fear in those days, was that it would someday end.

I remember hearing about a fire fighting tragedy that summer in Colorado. Like all the other stories about tragedy and death that week, it made little impression on me. I was protected by the belief that those things only happened to other people. I never heard they violated every rule of safety, that they ignored all common sense, that they surrendered their own doubts to a group brain through peer group pressure, and then jumped in up hill from an out of control wild fire. I never heard that the USFS commissioned the Tri Data study to examine the events of Storm King to identify the cause and offer solutions to prevent a repeat of the tragedy.

I was never told that the study discovered a culture of rule breaking, a machismo arrogant culture that gripped the entire fire fighting system. I was never told the study found a complete and utter lack of rule enforcement, a department of the government not accountable to anyone or any agency. I went on that week raising my son, enjoying the freedom and safety afforded me by the greatest government in the world.

On July 10th 2001 that all changed. A fire fighting system, unchanged after Storm King, killed again at thirtymile, this time it killed my son, and it killed a big piece of me. In my grief I have tried to bring light to this problem of rule breaking and lack of accountability, but thus far I have largely failed, and because the system has been allowed to continue unchanged it has killed two more times. How many more lives must be lost before someone forces the needed changes. How many more of today's 14 year old little leaguers will die if these fire fighters are not held accountable to the rule of law?

The framers of our constitution anticipated this problem. So to insure the safety and well being of all our citizens, they divided the government into three branches. The legislative branch has been helpless to effect the required changes, so that leaves just you Mr Hopkins, you and the power of the Judaical branch. We enjoy unparalleled freedom and protection as citizens of the US, privileges granted to us by countless millions who have sacrificed, fought and died to gain and preserve them for us. As beneficiaries of these privileges we have a fiduciary responsibility to pass them to the next generation unfringed. The lack of accountability now enjoyed by the USFS and it's fire fighting supervisors, is a major infringement on the principles of our constitution, and must not be allowed to prosper on our watch.

You must prosecute Mr Daniels, his cavalier dismissal of the law, his falsifying of his continuing education class attendance, his absolute disregard for his crews safety, his subsequent lies about what happened, all make him a poster child for all that is wrong with this system.

Some times we have to take chances, where would the law be, or this country for that matter, if everyone had been afraid to take a chance. Prosecute this man and in the process try to make a difference in this world. Had someone had the courage to do this after Storm King, maybe this system would have stopped killing on that hill in Colorado.

This is not about revenge, that would be selfish and diminish Devin's memory. But think about this for just a minute, do you want to pick up the paper some time from now and read about how similar events caused more loss of life, and wonder if you could have prevented that, I do not. I cried when I read about the Cramer fire, it made me physically ill, so did the California fire. They both served as vivid reminders that this system is still broken, that it continues to kill. Please help today's little leaguers, help your country, do your part and take the risk. Prosecute this man! Demonstrate our system of government still works, show why we have the greatest government in the world!

Thank you for all your work.

Ken Weaver