

CALSTAR ROTOR WASH

SUMMER 2012

An Interview with CALSTAR Board Chair Ken Meehan

Ken Meehan has been CALSTAR's board chair for the past 14 years, and a board member for a total of 22. As a tribute to Ken, as he moves toward new horizons after a 30-year career of contributing to the success of John Muir Health, we talked with him about his vital role with CALSTAR.

RotorWash: Tell us a little about how CALSTAR has changed since you've been on the board.

KM: When I first got involved, we were a small company with one helicopter -- a two-base operation. We have grown from that into a 15-helicopter, 2 fixed-wing service with expansive geographic reach, from South Lake Tahoe to Santa Maria. It has allowed us to take care of more and more patients. We grew from a small business of about 30 employees to a large not-for-profit community

» continued on page 6



Ken Meehan has helped to guide CALSTAR for more than two decades

Photo by Susan Wood

CALSTAR Member Spotlight: The Lundgren Family of Lafayette



From left to right: Patrick, Erik and Audrey Lundgren

Construction company owner Erik Lundgren, of Lafayette, CA, did some dirt-bike racing in his younger years, and he knew it was a dangerous sport. So when one of his young sons, Patrick, got seriously interested, Erik equipped him with the best in safety gear, including a good helmet, chest and neck protection, knee guards and boots.

He also took the precaution of enrolling his son as a CALSTAR member, and later got a family membership for all six active Lundgrens. It turned out to be \$45 well spent.

Patrick, now 17, is a standout rider in the District 36 MSR Western Regional Cross Country Series, with a large collection of trophies and plaques. His goal is to go pro before college.

On April 9, 2011, Erik brought him and his little sister Audrey, 10, to the Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area near Livermore, so Patrick could test a new clutch. Audrey wanted to try a beginner's track on her brother's outgrown Honda mini.

The kids went off, and their dad waited back at the parking area. After a while, he heard sirens heading up to the park. He was used to telling himself not to worry - "what are the chances - there are hundreds and hundreds of people here." He calmly kept an eye out for his kids' return.

But he saw Patrick rushing back alone at top speed, and could tell that something was very wrong. Erik jumped on the back of

» continued on back page

CALSTAR 6 Goes Bald for Cancer Research

In March, CALSTAR 6 organized a team to participate in a head-shaving fundraising event to support the St. Baldrick's Foundation, the largest volunteer-driven charity dedicated to raising money for childhood cancer research.

The entire CALSTAR 6 crew participated along with CALSTAR COO Tad Henderson in honor of Caitlyn Drennan, daughter of Flight Nurse Jennifer Drennan and a congenital Stage IV neuroblastoma survivor.

Held at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena, the event raised more than \$62,000 for life-saving cancer research. Thousands of similar events are hosted worldwide and have provided more than \$13.9 million in total funding to date.

The St. Baldrick's Foundation is a volunteer-driven charity committed to funding the most promising research to find cures for childhood cancers and

give survivors long and healthy lives. Since the Foundation's first grants as an independent charity in 2005, St. Baldrick's has funded more than \$78 million in childhood cancer research. For more information about the St. Baldrick's Foundation, please call 1.888.899.BALD or visit www.StBaldricks.org.

The CALSTAR 6 team raised more than \$7,000 in honor of Caitlyn Drennan



Recent Funding Supports Pilot iPads, Emergency Generators

In April, Mr. Howard Classen contributed \$5,000.00 toward the purchase of iPads and accompanying software for CALSTAR's pilots. With additional funding provided by the Monterey Peninsula Foundation and other individuals, CALSTAR is now able to proceed with this initiative to enhance flight safety, ensure regulatory compliance and replace volumes of paper manuals. The new iPads will enable our pilots to review real-time weather information, complete risk assessments and access all company manuals and checklists from any location. The project is a key step in the process of shifting CALSTAR's operations to digital platforms, and we thank all of the contributors for helping us to take this important step forward.

