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# Smokejumper Magazine, January 2001

National Smokejumper Association

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# SMOKEJUMPER



*Bill Moody (left) congratulates Dale Longanecker on breaking Moody's jump record.*

*Inside This Issue:*

Longanecker Breaks Jump Record .....	3
The NSA Needs You! .....	17
Important Information about the ADDF Report .....	41

# CONTENTS

Observations From the Ad Shack .....	2
A Bargain for You—Help for the NSA! .....	2
Dale Longanecker Sets Jump Record! .....	3
The First Jump in the Sequoias .....	4
Smokejumper Magazine Thanks Donors .....	5
1958 Trip to Redding—Really Tall Trees! .....	6
Downside .....	7
Sounding Off From the Editor .....	8
Reunion Reactions .....	9
Dawn Jump .....	10
Letters .....	11
After All These Years, It's Still the Alaska Jumpers Best	
Fishing Story .....	12
Checking The Canopy .....	16
NSA Needs Someone To Fill Secretary Position .....	16
The NSA Needs You! NSA Life Membership—	
A Message to the Membership from Jim Cherry .....	17
Featured Life Members .....	18
Redding Jumper Golick's Career Spans Four Decades,	
Three Bases .....	18
Touching All Bases .....	20
Elections for NSA Board of Directors .....	22
Information Regarding 60-Year Reunion video .....	26
Items From the Fire Pack .....	26
Video Review .....	28
The History of Smokejumping, Straight Up .....	28
Book Review .....	29
The Smokejumper Documentary—Personal Notes .....	30
Odds & Ends .....	31
Purchase of Mann Gulch Doug Possible .....	32
Off the List .....	33
Hell's Canyon (1960) .....	34
Rescue of an Indian Chief .....	35
Jump List—January 2001 .....	37
NSA Members—Save This Information .....	39
One Last Jump .....	40
Analysis of the ADEF Final Report .....	41
An Interview with Greg Greenhoe .....	42
What Richard Widmark Didn't Tell Us About Backfires .....	43
Honoring Our Heritage—A Legacy For The Future .....	46
Blast From the Past .....	48



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Cover photo courtesy of *Scott Wicklund*.

# Observations From the Ad Shack



by **Larry Lufkin**  
(Cave Junction '63)  
PRESIDENT

THE OCTOBER 2000 issue of *Smokejumper* discussed a Life Membership project chaired by Jim Cherry, who is our Life Membership chair. This is a very important project because our Life Memberships will establish a permanent endowment fund for the NSA.

Our Life Membership Endowment Fund will provide the NSA with a base of revenue that will continue as long as the NSA exists. Only the interest earned from the fund will be used for NSA operations. The fund itself will never be touched.

As of this writing, 44 jumpers have signed up as Life Members, and four more jumpers have made commitments to become Life Members. Each of these members paid \$1,000 to the NSA for their Life Memberships and the entire \$1,000 was deposited into the Life Membership Endowment Fund.

My goal over the next two years is to increase our Life

Memberships by at least 200. If we can achieve this goal, the NSA will have an Endowment Fund of \$250,000 and will realize additional revenue of about \$12,500 each year to provide services to members. This income, in addition to our other regular membership income and other income, will eventually provide the NSA with the funds needed to become a professionally run organization.

Those who become Life Members give a gift to the NSA that will last long after they have passed on to that great fire in the sky. Their names will also be etched permanently in NSA records.

Contact Jim today and convert your current membership to a Life Membership. Call him at (515) 927-4428. Jim has several payments options available for those who would rather pay for a Life Membership in installments. 🍷

## A Bargain for You— Help for the NSA!

There are still some great looking t-shirts left from Reunion 2000. They were purchased for the run/walk event and are white with the sharp multi-color NSA logo. The lettering is **National Smokejumper/logo/Reunion 2000 10K**.

We need to move these shirts and get the money off the shelf and working. They will go at near cost!

The long sleeve shirts (number on hand=M-1, L-3) are \$12.00. The short sleeve(M-3, L-7, XL-7, 2XL-3) shirts are \$7.00. Use the NSA merchandise order form. 🍷

# Dale Longanecker Sets Jump Record!

by K.C. Mehaffey Okanogan  
County Bureau

Parachuting out of a plane to fight a small wildfire on the Colville Indian Reservation on Aug. 9 was nothing special to firefighter Dale Longanecker.

But when he landed, his 617th jump as a Forest Service smoke-jumper broke the national record for most jumps, either for practice or to fight a fire.

A smokejumper for 27 years, Longanecker, 45, passed the 616 jumps made by former North Cascade Smokejumper Base Manager Bill Moody, who had held the record since the mid-1970s and who retired in 1989.

"Everybody else was making a big deal out of it," Longanecker said. "To me, it was just another jump." Since then, he's made three more jumps on fires, pushing the record to 620.

Longanecker has known he would be a smokejumper since he was eight years old. He grew up in Winthrop, next door to Francis Lufkin, the man considered by the Forest Service to be the father of smokejumping. Lufkin helped pioneer smokejumping in 1939 and was the first manager of the North Cascade Smokejumper Base near Winthrop. Inspired by Lufkin, Longanecker and both of his brothers and five of his cousins became smokejumpers.

Longanecker trained at Redmond because there weren't any spots open at the base in Winthrop. After three seasons, he came back to his hometown and worked under Moody.

When he heard of the record-breaker, Moody called to congratulate Longanecker, and actually was the first to break the news to Longanecker's wife, Kristy. The Longaneckers live in Omak with their 11-year-old daughter, Ashly. They still have a home in Winthrop, where they hope to retire.

Moody said he was glad it was Longanecker who broke his record. "I kind of watched Dale grow up. His father used to work in the office, and then Dale came to work for me in the 1970s."

Jumping from a plane traveling at 90 mph at 1,500 feet above the ground and steering a parachute into a tiny clearing deep in the woods is the fun part of the job, Longanecker said. "It's always a challenge," he said. "No two jumps are alike. The winds are always variable. It's a job that not everybody can do."

Make that hardly anybody. There are only about 350 to 400 smokejumpers in the United States. They're sent to the most remote fires because they're the ones who can get there in a hurry. Equipment is dropped with separate cargo chutes. Depending upon the size of the fire, jumpers sometimes spend several days on the fire line. When the fire's out, they often have to pack out with 100 pounds or more of equipment.

It's a dangerous job. Longanecker was on the South Canyon fire in Colorado on July 6, 1994, when 14 firefighters died. He heard about it while on the fire line, and it's still a painful memory. "That's something that can pretty much ruin a person's career," he said. "It makes you wonder if it's worth it all." It wasn't easy to keep working after the news. "I knew I would though. This is what I've always wanted to do and what I've always planned to do."

Physical conditioning can help keep smokejumpers safe. Still, there are plenty of hazards. In 1979, Longanecker broke both of his ankles during landings. But he's made safe landings in every Western state, including Alaska. This year, he's made jumps in Colorado, Utah,



*Dale Longanecker (Courtesy Scott Wicklund)*

Montana, and even a few in Washington. In 1996 he jumped on 20 fires, but averages about 10 a year.

As loft foreman, Longanecker is in charge of making sure the 22 smokejumpers in Winthrop have safe equipment. He teaches them how to sew, so they can repair their own jump suits, backpacks and parachutes. Dale has designed several packs, and is now working on a new design for a jump suit—one that's more comfortable and will allow for easier bending of the elbows and knees.

Although he holds the record for jumps, Longanecker actually misses out on a lot of jumps because he's also a spotter. Still, he may hold this record for a long time. After all, he's only 45, and he won't be retiring until at least 50.

"When I'm done smokejumping, I hope to be around long enough to congratulate the person that gets more jumps than I do," he said. 🍄

# The First Jump in the Sequoias

by Bob Nolan (Cave Junction '47)



*Sequoias Jumpers Porterville CA airport 1949. Standing (L-R) Airport dispatcher, unknown, Co-pilot, Orville Looper, Pilot, Bob Nolan, Warehouse Supt., Bob "Rigger" Snyder, Bob Moffitt, Paul Kovaleff, Cecil Cook (airport manager) Kneeling: (L-R) Local USFS, Mechanic, Paul Block, Lowell "Lucky" Scalf, Bob Scofield, Al Boucher. (Courtesy Bob Nolan)*

**I**n September 1949, nine jumpers from Cave Junction flew many miles south to the Sequoia National Forest and jumped the Osa Fire, which was tucked among the Giant Sequoia Redwoods. Along with me, the jumpers were Al Boucher, Orville Looper, Paul Block, Bob Scofield, Bob Snyder, Bob Moffitt, Paul Kovaleff and Lowell "Lucky" Scalf.

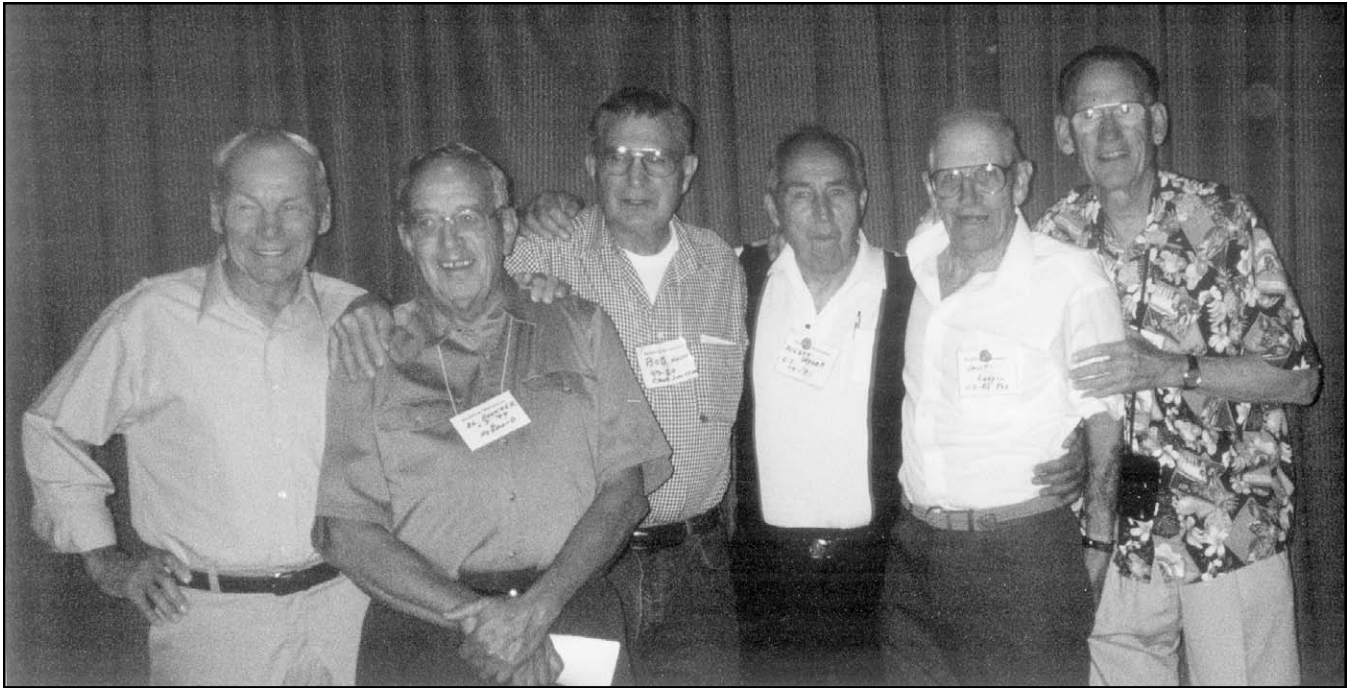
We flew down in the Tri-Motor that was based in Redding. Due to a strong headwind, we arrived too late in the day to jump. I swear the traffic on Highway 99 was moving faster than the Ford.

That evening the forest supervisor took the pilot and me to his office to show us the fire location on the map. He also informed me that he had already picked our jump spot which was a large meadow about six miles away from the fire. I told him that our objective was to jump as close to the fire as possible. The supervisor said that he had scouted the area and there was absolutely no place to jump among

the Sequoias, which were considerably taller than 200 feet. He practically ordered me to use the meadow that he had picked out. I told him that we might use the meadow, but the bottom line was that I would make the final decision as to where the jumpers would jump.

We took off early the next morning hoping to find a jump spot closer than the meadow. When we found the fire, there was also an opening in the Sequoias nearby, which was about 100 feet wide by 300 feet long. I told the pilot that if we went down to 800 feet I could put all the jumpers into the opening. After I spotted the others, I also jumped. Everyone made it to the ground and the fire was only a few hundred yards away. We were all safely on the ground and eager to attack the fire.

The Tri-Motor made a pass and dropped the cargo, with one of the pilots kicking the cargo. Guess what? The cargo chute hung up in the very top of one of those huge Sequoias. What a predicament we were in. We had to climb



*Sequoias Jumpers 50 Years Later at Reunion 2000. (L-R) Bob Scofield, Al Boucher, Bob Nolan, Bob Snyder, Orville Looper, Bob Moffitt. (Courtesy Bob Nolan)*

that Sequoia to retrieve our tools and supplies. Luckily we had two pairs of climbing spurs with us. We had to tie two climbing ropes together to get around the tree. However, there was no way one person could flip this much climbing rope. We had to find some long tree limbs and use them to push the rope up the tree as the climber moved higher. We barely managed to get the climber high enough to reach some limbs.

From there he climbed through the limbs to the top of the tree where he began sawing limbs. In less than an hour we had the cargo on the ground. The climber used a letdown rope to descend from the tree. After all this we were on the fire in two hours after jumping.

The fire didn't amount to much—duff burning and putting up a lot of smoke. It could have easily been a two-manner.

The next day a ground crew showed up to relieve us. They had ridden in by horse to a ridge about five miles away and hiked in from there. The horses and a packer were waiting for us at that spot. The forest supervisor said that he was really impressed by our performance and, now that he knew what smokejumpers could do, he would consider using them more often. 🌲

*Bob Nolan jumped at Cave Junction from 1947 to 1950. He is currently retired and living in that area.*

***Smokejumper Magazine Thanks Donors***

The following members added an extra ten dollars or more to their membership renewals. Thanks to their generous donations, we are able to run another issue with an expanded number of pages. We wish to thank:

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 Wildes, Chuck  
 Wildman, Dick  
 Wright, Larry  
 Young, Luke

# 1958 Trip to Redding—Really Tall Trees!

by “Wild Bill” Yensen (McCall ’53)

**A**fter serving Uncle Sam in Germany for my two years as a draftee, I returned to McCall for my fourth summer of jumping. I brought my wife, Arlene, and we lived in the trailer court.

When the call came for help from Redding, we flew down on the DC-3. In Redding we loaded up the Lockheed Loadstar with **Grant Landers** (McCall ’58), **Rocky Stone** (McCall ’57), **Bill Weaver** (McCall ’58), me, and “Paperlegs” Peterson as the spotter. Our fire was named Dutchman’s Peak and was up near Mt. Shasta.

Our jump spot was oval shaped and in a stand of big sugar pines. Landers and I were the first out. I remember planing my FS-2 to clear the last tree and getting ready to hit the ground. But I kept going and going—we had jumped from 1,000 feet and one quarter of the jump was from treetop to the ground!

We all made it to the ground except Bill Weaver. Bill had a Mae West and had to deploy his reserve. Naturally he landed in the top of one of those huge sugar pines.

After Bill settled into the top of that tree, he

hollered “I’m coming down!” I realized that he only had a 90-foot letdown rope and told him to stay put. He managed to lower his reserve tied to the end of the letdown rope, but was still at least 60 feet short of the ground.

I put on the tree spurs and climbed up that monster and tied on a Fanno saw and three other letdown ropes so that Bill could pull it all up. After he cut his main out of the limbs, Bill tied the letdown ropes together and attached one end to his chest strap. He dropped the other end over the lowest green branch that would hold him. I held that end around my back and ass and eased him down to the ground. When Bill hit the ground we had 20 feet of rope left of the four 90-foot letdown ropes.

