



# Remembering



## Gerald Lee Sundstrom Jr.

### North Carolina Forest Service – North Carolina

Career Pilot

Date of Death: May 11, 1996

Age: 38

Gerald "Lee" Sundstrom Jr. was born August 20, 1957, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, to Gerald L. and Peggy L. Sundstrom. As a youngster, he was very inquisitive, eager to learn and would tackle anything. His grandparents were farmers, and at a very young age he would love to visit and stay with them on the farm. As he got older, all he wanted to do was to be a farmer. His grandfather would take him on the tractors to work in the fields. At twelve years old he was allowed to drive one in the fields. He spent most of his summers on the farm.

He soon got fascinated with crop dusting planes. Then he decided he wanted to get his pilot's license. After graduating from Kempsville High School in Virginia Beach, he moved to North Carolina and helped his grandfather on the farm. At age 19 he was chosen "Future Young Farmer of the Year" in Chowan County, North Carolina. With that honor, he was awarded a week at NC State in Raleigh to attend the Future Farmers of America conference.

At the age of 24 he started taking flying lessons. He loved flying. In 1993, he started his own crop dusting business after getting his pilot's license. During the peak forest fire season of March, April, and May, he would fly an M-18



Dromader plane for the NC Forestry Service fighting forest fires. Lee had a very deep, clear voice, and during one forest fire in Onslow County, he guided an equipment operator and several firefighters on the ground through the smoke by radio to safety.

He was a member of Ballard's Bridge Baptist Church, where he sang in the choir and taught Sunday school. He was a member of Oak Grove Hunting Club, Rocky Hock Ruritans and the NC Agricultural Aviation Association. The love of family and God was always present in his life.

He had great love for his parents, brother, grandparents, and especially his nieces. Lee was a kind, compassionate, and unique person. If you needed someone, he would be there to help.

He could talk to anyone. If a man could tell it like it was, it was Lee. He accomplished so much to have had so little. He was a farmer, a pilot for the NC Forestry Service, and owner/operator of Farmers Air Service.

His familiar sayings were, "How're you doing?" and, "You worry too much." If a man's wealth could be measured by his friends, then Lee died a rich man. His quick smile and his care for others will live forever in our hearts.

*"Gone from sight, but not forgotten."*