CALSTAR would also like to acknowledge the Community Foundation of Mendocino County for providing \$4,000

in grant funding to help outfit CALSTAR 4 (Ukiah) with an emergency generator. Chevron Corporation and the Wal-Mart Foundation also contributed funding to equip CALSTAR's nine bases with new generators, which will help to ensure that our critical communications systems will remain operational in the event of a major power failure. We offer our sincere gratitude to these funders for supporting our efforts to provide uninterrupted service to the communities that depend on us.



iPads will enhance the safety and efficiency of CALSTAR's flight operations

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

Please visit www.communityfound.org to learn how the Community Foundation is working to strengthen local communities.



CALSTAR Says Goodbye to Its Pioneer Air Ambulance

The oldest aircraft in the CALSTAR fleet—in fact the first helicopter ever purchased by the company—has been sold. The sale brought back a flood of memories to the crewmembers that flew in the ship over the last 22 years.

The helicopter was an MBB model BO 105CBSB, Registration Number N623MB, a compact, twin-engine aircraft fondly referred to as Mike Bravo. According to Jim Arthur, director of flight operations, the first EMS mission for Mike Bravo was on September 4, 1990. Since that date, CALSTAR crews flew the aircraft for 6,835 flight hours and completed 28,005 landings.

“The sale of the aircraft is part of a large-scale fleet modernization which will bring enhanced safety features and technology to our fleet and subsequently to the communities CALSTAR serves,” Arthur said.

It’s anyone’s guess how many lives were saved by the hundreds of crew members who utilized Mike Bravo to race to trauma scenes and hospitals over the years. “It’s no doubt in the thousands,” said Regional Director Ross Fay.

Longtime former CALSTAR President and CEO Joe Cook said the purchase of Mike Bravo was one of the true defining moments in the company’s history. CALSTAR originally initiated flight operations in 1984, but it operated leased aircraft until Mike Bravo was purchased. “We saved so much by purchasing instead of leasing,” Cook recalled from his current home in Florida.

“Within a year we were able to purchase a second aircraft and then we were truly up and running.”

The helicopter took on a special fame of its own when it graced the cover of Janice Hudson’s well known book, *Trauma Junkie* (www.fireflybooks.com) Hudson, a long-tenured former CALSTAR flight nurse, vividly recounted many experiences while flying with other crew members in Mike Bravo.

One such flight involved a rolled-over vehicle on Pacheco Pass near Gilroy. Mike Bravo and the crew took off in extremely poor weather, but still above legal required minimums. En route to the scene the crew lost radio contact with first responders on the ground and could not get a fix on exactly where the accident



CALSTAR flight crews logged nearly 7,000 hours in Mike Bravo during the past 22 years



Former CALSTAR CEO Joe Cook with Mike Bravo in 1990

was. Eventually, the crew spotted the rolled-over vehicle and set the helicopter down nearby. They were astounded that no first responders were there.

It turned out that the crew had come upon a second accident, not the original one it was dispatched to. With no radio contact, crew members had no way of knowing this. Rushing to the vehicle the crew realized there was a mother, a four-year-old girl and an infant inside the car. All three had potential life-threatening injuries. The crew managed to get all three to Stanford University Medical Center and all recovered. This story, as told by Hudson, is described in much more detail and intensity in *Trauma Junkie*.

Other flight nurses have plenty of memories about Mike Bravo as well. Scott Wallace, former chief flight nurse for CALSTAR 1 (Concord), CALSTAR 4 (Ukiah) and CALSTAR 8 (Vacaville), and now CALSTAR's director of medical operations, said he spent plenty of time in Mike Bravo. "I could find every switch, every button, every piece of equipment blindfolded," he said. "Mike Bravo was a trusted helicopter—one in which I had some of the worst and best calls during my career." Wallace, a 17-year veteran of CALSTAR, says he felt that Mike Bravo "watched me grow up as a flight nurse."