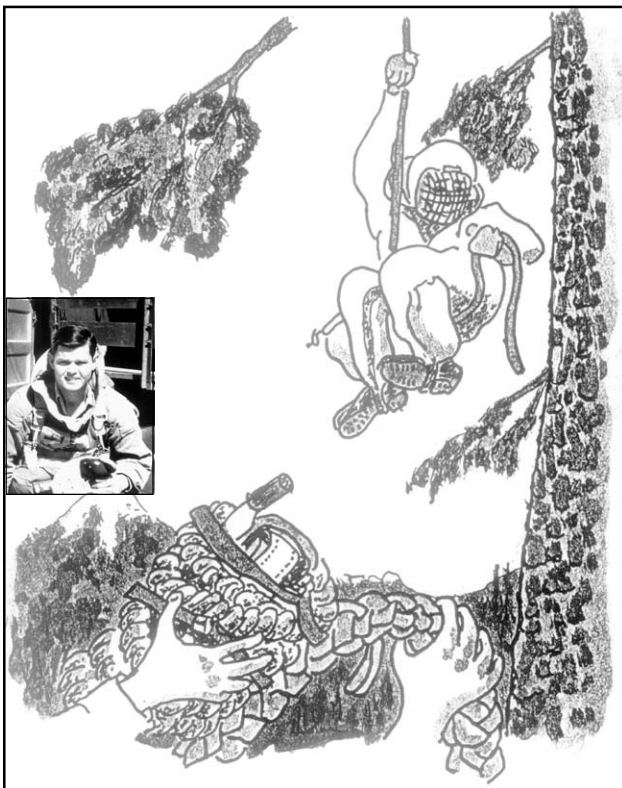
Our fire had burned out a cat face in the huge sugar pine—big enough for all four of us to get into. We used the tools from the two fire packs, which made it to the ground, but the crosscut saw was attached to the two packs that were hung up. We needed the saw to drop our tree.

When I first looked at the tree with the cargo, I thought that since the limbs went clear to the ground, it would be an easy climb. That 24-foot cargo chute sure did look small up there, though. When I went toward the tree, I found out that the “ground” was just a canopy of 30 feet of brush and it was a Douglas fir about 15 feet in diameter at the base. The lowest branch was up there about 50 feet.

In those days all we got were climbing spurs—no belt and no climbing rope. The cracks in the bark were six inches deep so I used them to carefully reach the lowest limb. Once I got over the enormous lower limb, it was a piece of cake to get to the top, as the branches were thick all the way.

When I got up there, I drained a canteen from one of the elephant bags and ate a can of beans. I had taken three 90-foot letdown ropes up with me and tied them together to let the cargo down to the ground. It didn’t reach the ground! I had to climb down 20 more feet to get that saw on the ground.

As I worked in the top of that tree, nearly 300 feet up, I got to thinking of the wonders of nature. I had been hired to teach biology at Mar Vista High School in Imperial Beach, Calif., that fall. I marveled that capillary action and osmosis could get sap or water



(Courtesy Nick Holmes)



that high. When I made a letdown from the lowest branch, the ground never felt better.

We sawed down the monster fire tree and dug 13 chains of line around it. It took until the next evening to complete the mop up and we hiked out to the road where we were picked up. It was nearly dark when we arrived at the little town of Hiller. As the driver needed to fix the headlights, we, being good smokejumpers, headed for the nearest bar.

We were wearing our jump jackets as it was kind of misty and cold. We were on our first beer when a guy asked what kind of jackets we were wearing. We told him that we were smokejumpers and had just put out a fire up near Mt. Shasta. He started putting pitchers in front of us as we told him jump stories. Several pitchers later, the driver returned and took us back to Redding.

When we got back, we were told that chutes needed to be rigged as there were more fires to be jumped in the morning. I wobbled up and down the table for a couple more hours packing chutes.

The next morning, my partner (a Redding jumper) and I were off in the Loadstar for the El Dorado Forest east of Auburn. We made the first fire jumps on that forest. It was a memorable jump for me as I had my first and only Mae West. By the time I worked the lines off the canopy, I was so low that I had a choice between a rock pile and a big oak tree. Needless to say, I took the oak tree.

When I hit it, the upper branches stopped me, but the canopy and lines then fell over me. Then I fell ass over teakettle down through the tree. When I finally stopped, I was hanging about five feet above the ground with two shroud lines wrapped around my left ankle. If I cut the lines, I knew I would fall and kill myself.

Rather than that, I did some upside down gymnastics and somehow got loose. My jump partner was about a half mile away and couldn't hear my screams for help. I'll never forget the terror of falling through that tree!

The fire was easy. After spending the night, we hiked out 14 miles the next day. Seven miles up the dry riverbed surrounded by poison oak big enough to climb. The remaining seven miles were up a trail to the road. I knew that I was susceptible to poison oak, so I bought three quarts of rubbing alcohol to wash my body. I washed all my clothes and still spent the rest of the summer scratching that \*&#@\$% poison oak. In the next 15 years or so, I turned down all the trips to Redding or Cave Junction.

John "Tex" Lewis (McCall '53) jumped one of those chutes that I had packed and had the gall to blame me for his Mae West. Could packing cause a Mae West? Nah! It's bad body position!! 🍄

*"Wild Bill" Yensen taught and coached in Southern California for 35 years and jumped at McCall for 30 seasons. Bill has contributed several great stories to Smokejumper magazine and we're looking for more.*



(Courtesy Nick Holmes)



# Sounding Off From the Editor



by Chuck Sheley  
(Cave Junction '59)  
MANAGING EDITOR

I HOPE YOU NOTICED that the October issue of *Smokejumper* magazine was 40 pages. That was an increase of eight pages from the normal run of 32 pages. Special credit and thanks is to be given to the donors who sent in a "little extra" to help with this project. This issue will also run more than 40 pages. There is a wealth of material out there and you members keep sending it to me. Keep up the good work!

Speaking of good work—there were five individuals who stepped forward to volunteer help with the time-consuming job of editing. The system is getting more professional as we continue to round out the corners.

There are three important projects to which I want to give special emphasis in this column:

1. Please read the estate planning brochure created by Past President Carl Gidlund. You could play a vital part in the continuation of the NSA by a donation of this nature.

2. Another inserted flyer deals with the NSA's effort to team with the Turner Publishing Company in the publication of a commemorative book on smokejumping. This is an excellent opportunity to get a professionally published book which features biographies, history of smokejumping and photographs. The key to the success of this publication is your contribution to the request for information. We can't write it if we don't have it! Carl has given a sample biography and picture which clearly explains the process. Please sit down now and mail in your own personal biography.

I want to put special emphasis on item number three. That is our kickoff campaign to increase our Life Members. You will be receiving a special mailing in January further explaining our plan to permanently put the NSA on a solid financial footing. There have been some major changes in the past year. The Board of Directors has representatives from almost all of the bases; the Executive Committee is meeting at the bases and holding NSA socials in those areas (we just meet at the North Cascades base in September and had 55+ at the Saturday night social); the magazine has increased in content and quality and the NSA's operating budget finished last year in the black.

One of the major needs at this point is to establish a firm financial base for the organization. We need more than dues and the sales of merchandise to

operate a professional organization. The Life Membership program can meet this need.

The cost of a Life Membership is \$1000. First let me say that this is an investment in the **future** of the NSA. It is logical that you will not receive enough quarterly magazines to recoup the \$1000. This membership is a statement of **support** for the future maintenance and operation of the NSA. None of the \$1000 will be touched. It will be put into an endowment type fund and only the **interest** will be used to support the NSA. Life Membership Chairman **Jim Cherry** (Missoula '57) has come up with some creative payment options that will make it very feasible for you to consider joining as a Life Member.

The NSA is on the move. Please give Life Membership some serious thought. It will set the foundation for the future of the organization!

When I was writing the section of the October issue crediting those who worked on the reunion, I was worried about missing some key players. In the course of eighteen months of planning and over twenty meetings there had to be someone that I overlooked. Sure enough I was right. The Region 4 crew who handled the super Sunday morning memorial service was left out. Even though I'm tardy, I speak for all of us who attended in giving **Stan Tate**, **Leo Cromwell** and **Bobby Montoya** a standing ovation for their efforts in heading up this part of the reunion. Great job guys! 🙌



(Courtesy of Terry Fieldhouse)

## Reunion Reactions

Just wanted to say how much Marlene and I enjoyed the reunion, although we really had to hit and run. We made the activities for Friday through Saturday, had to head back to Montana early Sunday. It was great to visit with so many old friends I hadn't seen since jumper days and was surprised at how many remember me as "Digger" instead of Doug. We really had a good visit.

While we were there, we saw some of the fella's with individual records of the jumps they made and the names and locations of the fires—it was a great record. Is it in a book I could purchase? Does someone have the records that I could contact and purchase mine? Are they smokejumper based records?

Boy this is a tough fire year. We've been over by Darby, Montana—fire bases everywhere.

Great reunion!  
—Doug "Digger" Daniels (Missoula '61)

APPLAUSE, APPLAUSE to everyone who had a part in making the Reunion 2000 in Redding so successful. It was wonderful to see friends of years past and to meet new ones.

My sincere thanks to those who worked long, tedious hours to compile the directory. I have spent many hours perusing the directory. Names bring back wonderful memories.

There was only one incident that marred the banquet for some of us, when someone took it upon themselves to appropriate Don Baker's generous gift for their table, leaving several tables with unused wine glasses. Thanks Don for your thoughtfulness and I am sure those who had five or six bottle at their table really enjoyed them.

I look forward to receiving Smokejumper magazine and read and re-read it. Keep up the good work.

—Dora E. Flint (Associate-Payroll Clk Missoula '55-'69)

The Redding Reunion was a memorable experience for us. Surely if all the

blessings of living come our way, the smokejumper experience has to rank up there in the top five.

I'm reading Murry Taylor's book *Jumping Fire*. It's hard to put down. Very reflective, good technical reporting and brings out Mr. Taylor's love of smokejumping.

—Dayton Grover (Missoula '55)

I thought the reunion was a huge success. Much praise should go to all of the group that put it together. It was very well organized with a wide variety of activities and subjects for everyone.

I was please and surprised at the acknowledgment of the pilots at the banquet. This hasn't happened much in the past. Numerous "old jumpers" stopped by our table to let me know that at some time in the past I has "dumped" them on some fires.

I was also glad to see Elmer Neufeld make it to the reunion. I flew a lot of jumper and cargo dropping missions with him. He was one of the best!

—Wally Tower (A#1 Pilot)

# Dawn Jump

by Jason Greenlee (Redding '99)



*Dawn and Jason Greenlee (Courtesy of Jason Greenlee)*

**T**here we were. It was June 14, 2000, the day our 32 Missoula rookies were to make their first jump. My wife was one of these hapless creatures.

The rookies waiting in the ready room had the look of salmon rolling relentlessly down a cannery conveyor belt. The smell of fear was in the room. I could see in the cosmic conveyor belt in their eyes. The belt was pulling them toward the open door of a Sherpa. The rooks were maybe hoping that they could fall off the conveyor onto the floor, there to be swept away from the fate that lay on the other side of that door.

The rooks were doubly nervous that day because Big Ernie had already sent a wind the day before, delaying their first jump.

Eventually, the aircraft rolled out one after another full of expectant, excited faces pressed to the windows. The experienced jumpers lined the ramp, waving merrily to the rooks. The wide-eyed faces looked out at us and seemed to be saying to us: "Help us! Help us!"

But the ships mercilessly rolled on down the runway and into the air. Later they came sailing back. Empty. Very empty. Where were all the rooks? Had they flown the nest? Had they made their jump? Or had Big Ernie sucked them into the clouds, never to be seen again?

By the noisy chatter in the ready room an hour later, I knew that either Andy had brought in a strip-tease dancer to entertain us or that the rooks were back from their first jump.

I saw my wife. She had a grin for me that reached from ear to ear. Oh good! Maybe she liked jumping! Or maybe, I cautioned myself, she was grinning because she'd been forgotten and left behind in the lemming rush to the sea.

"So," I said tentatively, "how did it go?"

"Oh, it was great! I loved it!" she replied.

"So everything went okay?" My hope was growing.

"Well, Everett did say that the spotter had to tell me three times to get ready once I was in the door."

"How come?"

"Well, I'm not really sure. I mean, he must have had to say it three times, but I guess I only heard it the third time."

"So you didn't freeze in the door or anything?"

"Oh, no. I jumped when he slapped me."

"But he said he had to push you." (I had prior knowledge.)

"Oh, he said that?"

"Yes."

"Huh! Maybe he did give me a nice little slap that was also sort of a shove. It was very helpful. I mean it was a nice shove. Sort of helping me out, you know?"

"Oh yeah, I know just what you mean. The spotter is a helpful guy. Did he say anything while he was helping you?"

"Well, he was yelling something, but I don't think I remember what he was saying. It was all so fast. Hey!" she lit up. "Maybe that's why I screamed!" She beamed at me.

"You screamed?"

"Yeah, I was jumping out and I gave a little scream. Well, the whole plane load sort of heard the scream, so maybe it wasn't so little," she admitted.

"But anyone would scream if they'd been shoved out of a plane, right?"

"Right. What happened next?"

"I opened my eyes."

"Your eyes were shut?"

"Well, of course they were shut!"

"So what happened when you opened your eyes?"

"The plane was gone and it was quiet, and I looked up and my chute was open. I looked at it and it made me feel really happy and I felt safe. I even remember saying something fond out loud to my parachute, like 'Oh, nice.'" She smiled sweetly at me,

remembering the parachute floating above her. "All those hours last night I was laying there going over 'look, grab, pull,' I could have been sleeping soundly!"

"How was the flight down?"

"It was wonderful. Hey, I just remembered what the spotter was yelling!"

"What?"

"He was yelling, 'Dawn! Jump!'"

Author's Note—All of us remember our first jump, and we tell the story over and over. The essence of the jump culture is that we've learned to laugh at

ourselves in our jump stories. Dawn's first jump story has no moral, no lesson, no edifying features at all—except that it gave Dawn and me a good laugh. Dawn's second jump that day was uneventful. 🐼

*Jason Greenlee is former editor of Wildfire Magazine and former director of the International Association of Wildland Fire. This year he is jumping out of Missoula. In the off-season, he directs a nonprofit library called the Fire Research Institute. He can be reached at: fire\_research\_institute@hotmail.com*

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## LETTERS

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Dear Editor,

Once again I want to compliment the National Smokejumper Association and the Redding jumpers for a great reunion. I've been to them all and they just keep getting better.

After reading the October issue of *Smokejumper* I was indeed saddened by the passing of Dr. Robert Caldwell. I remember his as one of the strongest men who ever jumped. He did the torture rack with a 25 lb rock held at arms length over his head! One time Frank Tweedy (Idaho City '52) and Bob Caldwell were arguing. After a few exchanges Caldwell retorted, "Mr. Tweedy, in a battle of wits, you are unarmed!" That was a nice picture in the October issue of Merle, Lloyd, Smokey, Ellis and Bob Caldwell.

There was a letter to the editor about a higher jump spot in the last issue. According to the letter they landed at 10,700 feet in the Absaroka Mountains near Yellowstone National Park back in 1965. The next year, on June 26, 1966, a DC 3 load of jumpers out of McCall were sent down to Troy Peak southwest of Ely Nevada on the Humbolt. A big stand of bristlecone pine (editors note: bristlecone pine are thought to be some of the oldest living trees, some are thought to be 4000 years old) we were sent to save it. We landed about 75 feet below the highest point on the mountain. After we had the fire out we climbed up the rocks to the peak and found the bronze marker that showed 11,268 feet. We definitely landed above 11,000 feet.

On that jump, Nick Kennedy went through Bruce Yergenson's lines and they couldn't get untangled so they landed together and rolled a long distance downhill. Poor Yergie injured an ankle but in true Smokejumper fashion he fought the fire anyway.

