

Sheryl Costello died on July 3, 2011, during a climbing accident on Mt. Baker in Washington. Sheryl was a talented and respected forest entomologist with the US Forest Service, based in Golden, CO. She will be greatly missed by her colleagues.

A heartfelt remembrance has been written by her USFS colleague, Jeff Witcosky.

Remembering Sheryl Costello

Written by Jeff Witcosky, USFS



Sheryl, I thought, would be the last entomologist I would hire before my retirement ... I shut my eyes for a very long moment and pinched my arm; she was the best of a very fine group of professionals. What made her special? It was character; it was drive; it was her vibrant fascination and love for her profession; it was her undaunted commitment to master any task, no matter how painstaking; and so many, many more traits... I'll describe some of these in a moment, but first, let us go back a handful of years.

Sheryl was born and raised in San Diego, California. After graduating from high school she attended Mesa Community College before transferring to Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1995. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Biology in 1999, cum laude. After graduation, she worked as a biological technician for a variety of organizations, including Rainier National Park, Tetra Tech, Pacific Northwest Research Station, Agriculture Research Service's Invasive Plant Species Laboratory in Florida, and Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Sheryl enrolled in Colorado State University in the fall of 2002 to work on her Masters degree in Entomology; her major professor was Bill Jacobi and Jose Negrón served on her committee. In her first year, Sheryl was a recipient of the Hawksworth Memorial Graduate Student Scholarship. She was active in the CSU Entomology Club during her time on campus.

Bill Jacobi held a series of lunchtime forest health seminars each school year and this is where I first met Sheryl. She was bright, serious, light-hearted, and brimming with energy. "What will you be working on for your thesis, Sheryl?" I asked, and off she went on a tour of her planned research on woodborers, traps and attractants, and borer abundance in fire-injured ponderosa pine on the Black Hills. One could not help but be drawn in by her enthusiasm.



Following a series of considerations our Group Leader, Frank Cross, decided to create a student trainee position within our staff. In 2003, through an open competition, Sheryl was selected to fill that position. Along with her class work and research, Sheryl spent a period of time at our Rapid City, Gunnison, and Lakewood Service Centers working with our staff to gain a broad perspective of forest insect and disease issues in the Rocky Mountain Region. Everyone was drawn in and so was she.

Sheryl could have been placed at any of our Service Centers, but in 2005 Lakewood's entomologist, Bob Cain, moved to fill an open position working for Frank Cross just as Sheryl was finishing her degree program. What good fortune to have Sheryl ready for

placement. Once she completed her degree, Sheryl moved to the Lakewood Service Center and filled in behind Bob.

There was no getting started... Sheryl was off and running. With bark beetle problems by the bushel, there was no limit to the work that needed to be done, the clients to help, and the issues requiring a professional's attention. She read a book and learned GIS; she hopped in a plane and learned how to do aerial survey; she wrote three papers from her thesis; she completed field surveys, wrote reports, provided advice for clients experiencing bark beetle impacts, and delivered numerous presentations to the public on our bark beetle epidemics; and she launched into special projects regarding mountain pine beetle, lodgepole pine, and fuels relationships, methods to protect white pine blister rust-resistant limber pine and Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine from mountain pine beetle infestation, and a study on how the mountain pine beetle might impact low-elevation ponderosa pine as the beetle spread down slope from adjacent lodgepole pine forests along the northern Front Range of Colorado.



One of my favorite requests from Sheryl concerned her desire to improve her ability to identify species of bark beetles under a dissecting scope. She had this idea: "I would like to visit with Dr. Donald Bright at CSU and ask him if he has the time and interest to train me in the identification of bark beetles", she said. And that is exactly what she did. Dr. Bright worked with Sheryl over a period of months and developed her skills at discerning the finer points of bark beetle taxonomy. For my part, I shut my eyes and pinched my arm.



Over her career Sheryl accomplished a number of projects that made her happy. One project that proved very rewarding for her was the preparation and publication of our

Field Guide to Diseases and Insects of the Rocky Mountain Region. Working with all our Forest Health staff and the publications staff at the Rocky Mountain Research Station, Sheryl ushered this sizable project through to completion in 2010. How she lit up as she held the first field guide out of the box.

Outside of work, Sheryl loved everything to do with the outdoors and was active and on-the-go all the time. Horseback riding, biking, running, skiing, trekking, climbing, she loved them all. Interests that gave her a big thrill were teaching children about entomology and volunteering for the Special Olympics Colorado Winter Games program.

On my desk is a picture of Sheryl, one my wife, Jill, took at a party with our staff a few years back. As I look at Sheryl holding a plate with that large slice of chocolate cake, I close my eyes for a long moment, pinch my arm, and think ... life is sweet, my friend. How we miss you now.



Visit a website (<http://sherylcostello.com/>) set up by Sheryl's family and friends to honor Sheryl, or a [July 2012 update](#) (3.5 MB) from Sheryl's parents.