Michelle Starbuck, also a 17-year CALSTAR Flight Nurse, echoed Wallace's sentiments. "I did all of my first flight nurse interventions, including intubation, surgical crich, etcetera, in that aircraft. I was always happy and felt comfortable working in her. I am so sad she is gone and hope she will be loved wherever she ends up."

Andy Swartzell was one of the first seven flight nurses to be hired by CALSTAR in 1984. He was with CALSTAR for more than 17 years before moving to the San Ramon Fire District in January of 2001. During his long tenure with CALSTAR he served in a variety of positions, including flight nurse, director of community relations, chief flight nurse and director of medical operations.

Swartzell recalled the first flight he took in Mike Bravo. "We were called for an auto vs. bicyclist at the intersection of San Ramon Valley Boulevard and Sycamore Road, just off Highway 680," he said. "The person riding the bike had suffered a head injury and needed to go to John Muir Medical Center.

"This is a very busy intersection, and to my knowledge that was the first and only time a helicopter has landed at that intersection. The incident commander was very nervous, and he asked me to keep our time on the ground as little as possible.

"The scene was next to a popular area with shops and restaurants. There were a lot of bystanders watching us that day and someone had snapped a photo that made it into the local newspaper. Fortunately, we were able to quickly load the patient, who had already been immobilized by the fire medics. We departed the scene without incident and the patient made a full recovery."

Swartzell said Mike Bravo proved that BO 105s made good air ambulances and became the primary model for CALSTAR's capable fleet for years to come.

Former CEO Cook notes that Mike Bravo spent most of her time at CALSTAR 1 in Concord. "CS1 was one of our busiest bases, and the flights were often short but intense." He added, "Over the years Mike Bravo proved to be a safe and dependable friend to our flight crews. This great little aircraft transported more critically injured patients and was available for service more than any aircraft in CALSTAR's fleet, even today. She goes to her new owners with a proud history of dependable safe service that saved many lives."

benefit corporation of 210 employees. My role was helping to direct that growth, in an environment where finances were always a consideration. Working with the board and leadership, our challenge was how to be thoughtful in growing the company. We have faced many ongoing major challenges over the years.

Given the intricacies of providing 24/7 services – keeping operations available with flight crews, pilots and nurses, weather, keeping aircraft operational, and more – improving logistics and planning has had much impact. We had to become better at executing what we do.

RW: How did your involvement come about?

KM: I was working in finance for John Muir Health, and was asked to participate in the analysis and then development of our Level II trauma center. We were designated Contra Costa County's only trauma center in 1986. We knew an air ambulance was a main component of trauma service, and that the two went hand in hand. We concluded that it was a key to success.

I was not yet a John Muir Health executive, but because of my financial background and exposure to operations through trauma, I was asked by our then COO, Janiece Nolan, to join the board. Becoming a board member at CALSTAR, I learned the importance of strategic planning, and its impact on the long-term viability of an organization. It allowed me to see this up close and personal. The importance, in any business, of a strong board of governance and the major impact that has on a company became clear.

RW: What have been some of the biggest challenges during your tenure?

KM: Our challenge has been operating a very high fixed cost company in a dynamic environment where there is no margin for error. Managing growth in a thoughtful manner has been an ongoing challenge. Others have been:

- The uncontrollable nature of scene volume
- Building an inter-facility transport business to offset the decline in scene transport
- Intense capital needs for aircraft
- Transport activity that can depend on weather and gas prices

RW: What impresses you most about the organization?

KM: I'm most impressed with the commitment of every staff member to patient quality and flight safety. They eat it and sleep it. CALSTAR has never had an accident impacting a patient or crew members in all their 28 years.

RW: Why is CALSTAR important to the community?

KM: Without CALSTAR, it would take much longer for patients to get to the emergency lifesaving care they need. One example is the surfer who was bitten by a shark and quickly transported from the beach to the trauma center in Walnut Creek. If you are at the base of Mt. Diablo, or on a ski slope in Tahoe, and injured, and you had to rely on ground transportation, your chances for a good outcome would really diminish. Victims would go well beyond the Golden Hour – or the short time window following a traumatic injury in which there is the highest likelihood that medical treatment will prevent death.