I would like to add my congratulations to Steve Smith. He took all twenty-five years of 8mm movies I had shot and put them on videotape for free. I was thrilled to see some of the 8mm movie film appear in

the video in just the right places. What a treasure that video is to me and my family! Thanks for a great job Steve!

If there is anything I can do to help the NSA, let me know. I'll keep sending you more of my favorite jump stories.

Sincerely yours

"Wild Bill" Yensen, (McCall '53)

Editor:

Even though I made my last fire jump in 1945, I enjoy reading our Smokejumper quarterly magazine and books by more recent jumpers. Much remains as I remember it, but I learn lots that is new, such as firefighting in Alaska and the different parachute used by BLM jumpers.

A number of writers have mentioned the desirability of overtime pay. That's a laugh to us from CPS 103. We received a \$5.00 a month allowance, double our \$2.50 which we received at the base camps from which we transferred. Overtime pay? Forget it!

I must add, however, that Forest Service supervisors proved generous with time off at the end of the fire season for all our overtime on fires. Several of us rode a bus to Pocatello, Idaho, to work a couple weeks in the potato harvest. We enjoyed all we could eat and \$1.00 an hour for our labor. We returned to Missoula with more money than we had seen in a month of Sundays.

Gregg Phifer (Missoula '44)

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### READERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO GET INVOLVED

Send your letter to the editor:

U.S. Mail: Chuck Sholey, 10 Judy Ln. Chico, CA 95926

E-Mail: cknkgsholey@earthlink.net

send as e-mail, not an attached document

Deadline for the April issue is February 1

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# After All These Years, It's Still the Alaska Jumpers Best Fishing Story

by Jeff Fereday (McCall '70)

In mid-September the Alaska sun still lingers long into the evening, but the cooler weather has made the smokejumper's workday more of an 8:00 to 5:00 proposition. That particular evening in September 1975, at the start of the long sunset, I was sitting in my room in the barracks at Fort Wainwright, trying to learn a guitar riff from a small cassette player. Al Dunton (Fairbanks '67) poked his head in the open doorway.

"Want to go to a fire? Southwest of Anchorage. I'm rounding up a load."

By that time of the year, several of the jumpers had packed it in for the season. By that time of the evening—with no stand-by and no storms predicted—most of those still on the jump list had headed for the bars on Two Street or for Sam's, the card and roulette room which Rod Dow (McCall '68) frequented and the authorities allowed to operate downtown. I put away my guitar, changed into something less comfortable and headed for the T-Hangar.

I got on the Volpar with Jim Clairmont (Missoula '65), Steve Nemore (Redmond '69), Rob Collins (Redmond '69), and Bruce Ward (Fairbanks '73). Like me, none of them was anywhere near the top of the jump list. The PG bags of the six guys who were at the top had been pre-loaded, which turned out to be a good thing.

The flight was lovely. We headed south in perfect weather toward the Alaska Peninsula, flying literally a few hundred yards to the west of the summit of Denali. Everyone was in a reverie, looking at the pink light on the glaciers and snowfields of the Great Mountain.

The south coast eventually appeared in the distance. Katmai National Monument was just off to the south, although that did not occur to me until after the fire when, returning to Fairbanks, the pilot took us on a tour. But now, on our way to this late-season fire, we dropped more and approached the area around the Alagnak River, maybe 40 river miles upstream from the village of King Salmon. This was another fact I learned later, as jumpers often do when they finally get time to study the map and figure out where they really are, or where they've just been, or might go next. As is often the case, this was a flight into new country.

The river was huge and cobalt blue in the slant of evening light, flashing silver at a certain angle. We dropped a little more. Al, now acting as spotter, opened the door; we got ourselves ready. A few minutes more, slowing down and near jump altitude, we saw the fire's smoke; it lay close to the ground, right next to the river. Clairmont asked what became the essential question: "Anyone have fishing gear?"

Bruce had a small telescoping rod and spinning reel, a few lures, and some flies in his PG bag, but that was it. So, as the

pilot circled to begin the streamer passes, we quickly rifled our absent comrades' bags. In the bag owned by Scott "Master" Bates, we came up with another telescoping rod and light spinning outfit. Like Bruce's, it was a basic \$8.99 special from some drug-store sporting goods department. Clairmont stuffed the items into a leg pocket.

The fire was loitering in a spruce bog in a wedge of land bounded on one side by the river and on the other by a large slough coming off the river at an acute angle. We made our streamer pass ... light breeze ... smoke very steady. Getting in close would be a piece of cake, but everyone paid acute attention to the streamers. It was a *very* big river. Over the noise of the engines and the wind in the door, Al shouted the usual vague pre-jump briefing as to where we were and how we might de-man. Someone asked to have a pump dropped in. Al nodded. Swinging my feet out the windy opening onto the step, I noticed a shack at river's edge, just downstream of the fire. There was an island in the river maybe 60 feet out—a pretty scene. Looked like it actually might be good fishing, too.

"Spot yourself?" Al asked. I nodded, then watched the lineup, rechecked the smoke, noted the location of the other four T-10 chutes, two of which were just then settling flat against the deep green Alaska ground cover. Directly over the streamers, I counted, "One and *two*." I bolted up and out of my sitting position. Then the fluttery payout of lines, the thrilling pullup, a glimpse of the plane above me. I was out and floating. The sunset now tinged everything gold.

I sat up in the spongy muskeg as my parachute settled on willows. Clairmont was shouting. "Geez, they must be three feet long!" He claimed to have seen something big moving in the swift water near shore.

The river had typically high gravel banks, edged at the top here and there with short, scraggly Alaskan black spruce that leaned out toward the flow. Several had been undercut and lay fallen along the bank. The structure we had seen from the air was a little open-walled shack. Inside hung a gill net; the place was somebody's fish camp.

That night we worked the fire for several hours, slapping spruce boughs at the flaming muskeg, making a black line at the fire's trailing edge. The fire's front crept away apathetically into the dead end between slough and river. Once our line formed the base of the triangle, it was essentially going to be a mop-up job. It was a typical smokejumper strategy: Obvious, easy, potentially worth several leisurely days in a splendid campsite—and therefore, brilliant. But we all readily agreed that this particular fire was going to take some time, undoubtedly four or five days, as Rob Collins later explained it, to "complete everything we had in mind." Bruce Ward set up his rod as we



*Jeff Fereday 1975 (Courtesy of Jeff Fereday)*

finished a 3 a.m. breakfast of C-rations and crawled into our sleeping bags.

I awoke the next morning to the sound of Steve breaking branches for the breakfast fire. Another beautiful day. I watched from the warmth of my chicken-feather bag as Bruce tied on a big daredevil spoon, red with a wavy white stripe. He heaved it out into the near edge of the heavy current, maybe 30 yards from shore. I sat up to get a look. He began reeling in—WHAM. A huge hit, the rod bending almost double, Bruce cursing and moving along the bank as what must have been a huge fish turned nose downstream in the current and ran.

The reel shrieked like an assault victim, back-ratcheted disapprovingly as Bruce leaned back and cranked it, shrieked again for several seconds, then stopped abruptly with an audible snap of monofilament.

“*Goddamn!* Broke off. Eight-pound test will not cut it with these sons of bitches.” Looking at us with a maniacal grin, and with a firm grasp of the obvious, Bruce said, “Sure felt lots bigger than a silver.” Then, a moment later, inspecting his puny rig, “Holy s---! He took *all* my line!”

We laughed. Someone was making coffee. Collins was moseying off to inspect the fire. Clairmont had set up the Scott Bates outfit and was making his third cast. A shout came from Jim a few moments later. We watched him stumbling around near the edge of the high, unstable bank, trying to get his footing against the pull of the rod. He recovered, backed away from the edge and began sidestepping unevenly downriver. Jim is a big man with a shambling gait. As the fish pulled harder downstream, the bear in him began loping comically.

Nemore picked up a Woodsman’s Pal and ran after him none too soon. Clairmont had come to the first of several small spruce trees that leaned out, presenting obstacles at the top of the cutbank. Jim managed to hand his rod to himself around the first one, then lost his footing and sat down hard. An arm hooked around a small tree was the only thing keeping him from slipping down the bank. Jim scrambled to his feet, reeling furiously. He was already winded.

The fish headed back upstream momentarily. Steve hacked down the next three spruces ahead of the action as the fish again dragged Jim downriver. We sipped our coffee and laughed at variations on this performance for about fifteen minutes. Finally, almost a quarter of a mile downriver, the rod went straight, wet slack line shining for an instant in a loop in

the breeze over the river. Another breakoff, another lure and a full reel of eight-pound test line gone. Distant cursing. More laughter.

Jim was just arriving back at camp with his crippled fishing outfit when a Cessna appeared: pump delivery from Anchorage. Out came the gear on a cargo chute, a head peering out the cargo door momentarily and then the static line being hauled in, the chute bag slapping the fuselage. Veering away to the northeast, the pilot’s voice on the radio inquired, “You men need anything else?”

“Yes,” I blurted, grabbing up the radio from where Clairmont had set it down to pick up his coffee cup. Then, speaking into the radio, “*Yes*. Could you get us a large spool of 25-pound test monofilament and several large lures? Big ones.”

There was a period of silence on the radio. The aircraft maneuvered off course to Anchorage to come back over us again, left wing dipped our direction. The ship was low enough that we could see the pilot’s face. He regarded us impassively from behind his sunglasses. Then his voice on the radio speaker: “I’ll, uh, get . . . uh, back to you on that.” I looked at Nemore. He shrugged.

We worked the fire the rest of the morning, two of us getting the pump set up and most of the hose lined out. The others kept the fire away from a stand of spruce near the slough on the far side. Mid-afternoon found us back at our fish camp headquarters, fixing lunch and relaxing.

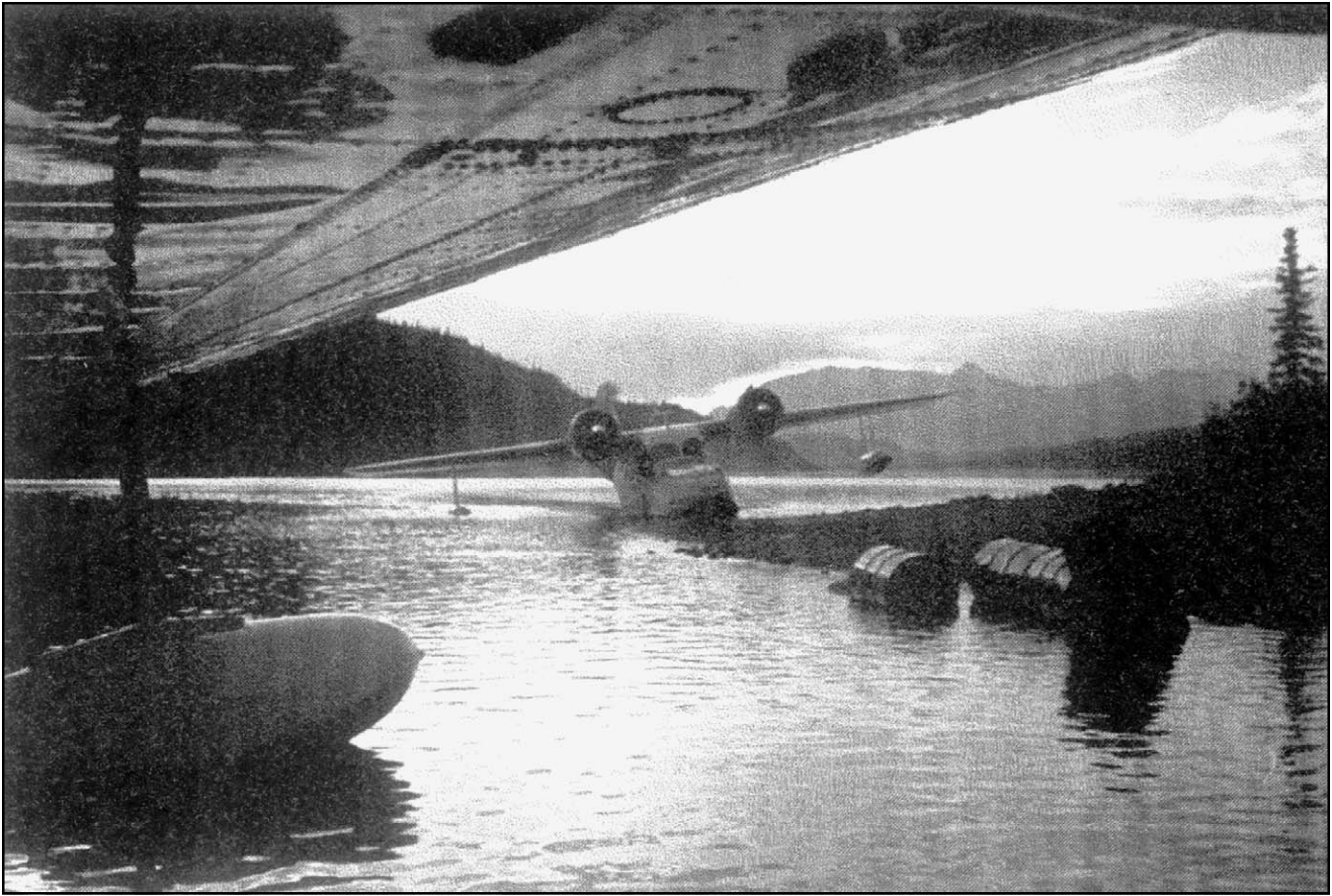
“Damn, I wish we had some line,” lamented Clairmont, staring into the swift water near the bottom of the steep bank.

I had been eyeing one of the cargo chutes. “Let’s see if we can make this stuff work,” I said. I cut one of the chute’s shroud lines, exposing the five twisted nylon strands inside, each worth about 50 pounds of strength and reasonably thin. For the next half hour I cut shroud lines, stripped out the guts and then tied these twenty-foot lengths end-to-end. Collins got the concept and began wrapping it evenly onto the end of a shovel handle. Once we had about 300 feet, we declared it good.

We threaded the line out through the guides on one of the small rods. The line of course would not work in the reel, so we removed the puny device. We’d stick with the shovel handle. It also was apparent that the line would not pay out through the guides in a cast; the stuff was heavy compared to monofilament, and with a knot every 20 feet there was no way. So we pulled about fifty yards of line through the guides and tied on our largest Mepps lure. About eight feet back from the lure, we attached a 20-penny nail we found at the fish camp. The nail gave us the weight we needed to cast.

Collins was the reel man; he held the shovel and stood to my right, ready to wind line on or let it pay out. I was the rod man. It took two guys to cast. Steve took about 20 yards of line downstream on the bank to my left. From him the line zigged back to Bruce, the cast man, about 15 yards upriver to my right. Bruce swung the nail and lure around to build up momentum while we ducked behind him, then let the thing fly out over the river. He let go, then Steve let go just after. It was perfect. The nail sailed out, carrying the lure just into the heavy current about 35 yards from shore.

“*Reel!*” Collins wound feverishly. Nemore, Ward, and



*Grumman Goose Demanning Alaska Fire (Courtesy Jerry Dixon)*

Clairmont were laughing hysterically at the implausible success of the cast. Then came a huge strike. I looked at Collins, the line spinning off the shovel handle like it was a spindle at a carpet factory. He gave me a look like, “I can’t believe this is happening.” There was shouting. Collins and I were fighting a very big fish.

For the next 40 minutes or so, Rob and I held our ground, me shouting, “Give line! Ooh! Reel in again! Wind, man! Oh no—*give* line!”

The fish worked back and forth into and out of the current, a huge pull when it made a downriver run, then a sickening slack when it raced back toward us, sometimes breaking the surface. But we were smokejumpers, so we trusted our equipment—specifically, the strength of that nylon string—and therefore held our ground. We both grasped the fact that the Clairmont down-the-river technique likely would have tumbled us into the river, wound up in parachute cord. Collins quickly got adept at tipping the shovel handle toward the rod when he needed to spill line, then tipping it the other way, pulling, walking backwards, and winding furiously when he needed uptake.

