

# William Coultas

*'Recognized across town'*

William Coultas has a high profile in Cave Junction. He and his wife, Chris, are graduates of the city's high school, Illinois Valley.

In addition, Coultas, 44, is recognizable as co-owner with his wife of the Radio Shack, a pilot and a coach for the high school's softball team.

Coultas was the first to arrive at the University of California-Davis Medical Center. He came in after midnight -- and in the worst condition.

Coultas, who was co-piloting the Sikorsky S-61 when it crashed, had third-degree burns on at least one-third of his body -- from his hands, arms and legs to his face. A breathing tube to keep his esophagus from swelling shut remained in place as of Friday night.

"He's is on the more severe end," Dr. Tina Palmieri, director of the hospital's burn unit, said Friday.

Coultas underwent more than three hours of surgery Thursday to graft skin from his abdomen and thighs onto the areas where his skin had been burned off and would not regenerate. Coultas will remain hospitalized for at least 35 days and undergo intensive rehabilitation, Palmieri said.

"This is a tremendous stress on the family," Palmieri said. "And (Coultas) has got a very supportive family here."

Pope, the high school's office manager, said Coultas is an all-around good guy. "He always volunteered with a lot of things. Whatever his kids were involved in, he was involved in," Pope said.

Cougar Booster Club. Fundraisers. Coaching.

"Whatever he could do," Pope said. "We're a small community so we need all that kind of help."

Pope said she met Coultas and his wife through their shared involvement with the Cougars' softball team, on which her daughter and Coultas' daughter, Ricci, were members.

The Coultas' son, Matt, is a sophomore at Illinois Valley, Pope said. Ricci is a junior communication major at Southern Oregon University.

Pope said people around Cave Junction still are reeling from news of the crash.

"I think in a small community it's always shocking because you get to know everybody, and everyone knew Bill because they own the Radio Shack and he also spent so much time in the valley helping others."

The initial shock of the news about Coultas gave way to a collective sigh of relief with news that he had survived.

"Hopefully he's going to be okay and doctors can fix him up," Pope said.

-- *Wade Nkrumah*