In many cases, it comes down to the difference between life and death. Our CALSTAR team, from dispatch to mechanics to pilots and flight nurses -- they are the difference. »

Working with the board and leadership, our challenge was how to be thoughtful in growing the company. We have faced many ongoing major challenges over the years.

CALSTAR Surpasses 25,000 Memberships, Now Offers Auto-Renewal Option

In April, the CALSTAR Membership Program topped 25,000 active memberships with more than 62,000 individuals enrolled in the program. We would like to thank all of our members for helping us to achieve this important milestone, and let you know that it is easier than ever to renew using our automatic credit card payment option.

Simply check the box in the payment section of your annual renewal form, or call us toll-free at 1-888-207-LIFE (5433) to set up automatic payments. Your annual membership fee will be charged to the credit card on file at the time of your renewal. You can update your credit card information or discontinue this service at any time, so cross one more item off of your to-do list and sign up today!



RW: What are some hallmarks of the relationship between John Muir Health and CALSTAR?

KM: John Muir Health was one of CALSTAR'S founding fathers – and one of its first bases, at a helipad in its parking lot before the new tower was built in Walnut Creek. Neighbors didn't like this, so we moved the base to Buchanan Field Airport in Concord.

Another hallmark was opening the newest tower in 2011 – and moving the helipad to the top of the Tom and Billie Long Patient Care Tower. Now, patients are moved by high-speed elevator directly into surgery.

The relationship has always been close, starting with our first board member, Janiece Nolan.

RW: What do you foresee as challenges to come?

KM: There will continue to be lots of challenges. CALSTAR is working on a long-term strategic plan towards a sustainable business model, and crafting the structure of the board to support that plan in the years ahead. Our goal is to have broader representation in the community.

RW: How has your work at CALSTAR changed or influenced you?

KM: This is where I learned the importance of strategic planning to organizational success, and how important strong governance is to any organization.

One challenge as a CALSTAR board member has been having a full-time job, plus putting in all the important time with the board. It is a labor of love!

I remember opening the helipad at the top of the Tom and Billie Long Patient Care Tower in April 2011. In all my years at CALSTAR, I had never flown in a helicopter. During the grand opening events, a pilot was going to give my daughter Stephanie and me a ride to the base at Buchanan Field. But as we were being briefed, the crew got called to an accident in Marin. Six weeks later, I finally got airborne for a tour from the top of Mt. Diablo to the Caldecott Tunnel. That was an inspiring event; it was really cool being in the co-pilot seat in a helicopter of an organization you've worked for. It is like riding in a mobile ICU in the air. It felt like being in a fishbowl – there is nothing but glass between you and the environment. It was great, you can see 180 degrees. That was very special.

Correction

We featured the following photo in our previous issue, but regrettably omitted the photo credit. Beverly Witchner captured this striking image of our helicopter flying above the Navarro Headlands in Albion, CA. We apologize for the oversight, and would like to thank Beverly for sharing her photo for the enjoyment of our readers.



Recent Hires & Promotions

CALSTAR is pleased to welcome the following new team members and congratulate those who have assumed new roles since our last publication:

- Joni Alameda • Flight Nurse
- Daniel Brooks • Pilot
- Jared Daly • Field Maintenance Manager
- Marina Emmons • Flight Nurse
- Alana Gibson • Chief Flight Nurse
- Tad Henderson • Chief Operations Officer
- Amy Henry • Flight Nurse
- Chas Heppe • Service Manager
- Thomas Kenner • Aircraft Technician
- Timothy Martin • Flight Nurse
- Troy Petersen • Chief Flight Nurse
- Amy Rejent • Flight Nurse
- Donathon Rodriguez • Flight Nurse
- Christina Tringali • Flight Nurse
- Scott Wallace • Director of Medical Operations