The cheap rod somehow held, though it often was bent essentially double. I’d pull back, and the tip would be quivering inches from my straining forearms. Nemore, Ward, and Clairmont were jumping around, offering advice which we ignored or barely heard. Half the time we were giggling like fools, the other half cursing and muttering incoherently. The

makeshift line slid back and forth erratically through the rod guides, the knots snapping and checking on each guide as they went past. I had gloves on, which allowed me to direct the line from the shovel handle through a right angle to the first guide, and to thumb the line against the cheap plastic of the rod grip. I could feel heat through the leather as the line moved back and forth.

After several minutes of this, the knots were beginning to get fuzzy and frayed. It was clear that they were approaching what Collins at one point referred to as a “threshold of failure.” I responded to this, between grunts and shouts, with a comment to the effect that if he’s got enough education to speak like that at a time like this, then what the hell’s he doing smokejumping in Alaska? He smiled broadly and jerked his head toward the river, where the fish fought on and on.

Finally, we worked the fish up onto the narrow gravel beach at the bottom of the cut bank. Our three companions were down there to land it. Bruce got a hand in each gill and lifted it up. This was a huge king salmon, silvery red. Shining firm and perfect, its muscular shuddering nearly threw Bruce off balance. Its breathtaking size stunned us all. Bruce scrambled clumsily up the bank, slipped back, then clambered up with a push from Clairmont. Bruce lifted the fish, grinning as if from a snapshot taken on a wharf in Key West, the sun shining between puffy clouds in an azure sky, the fisherman exhausted and happy. The fish’s curved snout reached nearly to Bruce’s chest. The tail was bent against the ground. This fish



must have weighed considerably more than 40 pounds. Ward declared it to be “fifty, easy.”

We celebrated our catch by rekindling our breakfast fire and roasting five huge fillets, Tlinget-style, on forked sticks jammed in the ground, the meat leaning over the coals, sizzling and dripping. It was a typical Alaska smokejumper event—making the most of often low-tech equipment, accepting the ever-present need to improvise, and somehow ending up with a feast.

After napping, we eventually drifted back to the fire, dragging hose around, spraying tussocks and smoldering peat and pingoes until they oozed sooty water. We found dug-out cabin ruins, and the remains of a graveyard with wooden coptic crosses, all fallen and rotting, everything matted over with the low viney growth of the muskeg. It was the kind of place that, when you think of it afterwards, you see it as a vision or something that you never really saw, but only read about.

That afternoon we caught two more very large kings, a sockeye and a silver salmon, on the parachute-line rig. That line never did break.

As the rest of us worked on the fire late that day, Bruce fashioned a smokehouse out of spruce poles and black visqueen with willow racks inside. He was already smoking the day’s catch by the time we returned, using some variety of alder or birch that looked questionable but turned out to be—of course—perfect.

In the evening, I waded over a gravel bar to the island where we’d seen a motorized canoe tied up. I found it had a nearly-full gas tank, so I launched it, swung over and picked up Rob. We motored maybe five miles upriver, past wading moose, innumerable shorebirds and waterfowl, through occasional clouds of mosquitoes. We pulled in at a long-abandoned cabin, also nearly engulfed in vines and muskeg growth, logs rotting, its sod roof partially collapsed. It apparently was a miner’s or fisherman’s cabin. I still have the old-style Primus stove I found in there. It is green with age, and when I see it, I think of the Alagnak River and that fire, and the fishing.

Later that night, Ward and Clairmont were in the canoe and at the lower edge of the island for nearly an hour, trying to place the gill net, giving orders to each other and laughing as they tried various techniques to wrestle the unfamiliar device into place. We occasionally offered useless advice from our spot at the campfire, which we fed far into the cool Alaska night. When they finally canoed to shore it was quite dark, their patter coming over the water our main assurance that they were not floating to the sea. The net eventually produced seven or eight chum salmon, what the Eskimos call “dog salmon”. They went into the smoker.

The next morning we all were startled awake at the same instant by the whine of the Cessna coming in low and fast out of the northeast. From inside Collins’ sleeping bag came a muffled inquiry: “Tora, Tora, Tora?” The aircraft made a sharp turn and came back over us dramatically, low and loud. Out popped a small package trailing a streamer. The 25-pound test

line and the lures! I looked over at Nemore, who lay squinting up from the caul of his mummy bag. He smiled broadly, his face turning to follow the Cessna, motoring up and away, wagging its wings.

That day and the next, and the next, we took turns on the two rods and on the pump, cycling from fishing to firefighting, with plenty of meal breaks and time for exploring the lost village. We caught fish on Mepps and daredevils and salmon eggs and even a couple of unlikely nymph patterns. We had a few break-offs, but the special-order monofilament proved to be sufficient. We caught king salmon, sockeye salmon, silver salmon, dog salmon. Closer to shore, we caught she-fish, bull trout, rainbow trout, arctic grayling. These were big fish, too. All of the trout were more than 17 inches, some as much as 23 inches long, weighing two to five pounds. The silver salmon ran from eight to twelve pounds or so, the kings all nearly as big as the first. Some of the fish we released, but most went into the smoker.

We finally managed to catch a whitefish, which was trying to grab a salmon egg on a snelled hook but was not quick enough to outdo the trout. Eventually, Bruce literally jerked the bait away from a marauding bull trout and the whitefish got it, just below us in the clear water. At that point we felt like we’d sampled the place. The smokehouse fire was about all the fire we had left by then, anyway.

When the float plane arrived to take us to King Salmon, we had two large garbage bags full of smoked fish. The T-Hangar was greasy with the stuff for a week. At the little restaurant in King Salmon that evening, most of us ordered king crab, which was a bit of a letdown.

On the flight home early the next day, we took a low-level tour of Katmai National Monument, over the Land of Ten Thousand Smokes, flying very low along a narrow stream incised a hundred feet into ash deposits. We took two passes over the site of Novarupta Volcano, now only a lava dome, whose explosion caused it all in 1912

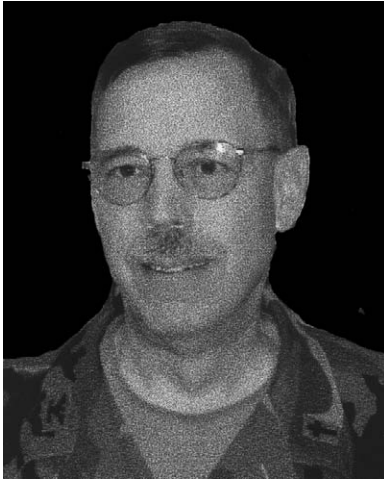
and probably other times in centuries and millennia before that. The sun that morning cast long shadows, showing the cut and altered volcanic landscape in exquisite relief. We watched a brown bear and two yearling cubs in the shallows of the Ukak River. One of the yearlings, a large red fish in its teeth, scrambled easily up a steep gravelly bank where the spruce leaned out over the water.

If I had thought about it at the time I might have figured out that, this late in the season and with my future unplanned, this would be my last fire jump. Turns out it also was my 100th jump. I guess this still is the best fishing story the Alaska jumpers have, even better than the time Murry Taylor took a 33-inch northern pike with a Woodsman’s Pal, thigh-deep in a swamp on Minto Flats. Record or not, it was a good way to end my smokejumping career. 🍄

*Jeff Fereday, now a lawyer in Boise, Idaho, jumped in McCall from 1970 through 1974, and in Fairbanks during the “T-Hangar Days” in 1975.*

“Half the time we were giggling like fools, the other half cursing and muttering incoherently.”

# Checking The Canopy



by Tom Decker  
(Idaho City '64)

## For Love of Danger

OKAY, JUMPERS, MY wife called it right!

I was reminiscing about my experience as a smokejumper when she said, "I know why you liked smokejumping." It sounded like a challenge.

"Well, okay, why?" I said.

"Because it kept you safe," she said

"Safe?" I retorted! Jumping safe? There were line-overs. Tall snags beckoned to silken parachutes. Bad exits result in inversions. What looked like a decent jump spot at 1200 feet disintegrated into ankle breaking boulders the closer one got to mother earth.

Many things could go wrong, and the more jumps, the greater the possibility of fate whittling the odds down.

My wife went on to explain that jumping was safe not because there were no inherent dangers, but because smokejumpers were expected to take

risks both on *and off the job*.

"Tell me more," I said.

She explained that while on-the-job safety was important, the mystique of jumping extended beyond the confines of shroud lines and fire lines to fuel expectations of invincibility in the face of any danger. "Sure it's dangerous," she said, "but it gave you a safe environment, a license to flirt with danger." True wife, she read me like a book.

You walk away from a good jump, but you walk through life, one step at a time, one day after the next. Life's dangers come in

bits and pieces, sometimes with the burst of light, and sometimes lurking in the shadows. What matters is how you handle it.

Some former jumpers recently wrote to comment about this column. They agreed that the issues of jumping spill into the stuff of life with answers that sometimes are beyond us. Their insight hadn't come quickly—nor easily; the result is a perspective with which to deal with life's inequities and challenges. How we handle the stuff of life may neither make it safe or sane but it may indeed save us. 🐼

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## NSA Needs Someone To Fill Secretary Position

The NSA needs a volunteer to step up and take over the position of secretary. The position has the following requirements:

- Must be organized and able to record the minutes of NSA meetings. The secretary also maintains other official files of the NSA such as the bylaws, contracts, and related documents. The volunteer needs to have basic word processing skills. The position does not require vast amounts of time, but the volunteer must respond quickly to requests for input into NSA matters.
- Must be able and willing to travel to Executive Committee and Board meetings four to five times per year. The trips are made mostly to smokejumper base locations and require overnight travel. The NSA cannot pay for these trips and all costs must be paid from your personal funds.
- Must have available and be able to use e-mail. There is frequent contact among the Executive Committee members concerning important NSA issues.

Anyone interested in applying please contact Larry Lufkin at 360-459-2534 or send an e-mail to [jumpercj63@aol.com](mailto:jumpercj63@aol.com)

## The NSA Needs You! NSA Life Membership—

# A Message to the Membership from Jim Cherry (Missoula '57, '59)

During the fires in the summer of 2000, I watched interviews with people facing forced evacuation from their homes. Those people, along with others who came back to find their home reduced to ashes, had similar priorities.

Those preparing to leave their home usually wanted to save their photos and special pieces of memorabilia. Those returning to sift through the ashes usually felt the loss of their photos and the memorabilia was painfully foremost in their minds. Those



(Courtesy Dan Veenendaal)

things translate into memories—treasured memories of people, places, good times and great accomplishments.

I have hung onto the photos and memorabilia from my smokejumper days as most jumpers have. In

fact, I continue to collect them—a pin from a reunion; a cap; a video; a group photo with signatures of others from my era; a new book that captures the flavor of a time I lived with pride. Memory is something I value—something worth preserving.

Preservation of this memory is something we do as individuals, but it's also bigger than that. Preservation of smokejumper memories is a goal of the National Smokejumper Association. To enable this goal to be met, the NSA has established the NSA Life Membership.

There are distinct differences between being an NSA member on an annual basis and being an NSA Life Member:

- As a regular NSA member you pay an annual membership fee. As a Life Member you are making a contribution and *100 percent of that*

*contribution is preserved in an interest-earning fund.*

Only the earned interest is used by the NSA in its work. All of the principal remains intact and it will not disappear over time. In addition, the NSA is recognized as a 501(c) (3) organization by the IRS and the Life Member's contribution is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

- There are special benefits and expressions of appreciation for those who become NSA Life Members, including:
- The personal satisfaction of knowing your contribution is working to preserve the smokejumper history, which is a part of your heritage.
- Having a lifetime membership in the NSA with no further annual fees to pay.
- Having a lifetime subscription to *Smokejumper* magazine, which will continue to your surviving spouse.
- Receiving a special NSA Life Member cap.
- Receiving an NSA plaque for display in the office or home.
- Special recognition of NSA Life Members in the NSA publications, at NSA reunions and other events.

The NSA Board of Directors is making it easier to establish your Life Membership by creating several options for making your contribution. Many of us don't have the \$1,000 Life Member contribution laying around as pocket change, but we can budget our resources. The following are contribution options—one of which you may find fits your budget.

- A one-time contribution of \$1,000, or ...
- Two contributions of \$500 each over a two-year period, or ...
- Eight contributions of \$125 each over a two-year period, or ...
- 24 contributions of \$41.67 each (automatic-checks plan only).

I have become a Life Member of the NSA because I believe in what the NSA is doing in preserving and promoting a part of our history—a part that shaped my life in major ways and left me with a treasury of memory, which is priceless. Every smokejumper has shared that experience in his/her own personal way and has been shaped by that experience.

I invite you to consider joining me and the other Life Members of the NSA. You can help preserve the memory. Take the time to join the growing ranks today. 🍄

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# Featured Life Members

**DONAL HALLORAN** (Missoula '53) is like many young men who come into the jumper program and stay for two or three years, but take away lessons that will shape them for life. Donal learned one of the most important lessons that a young smokejumper can learn: you must use your resources wisely!

He took this important lesson and combined it with a love of biology, as he made a career teaching college biology with an emphasis in conservation. Prior to teaching he earned a Bachelor's degree in forestry and a Master's degree in education from the University of Massachusetts. He also completed additional graduate work in biology at the University of Colorado and the University of British Columbia. He retired from teaching and conservation work in 1997.

While a passion for teaching and conservation provided him with a rewarding and fulfilling career, he also managed to keep up the excitement of working in the great outdoors. During summers, and academic sabbaticals, he worked for the Forest Service, Park Service, Peace Corp and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

In retirement, Donal hasn't slowed down a bit. He still spends his time on a multitude of conservation issues, flying vintage airplanes, restoring Model-A Fords and building wooden kayaks. Given all that he does, it is clear to us at the NSA that Donal not only learned the lesson of wise resource use, but he mastered it! 🍄

When **TONY BELTRAN** (Idaho City '69) went to work as a go-fer at the Grant County Airport in 1961, little did he know that the next 33 years of his life would be strongly influenced by the smokejumpers he met on those hot summer afternoons. It was during this time he got a glimpse into a lifestyle that would later take him far north to the Arctic Circle and back down to the high desert of the Gila, and to many points between.

The only significant detour from his career as a smokejumper has been with the U.S. Army's Special Forces program. Tony served a tour of duty in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Bronze Star and Combat Infantry Badge. After his service in Vietnam, he maintained his military ties through his service with the Army National Guard, as well as the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division.

Throughout all of his military service, he kept a close relationship with the Airborne element as he served as a Reconnaissance Team leader, light-weapons specialist and parachute rigger.

Tony's long and distinguished career in the BLM and Forest Service was evidenced by his 323 jumps made under rounds and squares. More importantly, younger Alaska jumpers will always remember Tony as an Old Salt who was generous with his time and expertise. There is no question that Tony's service and contributions to the SMJ program will be long lasting. You can also rest assured that there will be many smokejumper campfires in which the inevitable round of story telling will begin with, "You aren't going to believe this. There was this one time that a guy named Beltran ..." 🍄

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## REDDING JUMPER GOLIK'S CAREER SPANS FOUR DECADES, THREE BASES

by Carl Gidlund

At 51, and after 17 years of jumping from three bases, NSA Life Member Dennis "Big D" Golik is delighted that he's still an "irresponsible life-long GS-6 step one jumper."

"Old and decrepit, with the emphasis on old," he says "I can only do 17 honest pull-ups now—that's on my best day—and can't jog faster than a 10:30 on a 1.5 mile PT test without aggravating numerous lower body joints."

Golik reports that he spends 75 to 80 percent of his time in his hometown of Portland, Ore., as sole caregiver for his elderly mother who is "stove up with arthritis, two

artificial hips, and having problems with memory and following instructions."

An Oregon State forestry graduate, he also does volunteer tree service work for low income and elderly folks. "In a big city like Portland, you'd be surprised what commercial tree services charge for working on large trees in tiny yards. Most widows on fixed incomes can't afford the typical \$1,000 and up," he says.

"Of course, with my developing arthritis and bum joints, I'm not nearly as strong or flexible up in the trees as 20 to 30 years ago, so I work slow and take tiny sissy-boy

pieces. But since I'm doing it for free, what's the rush?"

That's his off-season avocation. His fire season hobby is harassing his bosses.

"I've returned to the Redding smokejumpers to give some grief to the overhead. You see, I remember when they were all less-than-perfect rookies and plenty wet behind the ears. In fact, I'm pretty good at recalling memories they'd be happy for me to forget."

Golik's initial entry into smokejumping was a dry run. After four seasons on a Malheur National Forest suppression crew, he was hired in 1973 by the Redmond, Ore., base, but resigned before reporting for training.

"In the tough old days, smokejumpers ran PT on the ramp in their jump boots," he recalls. "So I trained hard by pounding city streets in boots until I developed a stupendous case of shin splints. I couldn't even climb stairs without a lot of pain. No way could I handle the rigorous rookie training, so I made the tough decision to quit to allow them to find a last-minute substitute."

Golik figured that ended his smokejumper dream, "Because who would offer a wuss like me a second chance?"

McCall would, the following year.

"I rookied, also known as 'nedded' with about 23 other Boise and McCall neds in 1974, and that was the best and most special of all my smokejumping seasons. Before that June, I'd flown fixed-wing only twice, in tiny three-passenger aircraft.

"Imagine how impressive it was when us neds were standing at the north end of the McCall airport, all suited and chuted, the day for our first jump, awaiting arrival of the Doug from Boise. We watched it approach and land at the far end of the runway, then taxi toward us, glistening in the sharp sunshine. It spun around, then parked right in front of us. Wow!"



*Life Member Dennis Golik holding the "Gobi"- "A Tribute to The Redmond Sattelite Base From the CJ Crew 1964." (Courtesy of Mark Corbet)*

After only five training jumps, Utah got busy and, "All us neds made our first genuine fire jumps using venerable FS-5As. The story went that '74 was the first year that Utah used jumpers, and they used a lot when they did."

Golik's jumping career has been intermittent. He spent three seasons at McCall, took off for a year, then worked four out of Redding, another year out, then a season in Alaska as a Bureau of Land Management jumper. He then took a six-year sabbatical from jumping, with time out during that interval for removal of a disc. Redding became his home base again from 1990 through 1996, and again in 1999 and 2000.

"But I missed all of '92 except early jumps due to a brain hemorrhage, which may challenge the prevailing notion that smokejumpers got no brains," he says.

Golik salutes his smokejumper predecessors: "After seeing old

videos of how hard early guys landed – or pile-driven – under 28-foot mains, I'm guessing one old-timer jump is easily worth 10 on today's 'sissy chutes.' No wonder there was the rule about hanging up your harness at age 40.

"I keep telling the overhead, if they continue using these kinder and gentler canopies, pretty soon they'll be contending with more cantankerous and crotchety 50ish smokejumpers who may not swallow company policy as easily as wide-eyed and wondrous 20ish types," he says.

Why jump so many years? Golik's figured it out: "In a nutshell, smokejumping has been – since I never served in the military – the adventure and excitement of my adult lifetime, with many precious cherished memories of people and places. It's been a challenging, occasionally frightening experience working with legendary characters in places I'd never imagined." 🍷

# Touching All Bases

## Alaska

by Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

Sorry I missed the fall base report ... too busy working fires and doing *Jumping Fire* publicity. Maybe this will help catch up on Alaska news.

As most of you know, this was a difficult season for both the Alaska and Boise BLM crews. Our troubles began with a training accident April 29 that killed Dave Liston. As jumpers and ex-jumpers, I'm sure you can imagine the great sorrow of such tragedy.

Dave was a fine young fellow, a third-year jumper at the top of his game. He'd been three weeks to the day of his accident. He and his wife, Kristen, bought land east of town, near the Chena River and had chosen a spot under a grove of tall spruce to build their cabin. Our crew watched them fall in love the previous summer and very much enjoyed seeing them together—two beautiful young people madly in love. Dave had proposed to Kristen up at the Big Spot just after a practice jump. Pictures appeared on the jumpshack walls of Dave kneeling in a bed of wild-wood roses, holding her hand, proposing. Another showed them both kneeling, foreheads together, touching each other's shoulders. When we lost Dave, we not only lost a fine upcoming smokejumper, but lost the dream of two dear hearts beginning their lives together.

First came the shock, then the sorrow. The crew wouldn't go home the night of the accident. Everyone just hung around the shack, pacing back and forth, zombies, not talking, not knowing what to say or do. In the days that followed, Dave's family came, and messages arrived from jumpers all over the country offering sympathy or whatever support they could offer.

Then we held the memorial service, up at the Big Spot. More than 200 people came, some from the various branches of the Alaska Fire Service, a few from Alaska Division of Forestry, and some local friends. As we gathered in the low-angled light of an early May afternoon, Jump 17 was heard coming out of the north. In a wide turn it came around out of the sun, low.

As it roared overhead, Chip Houde dropped a single streamer from around 300 feet.

The yellow streamer fluttered silently down out of a blue sky and landed a few feet south of our group.

The streamer contained signatures of Dave and Kristen's smokejumpers/friends. Stories were then told, songs were sung, and Native American sayings read. A light breeze moved gently through the cargo chutes we'd tied in the trees.

After the main ceremony, we grouped around a table that had been set up near the spot where Dave had proposed. It contained photos of Dave and Kristen skiing in the winter down near Anchorage, Dave as a kid, and Dave winning the previous Big Flip. There were items from Dave's life: his pocket-knife; a can of Copenhagen; a couple of poems written or selected by jumpers; his work gloves; a large bouquet of flowers. A simulated jumper camp had been set up under one of the cargo chutes. There were cases of MREs, cubitainers, a woodpile, a tripod and campfire. A few jumpers set around the fire drinking coffee.

In the aftermath of the accident we were left to deal with our fate as a jumping crew. The BLM had shut down the ramair program until an interagency investigation team could assess what had happened, and how to prevent it from happening again. The procedure for establishing how that would take place, and how much time we'd be down, was unclear. We were smokejumpers without parachutes and there was no clear sense of what we could do about it.

After a couple weeks it became evident that we weren't going to be jumping for at least another two weeks, maybe longer. In frustration we hounded the overhead during working hours to hurry up the process, and threw full-on, drink-beer-and-bitch sessions in the barracks at night. In the meantime, BLM contracted more helicopters and assigned us to man them—Air Cav (for Air Cavalry) we called ourselves, a pathetic substitute for a jumpsuit and parachute.

In our place as jumpers, they ordered up bros from the lower 48. It was the darkest hour of our plight—to be in the ready room, grounded, while our brethren from the south jumped our fires. The good part was that even though we resented being replaced, in the spirit of jumpers-as-brothers, we welcomed them and helped make their visit as productive and enjoyable as possible. Many are great friends, and, as you might expect, they did a hell of a job with no

quibbling about rounds/squares or whatever.

Our Alaska season was short, though, and by July I was finished. I missed it all, even the Air Cav indignities and snafus, having been on a book tour in the west. I returned in early July just in time for the Big Flip. Then after two months of downtime, we were approved to jump again. In days we were up and jumping and laughing and regaining full faith in our system, happy to be smokejumpers once more.

If that all sounds easy, let me assure you it wasn't. During the two months we were down, tension ran high, with large distrust that the bureaucracy could/would solve this problem in due course. The Forest Service sent word that BLM jumpers would not be allowed on National Forest lands this season—and maybe never. Their distrust of our system and/or our professional ability to redesign and correct it was a sad state of affairs.

I won't go into BLM/FS politics here, but suffice it to say that throughout the process the jumpers themselves remained cooperative and supportive. Unfortunately, I can't say the same for some of the higher levels of management.

Within two weeks of the accident, the investigating team and BLM jumpers were deep into the what-went-wrong question. In the end, I feel—and this is purely opinion—that it was the jumpers themselves, Gary Baumgartner, Jim Veitch, Jim Raundenbush, Bill Cramer, Jim Olsen, Mitch Decouteau, Buck Nelson, Matt Allen, and a few others who got the critical work done. Bill Booth, inventor of the three-ring release system, Sandy Reed, and Mark Slater acted as consultants from the parachute industry.

What appears to have happened will be difficult to convey without photos/pictures, or a complete understanding of the square deployment system. I understand you can access the final study by logging on to the NIFC Web page. In the meantime I'll try to do my best here.

### 1. The Main

The jump was on a clear day, sunny, with light wind. It was the fifth of our refresher jumps. The entire week had been one of success, the PT test, the units, then jumping and having our typical early season fun. On the last load of the last jump, on the last stick, Tom Roach and Dave Liston both experienced drouges that would not release upon pulling the drouge-release handle (a drouge-release hesitation).

Our system employs a small drag chute called a drouge. It deploys via static line just after leaving the plane. This small, circular canopy serves to stabilize the jumper head-up—feet-down after about four seconds. Then, when the drouge handle is pulled, it releases the

drouge which pulls the main off the main container, the suspension lines are deployed, and after being fully extended, pulls the main from the main D-bag.

The final report states something like Liston experienced a malfunction when his reserve pilot chute became entangled with the bridle of the drouge. Fine; that was fairly clear from what could be seen on the ground. But the problem started with the failure of his drouge to release. The reason the drouge did not release remains inconclusive. But Booth, with 25 years of professional parachuting experience, assures us that something has to interfere with a three-ring release system or it will release every time—a matter of physics and leverage principles. There are a few things that might have happened.

In subsequent tests, it could be shown that if the container is not strapped tightly around the jumper's belly, it could ride up his back and pinch the three-ring assembly. It only takes two pounds of pressure to hold the small ring while suspending a fully suited jumper.

The greatest area of suspicion, however, lies in the small loop that holds the smallest ring.

This loop is held by the cable attached to the drouge-release handle. If the gear got wet, which it certainly may have since most of us had landed in some kind of water on the previous jump, then it seems likely that the loop and supporting assembly were partially frozen, or at least stiffened by the 28-degree air temperature at jump altitude that day.

We checked right off to see what the temperature was, since it was extremely odd that both Tom and Dave had the same malfunction. Tom and Dave had jumped the same spot that afternoon with our load and then rushed back in to make the final load and their final qualifying jump. It was the only factor common to both jumpers—they had jumped in our wet meadow. Roach had gotten his left shoulder wet. From the video, it appeared that Dave had landed in a wet area also.

While private-industry expert Booth was examining the entanglement, he asked if the gear had possibly gotten wet. When we said that it may have, he immediately wanted to know what the temperature was at jump altitude. When he heard our answer—28 degrees—he simply said, "There's your problem." Bill had done numerous experiments freezing three-ring assemblies for his promo jumps at the North Pole, and for him there was no doubt.

Still, we can't be certain that freezing caused the problem, because there's no way it can be proven. A few other possible design problems were identified and corrected, such as the ring position—now held in



straight alignment with a rubber-band attachment. The other corrections are too numerous to mention, but they were examined, tested, and appropriate redesigns were made.

Buck Nelson, Gary Baumgartner, and John Kawcinski traveled to Florida and worked with a contract group of private-industry jumpers filming jumps on the main system with the new design changes. In 50 jumps, everything worked perfectly.

## 2. The Reserve

When the drouge failed to release and thus failed to deploy the main, Dave went through his emergency procedures, pulled the cut-away clutch handle, which decommissioned the main, then pulled his reserve handle. Here again—although no one is certain—it's fairly obvious from examining the entanglement on the ground, that the reserve pilot chute, pilot chute sail, D-bag, and suspension lines became wrapped around the drouge bridle. The entanglement resulted in the assembly twisting around the bridle in such a way as to cause the reserve D-bag to flip through a loop in the reserve suspension lines and tie a larkshead knot on the bridle. That is to say, a knot both above and below the reserve D-bag. From that point on the system had no means of working its way loose. In 25 years of evaluating malfunctions, Booth had never seen anything like such a knot.

In subsequent dummy drops, the deployment of the reserve was filmed and analyzed. Apparently the new zero-porosity drouges, unable to let air flow through them, wobble back and forth above the jumper. The original Veitch System Drouge (old style) is high-porosity and let more air through and does not wobble, thus the pilot chute assembly clears the drouge more cleanly.

In a couple of cases, the pilot chute struck the top of the drouge and hung up momentarily in the vents that encircle the cap of the drouge. When these vents were bar-tacked to make them smaller, the pilot chute cleared evenly on every drop. Another added bonus was that with the vents tacked, the drouge itself inflated more fully, providing more stability for the jumper while the pilot chute, sail, and D-bag cleared the drouge smoothly every time.

With these modification made to the Veitch System Drouges, 120 test drops were made and the system worked flawlessly 100 percent of the time. Thus, the new zero-po drouges were scrapped.

The Interagency Investigating Team came up with additional suggestions on design change. Most concurred with the test jump findings. In early July we got the go-ahead to begin refresher jumps. It was a great week. For the younger jumpers, the Old Salts—

everyone. Our jumps went off perfectly. By week's end, we were back feeling like smokejumpers, confident in our system, and proud of the extremely professional effort that got us back in the sky.

It was a gutsy thing for the upper level management of BLM to take on. Besides the agonizing delays in going through the process and politics, they ultimately had the administrative will to move ahead and stay with the ramair system. We have great faith in this system and feel that we are close to having its deployment reliable as the round system.

This is my opinion again, but I feel that the future of smokejumping is with the ramair system. The square parachute is a performance canopy. In the long run, it will allow much more in terms of maneuverability and safe landings. As the newer innovative canopies developed by private industry, the smoke-jumper of the future will be able to move along with state-of-the-art parachutes.

Billy Martin and Dave Liston died on ramair systems. Most of us feel the weight of that every day. When you give your best to become the best, then when you suffer losses, you lose the best. It has to be that way. There are inherent dangers in parachuting, let alone in rugged country to wildland fires. I believe that we must proceed in the same spirit as those who got us airborne in the first place. It was a bold and daring venture to begin smokejumping 60 years ago. Why shouldn't it be now?

Not long after we became jump-qualified, the call came to go south. We did, and what a season it was. Some came home battered and exhausted. I did. This was my last—I mean it this time. Sadly, Mike Lamb-right, suffered a compound fracture of his right femur in Utah. Fred Hernandez broke his right arm just above the wrist, Utah again.

Charlie Brown came back saying it was his greatest season down south, ever. Al "Togie" Wiehl came home with 16 fire jumps, while a few others had the same. The Alaska and Boise crews had a lot to deal with this year.

In the end they made it, and showed hard all the way. By mid-July the restriction on jumping Forest Service land had slacked somewhat and I found myself looking down into the Middle Fork of the Salmon River at a hot little three-acre fire in big timber with a tricky jump spot. It was everything a jumper dreads and yet lives for. We all made it in okay, joined eight McCall guys and spent two days in the woods, sleeping under a big full moon and telling stories—most of them true. After a long, hard season, rent with difficulites and disappointment, my fire jump in the big trees of the Salmon River country was the sugar

plum I'd been seeking.

Best wishes for a Happy Holiday from the Alaska Smokejumpers.

## Boise

by Grant Beebe (NIFC '90)

For the second-straight season, the Boise BLM Smokejumpers set a base record for action. Despite being off-line until July due to the death of Alaska jumper Dave Liston, the Boise jumpers still managed 450 fire jumps. In all, 933 fire jumps were made out of Great Basin satellite bases.

Including helitack, engine, and hand-crew assignments, more than 1,200 jumpers were dispatched in the basin. Roughly half of those dispatches were Forest Service and Alaska boosters. In all, 296 fires were initially attacked or reinforced out of BLM Boise operations. A Forest Service dictum suspended mixed-load operations (round and square jumpers on the same plane), and made staffing fires a bit more-difficult this season.

More than 100 Boise jumpers filled overhead orders as well this summer, making the season the busiest yet for the base.

The year's rookie class was scrapped due to the Liston accident, leaving the base some 15 jumpers down in the head count. Plans are for Alaska and Boise to train their rookies individually next spring, because both bases will hire large rookie classes. The rookie class of 2001 will be the first BLM class trained in Boise.