CALSTAR Board of Directors

Kenneth Meehan, Board Chairman
Associate Member

Lynn Malmstrom, Board President
President & CEO – CALSTAR

Michael Heil
Principal, HealthWorks, Inc.
Associate Member

Jen Sweeney
Vice President, Physician Contracts & Business Development
Regional Medical Center of San Jose

Kacey Hansen
Director, Trauma and Transfer Services
John Muir Health, Walnut Creek

Dionne Miller
Chief Operating Officer
Sutter Roseville Medical Center

CALSTAR Management Team

Lynn Malmstrom – President & CEO
Mark Vincenzini – Chief Financial Officer
Tad Henderson – Chief Operations Officer



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Member Hospitals:



Affiliate Hospitals:

- Howard Memorial Hospital
- Mendocino Coast District Hospital
- Natividad Medical Center
- Saint Louise Regional Hospital
- Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento
- Ukiah Valley Medical Center

» continued from page 2 » Lundgren Family

his son's Yamaha, and they raced uphill. Soon, he could see his daughter lying next to a trail, with emergency medical personnel leaning over her. "I was able to see her feet moving, which was a huge relief," he recalled.

Audrey, bored with the beginner track, had wanted more of a challenge. The kids went up a trail a little way, but coming back down, with the bike accidentally in neutral, Audrey gathered too much speed entering a turn. She lost control, and when Patrick got there, she had simply vanished. "I looked over the edge of the hill and yelled for her, and finally she yelled back – she'd been knocked out. I saw the bike 15 feet below, in a creek. I got two ATV riders to stop -- one went for help and the other stayed with me. I jumped down, and found Audrey." Audrey only remembers that her leg hurt terribly.

Patrick, a Boy Scout in Lafayette's Troop 241, knew basic first aid. Luckily, medical personnel with equipment were close to the site as well. A fire truck and crew arrived quickly, and a park ranger. They ran tests on Audrey, splinted her leg, and put her on a backboard. CALSTAR 1 had already been activated, and she was carefully moved to a flat area where the MD 902 Explorer could land.

CALSTAR Pilot Gary Garavatti knew from experience that calls to the recreational park usually result in a transport, due to head trauma or a broken limb.

"Fun definitely comes with its hazards. But we train on a routine basis with the people onsite, in terms of safety procedures, landing zones, and more, and we're always in contact. Everyone is very well prepared, because we know the key is to transfer the patient quickly to a trauma center. Chances greatly improve for a trauma physician to save lives if a critical patient arrives within the 'Golden Hour.' That's why we coordinate constantly and do lots of in-service training with our partner agencies."

Erik was granted clearance to accompany his young daughter to Children's Hospital in Oakland. Gary recalled that Erik was clear-

minded and relatively calm when he was buckled into the front passenger seat. "He seemed to realize that his child was in good hands with the two critical care flight nurses in the back."

"I was just amazed at what the crew was doing," said Erik. He was able to talk with his daughter via radio from the front seat, while two flight nurses, Michelle Starbuck and Ernie Acebo, and trainee Heather Kinney tended to Audrey.

"I don't remember very much about the ride," recalled Audrey. "Inside, I could only see the roof, with my neck braced. I could see my face reflected. I was really glad my dad was with me."

As it turned out, she had a spiral fracture of her tibia, and six other fractures of her foot and toes. She was in a full-length cast for six weeks, then a walking cast.

At least the event brought her some extra attention at school. Her friends all wanted to push her wheelchair and ride in it. Now, she's fully back on her feet and doing very well – and wants to ride again, even to compete.

Patrick says "It's really good that we had the family coverage. CALSTAR helped my sister a lot."

The family agrees that the CALSTAR personnel were the nicest people you never expect to meet.

"I knew about CALSTAR from having seen the helicopters," Erik said. "Someone told me how affordable coverage was, and that it could save thousands of dollars, so I went to the website. The membership is so worth it, even just for peace of mind. And it can be a lifesaver."

Pilot Garavatti added, "What I tell people is don't skimp on what you get for safety for your kids – and make sure they have identification on them including their name, emergency contact, and allergies. And by all means: get that CALSTAR membership."