Boise operated this season with a pair of Twin

Otters and a leased DC-3, a fleet that should be reconfigured next year, though the details are still being hammered out.

Assistant Operations Supervisor Tom Romanello has just accepted an FMO job with the Fish & Wildlife Service, and will be departing for Lakeview, Ore. in December. Veterinarian/smokejumpers Steve Baker swears he jumped his last fire, and will start working as a vet full-time. Darrell Wittke accepted a job as a city firefighter in Great Falls, Mont. Ted Mason has moved to the NIFC training branch.

## Grangeville

by Jerry Zumalt (Redding '70)

The Grangeville jumpers had an active season making 257 fire jumps on 60 fires out of that base. They totaled 8330 hours on those assignments.

In addition to the jumps made out of GAC, they also jumped a total of 97 fire jumps from other bases which included Alaska, North Cascades, Missoula and West Yellowstone.

Jumper personnel were involved in over 2,000 hours of ground action and overhead assignments. Assignments included work in R-8, the Dakota Grasslands, Nez Perce and Umatilla National Forests, The Boundary Waters Area in R-9 and climbing assignments in Chicago.

## McCall

by Rick Hudson (Boise '73)

Early-season work for McCall jumpers began in Chicago during March, April and May with a climb-

# Elections for NSA Board of Directors

## Chuck Sheley-Election Committee Chair

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the NSA and meets two times a year to conduct NSA business. The meetings are held at the current smokejumper bases. The terms of four members of the BOD will expire July 1, 2001.

Even though you would be obligated to two meetings a year, it is important to remember that you can be a valuable working BOD member regardless of where you live. In the day of e-mail, a functioning board can work with its members spread across the U.S. If you have ideas and are willing to roll up your sleeves, please consider joining the NSA workforce.

Election timeline and procedures:

1. Jan.-Feb. 21, fill out personal information sheet. Must be in my hands by Feb. 21.

2. Personal information on each candidate inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.

3. Ballot sheet and voting envelope inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.

4. Ballots must be received by May 21. I will mail the ballots to those members east of the Rockies via first class mail as their magazines take 3-4 weeks to arrive.

5. New board members to take office July 1st—election results published in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper*.

Please call, write or e-mail for your filing papers. My contact information is on page 2 of this issue. The time to act is now!

ing crew working on the APHIS Project. Through special ascension training by licensed arborists, jumpers from all bases have been involved with the eradication of the Asian Long-Horned Beetle in eastern hardwoods. Late-season work took 14 McCall jumpers swinging back into Chicago trees to resume the ongoing project.

Smokejumper spring refresher and rookie training was completed ahead of schedule by working through several weekends. This provided booster coverage for BLM in Alaska and the Great Basin. It was the result of an unfortunate ram-air fatality and the early-season fire activity throughout the west.

Initial attack by McCall smokejumpers began June 22 on the Payette and continued at a steady pace. By the end of the season, the Payette alone had 340,000 acres scorched, mostly in the Frank Church River-of-No-Return Wilderness.

Dry conditions and pulses of monsoon-generated lightning resulted in suppression difficulties for many fires in the Rocky Mountain-Great Basin regions. Extended attack on large fires went on from days to weeks to months. The high demand for initial-attack resources and the "21-day" rest/assignment rotation provided many McCall jumpers with opportunities on overhead assignments on large fires.

The local fires on the Payette, as well as the smokejumper unit, drew visitors from the news media and state and federal agencies. Mike Dombeck, chief of the Forest Service, and Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne passed through several times through the long summer. President Clinton visited a fire camp on the Burgdorf Junction Fire to lend support and encouragement to the firefighters. Though "The Chief" did not drop by the McCall Smokejumper Base, Secret Service agents were sporting McCall Smokejumper ball caps when they left.

Aircraft at McCall consisted of a Turbine DC-3, a Twin Otter and a BLM Sherpa. During the month of August, a spike base was established in Vernal, Utah, with the Sherpa dropping 117 McCall jumpers on 26 fire missions. For the McCall Smokejumpers, this was the second-busiest season in the last 10 years, with 697 fire jumps by McCall Smokejumpers, and nearly 200 ground assignments.

The last fire jump of the season took place October 9 on Grand Mesa N.F. after McCall reopened the Grand Junction Base.

## **Missoula**

by **Wayne Williams** (Missoula '77)

For Western Montana, this was one of the busiest fire seasons since 1910. With more than 700,000 acres

burning at the height of the season, Missoula's 80 jumpers had their hands full.

We had 91 jump fires, for a total of 542 fire jumps out of 206 resource orders. Missoula was jumped out for five weeks in a row. Although 1967 was Missoula's banner year with more than 1,700 fire jumps, some believe if we had 200 jumpers, as was the case in 1967, this may have been one of our busiest years ever. Missoula's 30 rookies had an average of 14 fire jumps each. Silver City had an inter-base contingent of 30 jumpers, and as many as 50 jumpers at the height of the fire season. It was an average year in Region 3, with 24 jump fires, 71 fire jumps, and 19 overhead assignments.

Missoula now has 10 jumpers working on rehabilitation projects in the Bitterroot National Forest, 12 jumpers climbing trees in Chicago, and four jumpers doing saw work in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota of Region 9.

The Visitor Center had its second-busiest year, with more than 50,000 tourists visiting the base. This was also a good year for the Missoula Welfare fund. The Missoula Welfare Fund was proud to help with the Redding Reunion, supplying an old jump-gear display, statistical information, and artwork. Donations this year included the Liston Fund, Travel Montana, Big Brothers and Sisters of Missoula, Region 1 Hotshot Scholarship Fund, Federal Wildland Fire Service Association (Sponsors of the Wildland Fire Fighters Pay Fairness Act), Montana Highway Patrol Fund, United Way Campaign, Camp Menard Project, and the NSA Trail Project. This summer, the Fund introduced the third print in the Larry Janoff Series "Cargo Drop." This features an Intermountain Twin Otter dropping cargo.

## **North Cascades**

by **Doug Houston** (Redmond '73)

The 2000 season at the North Cascades Smokejumper Base turned out to be very busy starting in early spring. We had jumpers in South Carolina assisting with burning/wildfires, and jumpers in Chicago climbing trees for the elusive beetle. We then qualified a few jumpers and sent a couple to New Mexico.

From there, it was rookie training with five of America's finest making it through to add to the complement of 22 jumpers. Activity at NCSB shows that we jumped 59 fires for 269 total jumps. We did this with the help of several boosters, and we thank them greatly.

The airplane that we used mainly was the BigHorn Casa 212, supplemented with help from a

Redmond Sherpa. We also had jumpers on the road most of the season helping out from the Great Basin to some of those great cabin protection fires of Alaska. As the season wound down, the project work cranked up again with climbing and burning details which finished in November. All in all, it was a very successful season with only two very minor injuries and no lost timework.

## **Redding**

by **Josh Mathiesen** (Redding '94)

The 2000 Region 5 smokejumper crew began the new millennium with several projects underway. To begin with, Redding was the host for the sixty-year smokejumper reunion. The event was to be held in June and was being sponsored by the National Smokejumper Association. Much work went into preserving the Redding Smokejumper History and sprucing the base up for the many visitors that would come through the facility. By all accounts the reunion was a success, and the hard work produced by the smokejumper unit paid off.

California experienced average precipitation during the winter, but when spring arrived, warm temperatures dried the forest out rather rapidly. The Smokejumper unit was preparing for another busy season. On April 3rd, 24 smokejumpers started the annual two weeks of refresher training. This is time of year when thoughts of warm sandy beaches turn to thoughts of jumping fires and digging line. This is also a time where a variety of firefighting and smokejumper related skills get sharpened. Again this season having smokejumpers trained up early proved valuable. Although California had not started its fire season yet, Redding sent boosters to Silver City, New Mexico, Fairbanks, Alaska and Grand Junction, Colorado. In fact, the early season booster activity would be a precursor for the season ahead.

Smokejumper activity within Region Five was below normal this year whereas smokejumper utilization outside of Region 5 was above normal. The first fire jumped in Region 5 was the Adam fire on the Plumas National Forest on June 26th. For the next week or so there was a short burst of activity with jumpers staffing fires on the Lassen, Shasta-Trinity and Plumas National Forests. The latter half of July proved to be slow with jumpers staffing only a few fires within Region 5. Again, most of the activity was occurring outside of the region, and R-5 jumpers were assisting those regions in their suppression efforts. In August several fires were staffed in Southern California on the Sierra National Forest with jumpers taking action on seven separate fires.

The rest of the fire season moved along slow within Region 5, and R-5 jumpers saw most activity while assisting other regions with the severe fire situation that they were experiencing. Just as smokejumpers came from all regions last summer to assist with our busy season the roles reversed this year as Redding jumpers made 186 fire jumps outside of California this year.

At the time of this writing, Redding has 20+ smokejumpers available for any late season fire assignments and additionally has half a dozen jumpers out in the Big Apple climbing hardwoods in search of the pesky Asian Longhorned Beetle. A larger contingency of folks is expected to join these climbers fairly soon.

## **Redmond**

by **Mark Corbet** (LaGrande '74)

Redmond started out the new millennium by sending personnel to South Carolina for burning projects and New York to climb in search of the Asian Longhorn Beetle.

As the fire season picked up in the west, jumpers were sent to Silver City and later to the Great Basin. In early June and again later that month, Alaska called for boosters. The second group included most of the 9 rookies just qualified at Redmond.

Fire potential in R-6 was very high from early July until well into October. Due to lower than normal amount of lightning, the total number of fire jumps out of Redmond were about one third normal. Boosts to NCSB, R-1, and the Great Basin resulted in an average of 10 fire jumps per active jumper. Some individuals made nearly twice that. Total jumps for the season averaged 20 per active jumper with many making nearly 30.

As fall approached a crew of 8 was sent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in northern Minnesota. Work consisted of clearing trails and portages blocked by falling trees when a wind burst flattened large areas of the wilderness a couple of years ago. October and November will see most of the crew on project work both near and far. Locally, another group of the Special Forces troops will be trained in rough terrain landing techniques prior to Thanksgiving.

## **West Yellowstone**

by **Derrek Hartman** (Redding '98)

As can be imagined, the fire season for the West Yellowstone jumpers and our retardant base was extremely busy. Instead of giving statistics and details about every fire and incident, I'll shorten this summary to give you the highlights—or so-called greatest hits—and upcoming information from our base.

The year started with several individuals being

sent to Silver City, N.M., and others going to Alaska. Squad leader Charlie "Chewy" Wetzel was detailed to Silver City, and Carlos "Cheech" Trevino and Mark "2 Tuff" Duffy were sent on the first booster crew to the Gila in May. Although neither Cheech nor Duff got a fire jump, Cheech got the double-bone when he didn't get a jump in Alaska, either, while 2 Tuff had several.

The other jumpers boosting Alaska were Ashley Sites, Cole Parker, John "Yunce" Ueland, Chuck "Tuna" Flach, Mike Hill and Derrek "Boomer" Hartman. On a note of interest, Chewy was the first one out the door on our first fire on the Lincoln National Forest down in New Mexico, so I guess it would be fair to say that a West Yellowstone jumper made the first fire jump in the year 2000.

When the season finally got going in West, there were several new faces to our small family. Especially worth noting were our rookies Leslie "Xena" Williams and Chip "Cornealius" Gerdin, who both hailed from the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Both did a phenomenal job. Chip was on a detail, so he returned to Jackson at the end of the year, while Leslie is tree climbing in Chicago at present. Other new faces were Derrek Hartman, who transferred over from Redding while he was detailed in Silver City, and Minnesotan Hans Smith, who rookied in Missoula and detailed to our base for the season.

This was the first time in a couple years where we didn't have detailers from the BLM, though we certainly had our share of boosters and Missoula detailers with us this season. These included returning folks such as Mark Cheff and Cindy Champion, who did a great job along with everyone else who came through West to make it a phenomenal year. In addition, Chris "Gravy Train" Young, a squad leader at GAC, came over to help out for a bit, and retired jumpers Larry Wright and Barry Vandenberg came down to West to assist with the retardant and jumper base.

When late August and September rolled around we were still jumping fires, with several in the park, as well as a late-season jump in Colorado. Bill "Chicken Man" Werhane went to North Carolina to help train and lead a group of Marines, who did a great job helping with the fire season here in Montana and Idaho. As always, Bill Colman had everything running smooth in the office and dispatch.

As we approach the next few fire seasons, some important events and milestones will be taking place. One event, which already happened, was the retirement of Jiggs Parker, who was our mix-master and rescue jumper. Jiggs worked at the base for more than

30 years (in fact, no one is really sure when he started). After Cole got back from boosting Alaska, he detailed into the mix-master position for the summer.

We also set a record for our base with most gallons mixed and delivered in a single day (our previous record was from the 88 season). Also, our Loft Foreman Bill "Bright Eyes" Craig will be retiring in July. Bright Eyes started jumping in 1966, and in August he made his 550th jump on a fire at more than 10,000 feet in Yellowstone National Park. This was also the last year of our Twin Otter contract with ERA aviation, and it would be great to have Romie Carpenter and the Otter back for another season.

As next fire season approaches, one event worth noting will be the celebration of West Yellowstone's 50th anniversary. We are currently planning some festivities for mid-July and look forward to folks coming back for a visit at that time. We will have more details available in the next few issues.

With all said and done, it was an incredible season for Greg Anderson and his gang. Close to 50 fires were jumped out of the base, and jumpers out of West Yellowstone made almost 250 fire jumps. And congratulations go out to both Bright Eyes and his new young bride, and Chewy, who married Wendy, our co-pilot on tanker 25; both guys got married this fall. 🍷

## Information Regarding 60-Year Reunion video

For anyone who attended or missed the video presentation shown during the 60-year reunion the night of July 17 in Redding, you can now purchase a copy of the video. The cost is \$15 and includes shipping. If you would like a copy, you can contact Derrek Hartman at the West Yellowstone smoke-jumper base during the fire season, or at home during the winter.

E-mail address:

hartmanfilms@earthlink.net, or you can write or call Derrek Hartman, P.O. Box 464, Seal Beach, CA 90740. Telephone: (562) 594-9553. Please make checks payable to the West Yellowstone Smokejumper Welfare Fund. The video has no broadcast capabilities and is meant only for the bros and their families and friends.



# Items From the Fire Pack

I first became active in the smoke-jumper program in the spring of 1948, when I trained at Intercity Airport, Winthrop, Wash., in U.S. Forest Service Region Six.

It was known then as the Okanogan National Forest Jumper Base, but now is called North Cascades Smokejumper Base. Francis Lufkin was the foreman and Jim Allen was one of the spotters. Jim was later selected as foreman of the Base at Cave Junction, Ore.

—Hal Werner (North Cascades '48)

Cape Coast, Ghana, West Africa

## Burma-Shave on the Fireline?

**Bob Caldwell** (McCall '46) gives **Paul Claybaugh** (McCall '46) a quick shave demonstrating the keen edge that the 1940s jumpers had on their pulaskis. Caldwell and Claybaugh, both deceased, were WWII combat veterans. Caldwell was with the 80th Infantry Division—one of Patton's Third Army divisions sent north to relieve Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

Claybaugh, a medic, jumped into Normandy on D-Day. Paul landed behind German lines, was captured and spent the rest of the war in a POW camp.

Photo (above) taken by **Jim Graham** (McCall '47) and given to **Bruce Egger** (McCall '46) by Jim's daughters.

**Another small world story** related by **Phil Robertson** (Missoula '62). "I was at a road race in southern Illinois about 15 years ago and



wearing a t-shirt from Silver City, New Mexico. A runner whom I did not know approached me and inquired about Silver City. I told him that it was my hometown. He informed me that he was a smoke-jumper there and had trained at Missoula in the 1970s. I then told him that I was a Missoula jumper from the 1960's. It turned out that we both lived in Carterville, Illinois less than two miles apart."

Two veteran jumpers from the same base who rookied over ten year apart meet at a road race in Illinois and find out they live in the same town! I've heard of similar stories. Send them to the magazine.

Just the right time to put in a

plug for the complete roster of 20th Century Smoke-jumpers done by **Roger Savage** (Missoula '57). Over 3000 jumpers and hometowns listed. Available through NSA merchandising. See which jumpers are living in your area.

## This Job's As Easy As Pie

**Maynard Shetler** found himself responsible for cooking, washing dishes and splitting wood for the fire on a clean-up trip in spring 1945. He baked some pies

for the nine others in the group, and his method of using maple syrup instead of sugar—with no sugar available—earned him a break on his other duties.

"The crew volunteered to wash dishes and cut the wood if I would continue making desserts," Shetler recalled.

**Abe Schlabach** and **Charlie Brunk**, a couple of 18-year-olds, had a thing for physical fitness—a good thing considering the caloric content of the pies. Schlabach and Brunk would do push-ups at night between two cots so they could lower themselves beneath the edges of the beds.

—Maynard Shelter (Missoula '44)

# VIDEO REVIEW

*The History of Smokejumping,  
Straight Up*  
by Brian Ballou

*This review appeared in the June issue of Wildland Firefighter magazine and was written by editor Brian Ballou. We thank Brian for his permission to reprint his review.*

SMOKEJUMPERS HAVE BEEN hot property for writers and filmmakers in the past couple of years. Spectacular footage of them at work appeared in The Discovery Channel's IMAX film "Wildfire: Feel the Heat." Actor Howie Long donned jumper duds in the flame-filled, brain-dead action flick "Firestorm." Long-time jumper Murry Taylor penned an excellent book "Jumping Fire," based on his decades of fighting fire in Alaska.

From Randle Hurst's 1966 book, "The Smokejumpers," to a parade of wildland fire documentaries on the educational channels, much has been said and shown about smokejumpers and their history. Montana writer/publisher Stan Cohen even dished out a credible book in 1983, "A Pictorial History of Smokejumping," that captured the trade's highlights.

However, none have done as fine a job of telling the tale of smokejumping as the new video produced by the National Smokejumper Association. "Smokejumpers, Firefighters from the Sky" is a classy 2-hour documentary that hits all the important points, high and low, without worrying about being politically correct.

How refreshing.

The government couldn't have made this video. It is too bold, too frank, too honest. The

script would have given Forest Service and BLM spin doctors spasms of fear. They also would not have let the "Smokejumpers, Firefighters from the Sky" editors play out the elegant footage; the current trend in videography is to make scenes snappy, regardless of content, believing that today's audiences are easily bored, even by beauty.

There is a steady, comfortable pace to "Smokejumpers, Firefighters from the Sky," like a long walk through a wilderness filled with strange, beautiful, even frightening things. When it is over, the viewer feels ready to watch it again.

The video begins at the beginning, 1939, when smokechaser Francis Lufkin receives an hour of training in smokejumping, then goes aloft. Fifty years later, that jump was recreated when modern-day jumpers wearing vintage gear jumped from a Ford Tri-Motor.

This underscores an important point of the video: To the casual observer, smokejumping hasn't changed much in 50 years. Jumpers wear a helmet, a face mask, a parachute, and boots, fly to a forest fire in an airplane, jump out of the airplane, then go put the fire out.

Sandwiched between then and now are countless thousands of hours of training, equipment development, and learning. Much of this knowledge, which has made smokejumping one of the safest and most effective ways to suppress wildland fires, has been hard-won, the product of malfunctions, burnovers, plane crashes, wars, and women.

History is brought to life in the video through a rich smorgas-

bord of little-seen black-and-white film footage and still photographs from smokejumping's earliest days. Knitted with these sequences are interviews with the men who were there—Earl Cooley, Fred Brauer, George Honey, and Roy Wenger. Together, the words and images capture just how wild and dangerous those early years were:

Chutes that opened with such ferocity that the jumpers bounced up into the canopy. Harnesses that hammered jumpers' ribs. Trees that raked their faces, broke a few bones, and rather ignobly dropped a few jumpers a very long ways to the ground.

There was no manual for smokejumping. They wrote it as they went, figuring it out from scratch. As time went by, and more men joined the ranks of smokejumpers, improvements continued to be made.

Sacrifices, too.

A fine segment in the video highlights the contributions and sacrifices made by the 555th Airborne Battalion, a contingent of black paratroopers assigned to wildland fire protection in the West during World War II. The 555th had the unfortunate distinction of suffering smokejumping's first fatality. Private First Class Malvin Brown died from a crushed skull after falling from a tree following a fire jump in Oregon's Siskiyou National Forest.

The good and bad year of 1949 is also given considerable time in the video. Early that year, a handful of smokejumpers made an historic jump in Washington, D.C., to highlight national wildland fire prevention pro-



grams. Later that year, a wildland fire in Mann Gulch, Montana, dealt smokejumping its worst single blow when 12 died in a horrendous blowup.

Robert Sallee, the last survivor of the Mann Gulch Fire, gives a vivid account of that horrifying afternoon. Laird Robinson, Earl Cooley and Fred Brauer recount the fire's aftermath, and its effects on smokejumping, the field of fire science, and the lives of those touched by the tragedy.

These frank revelations lay bare one of smokejumping's darkest times, underscoring that this video is not going to candy-coat the bad times, or conveniently overlook controversial events. The rough spots are dealt with straight up.

The video dives headlong into the era when women first entered the smokejumping ranks. It doesn't skim over the criticism of how the physical training standards were lowered; it gives the interviewees the gloves and lets them go at it.

Seemingly building a liking for controversial issues, the video plunges into the South Canyon Fire, a tragedy on par with Mann Gulch. Survivors recount the horror of that day, along with frank opinions about what went wrong. The segment ends with a critical review of fire shelters.

The video also peels back the covers on some of smokejumping's greatest legends, such as when 50-60 jumpers went to work for the Central Intelligence Agency and Air America, doing

covert operations during the Vietnam War. It also touches on when the FBI questioned several smokejumpers following D.B. Cooper's skyjacking in the early 1970s.

In all cases, "Smokejumpers, Firefighters from the Sky" exudes pride. Smokejumpers have weathered the worst that nature, bureaucracy, societal changes, and Big Ernie have thrown their way, and have come through it grinning, willing, and ready to do it again.

All wildland firefighters deserve to be honored in a video like "Smokejumpers, Firefighters from the Sky." However, as the smokejumpers have proved, to get it done right, you gotta do it yourself. 🦁

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## BOOK REVIEW

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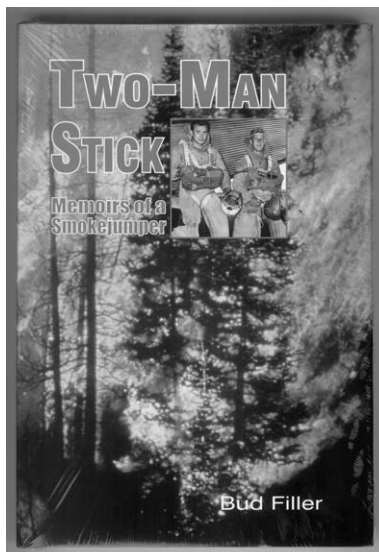
by George Harpole  
(Missoula '49)

I just finished reading a hard cover copy of Bud Filler's book, *Two Man Stick*.

Yes, somebody has finally done it! Filler writes about smokejumpers as clearly as Louis L'Amour has written about cowboys, and John Grisham about lawyers. *Two Man Stick* is a fabulous book. Bud clearly portrays smokejumpers as they are.

You'll learn that smokejumpers only get touched by the bad smells of smoke, sweat, and logging town barrooms in their noble pursuits to fish for trout and parachute their way to forest fires; and, that these noble pursuits even appear to prevail over the temptations of Viagra-flavored women.

Yes! If you've been a smoke-jumper or are interested in what it might be like to be a smoke-jumper, you must read *Two Man*



*Two Man Stick*, by Bud Filler. 1999. NSA Merchandise- color and black-and-white pictures. \$25 hardcover plus shipping and handling.

*Stick*. Filler's book is better than a five-star in every way—for example, with high-quality writing in a top-notch binding, on paper of the highest grade, and with excellent pictures. After your first reading, this book will be a treasure for your bookshelf as a reference for technical details about smokejumping equipment and aircraft of the 1950s, and for rereading the exciting stories about events experienced by Filler. 🦁

### Did You Lose Your Rookie Jump Pin?

Here's a chance to get it replaced. Order item # 132 on the merchandise order form. Each pin is \$10.00. Only sold to smokejumpers listed in the NSA master database.

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# The Smokejumper Documentary—Personal Notes

by Steve Smith

There are so many people who contributed their time, energy, expertise, home movies, still pictures and, of course, money to make this project happen. If you have a copy of the Smokejumper Documentary, I hope you'll take a second to open the box and review the list of names on the inside of the cover.

I have to give special thanks to all the members of the video committee and particularly to Fred

have great respect. He added a lot to the documentary.

In the opening of the documentary, there is a shot of current and former smokejumpers parachuting from a Ford Trimotor. They are wearing the jump gear of today and yesterday. I filmed this segment as a tribute to all of those, living and gone, who fought fire from the sky. It was beautifully filmed by Phil Sturholm and T.J. Williams and is a source of pride. Unfortunately, some of the jumpers were

the existing one”

Where are the voices from the bureaucrats and overhead saying to their bosses—“GIVE US A BETTER FIRE SHELTER”—? They seem content to send young men and women into fires with the same shelter that failed at Storm King Mountain. We waste time and money for two years hassling an outstanding smokejumper over an unauthorized practice jump and ignore the fact that we are putting young lives at unnecessary risk on every fire.

Smokejumpers are such a bargain for the taxpayer compared with the other government spending. I believe the government can afford to give these and the other dedicated firefighters the best chance to stay alive. They deserve a fire shelter that they can have faith will do the job.

John Maclean said it better that I can in the closing of his book, *Fire on the Mountain*. “The

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## I filmed this segment as a tribute to all of those, living and gone, who fought fire from the sky. . . .

Rohrbach, Bill Moody, Chuck Sheley and Larry Lufkin who were always there when I needed some help. If you've ever tried to find a picture of Cave Junction in the 1950s, you'd know what an important contribution they made.

In the summer of '97, I had the good fortune to interview Eric Hipke. That turned into a collaborative relationship when he told me that he wanted to further his college work in television production. He helped me learn about smokejumping, and I helped him learn a little about television production. Eric shot a lot of the fire footage used in the show. He also shot all of the fire jumps shown on camera.

One of the most memorable days was climbing Storm King Mountain with Eric and my 12-year-old son, Marc. I had a chance to watch them together since I was always dragging along behind. Eric and I also climbed Mann Gulch together and over time, we interviewed dozens of smokejumpers. Eric is a quality guy for whom I

penalized for making these unauthorized jumps. A great deal of time and money has been spent in one individual case that has gone on for two years.

This frustrates me and illustrates why so few of us have much faith in the government. Five years ago, fourteen firefighters died on Storm King

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## . . . Unfortunately, some of the jumpers were penalized for making these unauthorized jumps.

Mountain. (OSHA placed much of the blame for those deaths on the Forest Service and BLM.) Several of those firefighters sheltered up but died because their fire shelters melted around them. Jim Roth, (Roger Roth's brother), made it his life's work to build a better fire shelter. As an aerospace engineer, he dedicated his time, energy and personal savings to see to it that his brother's friends would have a better fire shelter. He used space age materials (the current shelter design is more than two decades old) and built a shelter that will greatly out perform

same wind blows over Mann Gulch where young men fell, and Storm King Mountain where young and not so young, women as well as men, met nearly identical fate four and half decades later. The wind that fanned blowups and will again, now reaches across the years to join comradeship with those who fell; and they call out to those who follow, let our sacrifice be enough.” 🍄

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# ODDS & ENDS

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**Scott Morrow** (Redding '98) passes on some bad news to the smokejumper community. He's been informed by Redding Bro. **Steve Vangundy** (Redding '98), that he (Steve) has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Steve said that jumping was the best time he spent as a forest service employee. Hearing from his bros would be great medicine for Steve who can be reached at (530) 963-3080 or PO Box 136, Stonyford, CA 95979.

**Dick Flaharty** (Missoula '44) reports the passing of **Murry Braden** (Missoula '44). We haven't received an obit but will relay what Dick has to say about Murry.

"I felt very close to Murry. He and I were drafted at the same time and we met on the train that was taking us to a CPS unit in Ohio in 1942. We lived in the same dorm in Ohio-volunteered for the Smokejumpers in 1944 at the same time-and made our first fire jump together in Idaho.

We hit the timber on that jump and Murray suffered a slight concussion when he came out of a tree. He was very intelligent, had a sharp wit, and was a pleasure to pal around with. I know that he was the son of a college professor who taught Theology at a seminary attached to Northwestern University."

NSA President **Larry Lufkin** (Cave Junction '63) will be retiring at the end of September from his post as Area Audit Office Supervisor for the U.S. Office of Child Support Enforcement. Recently Larry received an award for "Area Audit Office Manager of the Year 2000" plus a Special Service Award of \$1,000. This award will come in handy as Larry will be the first new NSA Life Member to join in our Life Membership Recruitment program headed up by Jim Cherry (Missoula '57). To top it off, Larry then received the "1999 Volunteer of the Year Award" from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for his work in the Hunter Education/Firearms Safety Program.

Speaking of Life Members, **Ben Musquez** (Missoula '56) has asked that a couple copies of this issue of *Smokejumper* magazine be sent to the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders Team. Last year Ben was pictured in the magazine standing next to a rather attractive young lady who was a member of that group. What's going on Ben? Think that we can get an NSA logo cap on the same program with "Americas Team"?

**Bob Nolan** (Cave Junction '47) reports that he and retired judge **Dick Courson** (Cave Junction '46) were talking at the reunion and discussing who coined the name "Gobi" to describe the base at Cave Junction. They both agreed that it was **Terry Fieldhouse** (Cave Junction '47) and **Armand Riza** (Cave Junction '48) in 1948.

**Jim Allen** (North Cascades '46) passes along a 1979 article

from the Siskiyou N.F. newsletter in which **Danny On** (Cave Junction '46) is credited for finding a rare plant at the base which only grows elsewhere in the Gobi Desert. Thus the named the "Gobi" and of course, the jumpers "Gobi Rats." So much for the legend. Ironically, next to the story on the Gobi Rats is an article on the death of Danny On (Jan. 21, 1979) is a skiing accident on Big Mountain near Whitefish, Montana.

**Al DeVoe** (Cave Junction '47) forwarded an article from the Sacramento Bee concerning the firefighting. There was an interesting description of Smokejumpers: "firefighting's adrenaline junkies-dive out of airplanes to land in otherwise inaccessible areas."

**Chuck Viviano** (Missoula '53) forwarded the obituary of jumper pilot **Jerry Wilson** and related a short story in his letter. Chuck and **Fran Polutnik** (Missoula '52) had jumped a fire at 10,000 on Mr. Doane in Yellowstone. The Park Service tried to send in a packer to help them with their gear but it was too steep for the mules! Fran and Chuck packed out the works which weighed in at 125 # each. Chuck said that Jerry and **Tom Milligan** (Missoula '51) flew over the fire one day and dropped a much-appreciated six pack. According to Chuck, Jerry was in a bi-plane crash before 1953 in which smoke-jumpers were sent in to help get him out.

**Greg Whipple** (Missoula '59) who lives in Silver City, New Mexico, reports that conditions are still extreme in the Southwest. "I just got back from bow hunting for elk about 20 miles north of Luna. Conditions are the very bad-the worst I have ever seen here as far as moisture. The fire danger is extreme. I have hunted the same area the last five years and each year it has gotten drier. The stock ponds (tanks as they are called here) have gotten lower each year until this year. They are now powder dry and as a result the elk have no place to water and the hunters have no place to set up an ambush. If we don't receive some good precipitation this winter I don't know what will happen this next year".

**Tom Albert** (Cave Junction '64) recently retired as Head North Zone (Calif.) pilot, reports in from Ft. Smith, Arkansas. Tom is flying as a contract lead plane pilot and has had a busy season to say the least. He has some interesting comments from the field:

"When I was up in Idaho, they couldn't speak highly enough of the jumpers. They said the jumpers saved their bacon. This was especially true of the North Cascade jumpers. They said the Winthrop jumpers would jump the fire and the only radio call they got from them was, 'the fire is lined.' Though I didn't jump out of North Cascade, I was still proud to hear that." My observation while flying lead plane all over the West this busy season

is that the jumpers (BLM and USFS) are holding up the tradition. When we dropped retardant on the fire and came around on the next pass to evaluate the drop, the jumpers were there working the line. Remember, retardant is just retardant. It takes firefighters on the line to take advantage of the drop. Some have lost sight of that, but not the jumpers and, I must add, some of the small district crews.

Please pass on this, "It was a pleasure working for you jumpers. It was fulfilling to be a part of "aggressive" fire fighting. My hat is off to you and thanks for keeping up the tradition. No question, jumpers will be around for a long time."

**Gregg Phifer** (Missoula '44) mentions that he had just heard from **Tedford Lewis** (Missoula '43) who is recommending that the CPS-103 reunion in 2002 be held in Montana near Glacier Park.

**Jerry Schmidt** (Cave Junction '62) reports that after 42 years with the Forest Service, he will be retiring in November. Jerry took the picture which is on the cover of the NSA's video "Smokejumpers-Firefighters From the Sky".

**Jason Greenlee** (Redding '99) who jumped out of Missoula this season said that he had a good season with seven fire jumps and 45 days of overhead on the Valley Complex fires.

**Bob Cordell** (Missoula '67) has retired after 32 years with the BLM/USFS and is building a house near Tensed, Idaho.

**Murry Taylor** (Redding '65) reports that Steve Nemore got his job back. "The details haven't been worked out, but the DOI ordered the Boise crew to return him to his position.

I talked with Steve last week and he was thinking about writing something for the upcoming *Smokejumper*."

**Troop Emonds** (Cave Junction '66) has received a Department of Agriculture Small Business Innovative Research grant to continue his work with the "Troop Tool". Troop reports about the aluminum Pulaski. "The grub-hoe blade is an inch longer, the axe blade a half inch longer, and each blade has five rivets holding it on the core. Total weight is 2.8 pounds." The Boise Smokejumpers have given the tool (which is really four tools with a universal handle) a thumbs up.

By the time you read this the elections are history. Received one of **Doug Sutherland's** (Cave Junction '56) campaign flyers from an NSA member. If Doug was successful, he is now the Commissioner of Public Lands for the state of Washington.

Associate **Chris Sorensen** found this when looking through some records on the web lately: "University of Montana Botany Professor Emeritus Rueben Diettert passed away November 22, 1998, in Missoula at age 97. He was the Father of Eldon E. Diettert MSO '49 who was one of 13 smokejumpers killed fighting the Mann Gulch Forest Fire in the Gates of the Mountains on August 5, 1949."



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## Purchase of Mann Gulch Doug Possible

The Museum of Mountain Flying, located at the Missoula International Airport, has located the DC-3 (#NC-24320) that dropped the Mann Gulch smokejumpers August 5, 1949.

The DC-3 has been used for years by a cargo service in West Memphis, Ark. and is in remarkably near-original condition. Prior to that, it was owned by Johnson Flying Service of Missoula.

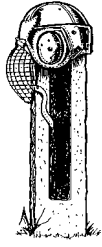
The Museum's intent is to return the plane to Missoula, and restore it as a memorial to the Mann Gulch jumpers and all past and present jumpers. It will be for sale within the next 12 months at a cost of \$125,000. The MMF has first option to purchase the plane and has started a fundraising campaign. Additional funds will be needed to fly the plane to Missoula and restore it to its 1949 look.

At the historic Wilma Theater in Missoula, two showings of the 1952 smokejumping movie "Red Skies of Montana," starring Richard Widmark, brought in close to \$10,000.



(Courtesy of Stan Cohen)

The museum is a state and federal 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation, and any financial assistance from the NSA and individual members will be appreciated. For further information contact Stan Cohen at the MMF, 713 S. Third Street, Missoula, MT 59801. Telephone: (406) 549-8488; e-mail: [phpc@montana.com](mailto:phpc@montana.com) 📧



## Off The List

We want to know! If you learn of the serious illness or death of a member of the smokejumper community, whether or not he or she is a member, your Association wants to know about it. We would like to express your Associations's sentiments and

spread the word to others. Please phone, write or e-mail our Missoula headquarters and/or our webmaster (webmaster-@smokejumpers.com) including the name, address and phone number of the subject's next of kin. We'll take it from there.

### **Murray Braden** (Missoula '44)

Charles McMurray Braden was born in Santiago, Chile, on June 9, 1918, where his father was running a religious bookstore and had taught at the University of Cochabamba.

Murry graduated from Northwestern University with a major in Physics and pursued his education at the Chicago Theological Seminary. During WWII he was assigned to the Civilian Public Service program (CPS) near Coshocton, Ohio where he worked on a soil erosion research project. In 1944 Murray volunteered for the CPS 103 Smokejumper Unit near Missoula and jumped the 1944 and 1945 seasons.

After the war, Murry began teaching Mathematics at the University of Minnesota where he completed a masters in Physics and a Ph.D. in Mathematics. He then began a 25-year association with Macalester College. Starting as an assistant professor, he eventually was elected Dean of the Faculty. In 1959 he received a National Science Foundation grant to study and teach at U.C. Berkeley. In his spare time he studied, designed and experimented with rotary engines such as the Wankel engine. While his wife Geraldine taught at Boston University, Murry continued his work at the Digital Corporation in Maynard, Massachusetts.

Murry passed away on August 1, 2000 in Saint Paul, Minn. He is survived by his wife, Geraldine and four children.

### **James E. Dewey** (Missoula '50)

Jim, 71, died Aug. 26, 2000 at his home in Princeton, Idaho. A Missoula jumper in 1950 and 1952, he graduated with a bachelor's in forestry from Pennsylvania State University. He had worked for the Idaho Department of Forests and Waters as a timber sales supervisor, and began permanent employment with the U.S. Forest Service on the Priest Lake District of the Kaniksu National Forest in 1953. He continued working for the agency for 32 years in various parts of Idaho and Montana, including the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests. Following his retirement, he worked as a consulting forester for many years. Survivors include his wife, Helen, four daughters, a stepdaughter and three stepsons, 13 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Helen Dewey, 1137 Bear Creek Rd., Princeton, Idaho 83857-9753.

### **Robert D. Fleming** (North Cascades '54)

Bob Fleming passed away September 24th in a Houston hospital. He was commercial manager for AirFoyle N.A. and chartered Antonov aircraft to haul over-sized cargo worldwide.

Bob jumped at North Cascades from 1954 through 1958 and then jumped at Fairbanks for the 1959 and 1960 seasons.

Later he worked seven years as a fireman for the city of Fairbanks. He was employed by Southern Air Airlines for 17 years before working for AirFoyle in Houston.

Bob is survived by his wife Clare of Baytown, Texas. The family will gather at Hart's Pass on the North Cascades Highway this spring to scatter Bob's ashes. This was one of his favorite places.

### **John Hautzinger** (Missoula '52)

John Hautzinger, 69, died at his home in Helena, Mont. on Oct. 2, 2000 after a three-year battle with prostate cancer. Born in Omaha, Neb. on Nov. 28, 1930, he attended the University of Nebraska for one year, then transferred to the University of Montana. He was graduated from the Missoula school in 1955 with a bachelor's in forestry.

During his college years, he smokejumped one season from Missoula and worked as a log scaler in Alaska.

Following his graduation, John served four years in the Air Force as a pilot and radar installation officer. He then returned to Montana and the U.S. Forest Service for which he worked in timber management until his retirement in 1986 as zone forester for the Helena, Lewis & Clark and Deerlodge National Forests. His earlier postings included Troy, White Sulphur Springs, Thompson Falls, Seeley Lake and Butte, all in Montana.

He and his wife, Shirley, raised six children and had 13 grandchildren.

Condolences may be sent to Mrs. John Hautzinger, 250 N. Carson St., Helena, MT 59601-4530.

### **Robert L. Kaufman** (Missoula '45)

Kaufman, 74, a Civilian Public Service jumper, died of cancer Nov. 15, 1999 in Moundridge, Kan.

Born Dec. 31, 1924 in Belmont, Kan., he was a farmer and owner/operator of a farm equipment firm in McPherson, Kan. until 1995 when he moved to Moundridge. He was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in McPherson.

Survivors include his wife of 48 years, Martha, two daughters, a brother, sister and three granddaughters.

Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Martha Kaufman, 200 17th Village, Apt. 19, Moundridge, KS 67107.

### **Ellis Moncrief** (Idaho City '51)

Ellis Everett Moncrief, 73, of Joseph, Ore., died of lung cancer April 30, 2000 at Wallowa Memorial Hospital. Born July 12, 1926 in Warwick, Wash., he served in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1947.

He was graduated from Oregon State University in 1949

and was a contract officer and helicopter pilot for the U.S. Forest Service, flying out of Missoula, McCall and Idaho City.

His wife, Helen, two sons, a stepson, two stepdaughters, two brothers and 12 grandchildren survive Ellis.

Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Helen Moncrief, P.O. Box 309, Joseph, OR 97846-0309.

#### Conrad "Connie" O. Orr, Jr. (Missoula '53)

Dr. Orr, 65, died of pancreatic cancer Sept. 13, 2000. A Missoula native, he was born Jan. 30, 1935 and was graduated from Missoula County High School in 1953 with nine letters in football, basketball and track. He jumped from 1953 through 1957 to help finance his pre-med education at the University of Montana and his veterinary degree from Washington State University in 1959. He attended Montana on a track and field scholarship and also played basketball for the university.

Dr. Orr practiced veterinary medicine in Missoula for 42 years, was a member of several professional associations, and spent much of his time participating in studies involving both wildlife and domestic animals. His affiliations included the National Smokejumper Association, Phi Delta Theta fraternity, the Elks, Kiwanis, and American Legion. He was a founding member of the University of the University of Montana's Grizzly Athletic Association and was its president in 1980.

He is survived by three daughters, two grandsons and a sis-

ter. Memorials may be made to the University of Montana Foundation/Rhinehart Fund, c/o the Grizzly Athletic Association, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812.

#### Gerald D (Jerry) Wilson (Pilot)

Jerry Wilson of Lewiston, 74, died Wednesday, May 31, in Spokane. Wilson was a lifelong pilot who started flying at the age of 14 and went on to own a major aeronautical firm and at age 39 started a Clarkston bank.

He was drafted into the Army and was discharged in 1946. Wilson and Frances Greer married in June, 1948 and lived in Orfino, Idaho. Jerry and Gustin purchased Hillcrest Aircraft in 1959. The firm had flying contracts throughout the U.S. ranging from Hollywood movie productions to Western states wildfires.

NSA member Chuck Viviano said that Jerry was the smoke-jumper pilot at West Yellowstone in 1953 and 1954. In 1971 Jerry received the national Robert E. Trimble award for distinguished mountain flying for his helicopter rescue of an injured smokejumper in a remote forest area in northern Washington.

Jerry retired from active banking and aviation in 1994, three years after suffering a stroke. He is survived by his wife of nearly 52 years, Frances.

We thank the Lewiston Morning Tribune and Chuck Viviano for the above information. 🕯

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## Hell's Canyon (1960)

by Steve McDonald

We sat in the back of the open trucks  
Covered with dust.  
Half comatose  
From the rough roads of the last hours.

Our leader,  
Back from the fire boss's tent,  
Said, "We're goin' to a spike camp  
Up on the rim a' the canyon."

A couple of hour's rough ride  
Showed us the camp:  
A tent, a fly, and a truck  
Out on the beargrass covered ridge.

It was twilight.  
Just enough time  
To eat a sandwich, drink some water,  
And grab an old Army surplus sleeping bag.

Out in the open  
In little sheep trails  
Between the beargrass clumps,  
We slept.

We slept the deep, deep  
Sleep of tired young men.  
Down came the early morning frost.  
We slept as dead men.

Hot coffee and  
Cold eggs and ham  
From big metal tins  
Got us going at dawn.

We tied small white lunch bags  
On our belts.  
Inside was an orange, a Hershey bar,  
And a bologna sandwich.

Our stiff boots gradually  
Got softer  
As they warmed on our feet.  
We picked up our tools.

Waiting to hike down the ridge  
To the fire in Eckel's Creek,  
We looked  
Into the huge, dark canyon below.

It was full of smoke.  
At the bottom  
A gleaming silver thread of River wound.  
Hell's Canyon.

"Let's go!" the leader commanded.  
We descended single file  
Slipping and stumbling  
Through scrub woods, grass and brush.

The fire ran us out  
About noon  
After it jumped a forty-foot wide  
Dozer line.

In the 100 degree heat  
We ate our oranges,  
Drank our now liquid Hershey bars,  
And cursed Hell's Canyon.

*Dr. Steve McDonald retired in 1996 after 36 years with the U.S. Forest Service. He worked in all divisions of that Agency. He is an avid writer of novels ("Baker 30" and "Bitterroot") and poems, usually with forestry themes. He plans to publish "Echoes in the Forest: A Forester's Collection of Poems" during the winter of 2000.*

# RESCUE OF AN INDIAN CHIEF

by Mike Overby (Missoula '67)

**D**uring the summers of 1969 and 1970, I was part of the Missoula crew assigned to assist the Fairbanks, Alaska BLM crew during the busy early fire season. We would arrive in late May, do a week of refresher training in Missoula and then get shipped off to Fairbanks/Ft. Wainwright for June and July. In August, it was back to Missoula to wrap up a busy summer. We were all wanting as much overtime as possible during the slow early months of the summer—and during those two summers, we got a lot of it.

During the 1970 season, I participated in a very “out of the ordinary” jump in the far northern part of the state. The jump occurred in an area where we normally never went due to the colder and wetter conditions – and it is one I will never forget!

Several smokes had been spotted on the south slope of the Brooks Mountain range by one of the many C-130 pilots transporting pipe from Fairbanks to the North Slope oil fields. We were dispatched and found three to four small smokes approximately 50 miles north of Arctic Village (far north of Ft. Yukon). Four of us jumped—a BLM jumper and three other



Mike Overby (Courtesy of Mike Overby)

Missoula jumpers. In the states, this would have been a two-man fire, but in Alaska, they always seemed to overdo things as I recall.

I was the first jumper to land and before unsuited, a very old Indian man ran up to me with tears in his eyes thanking me for coming to his rescue. Needless to say, I was very surprised to see an old man and two very skinny husky dogs out in the middle of nowhere. There were no roads anywhere this far north.

As we were to later learn, the old man was an ex-chief in Arctic Village and was brought up a nearby river by boat and left to join a hunting/fishing party in the area. After a week of searching, he never found the party, decided it was too far to go back, and as a result, used his last few matches to start fires at the base of some large fir trees to try and attract attention. It was so wet they barely burned, but did put off a lot of smoke.

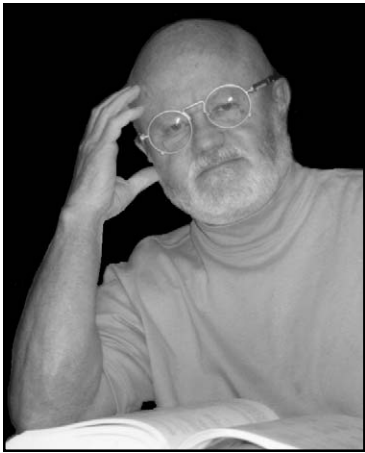
He had an old carbine rifle with only a few rounds left. He had not eaten in three to four days. He had killed some ground squirrels, most of which he fed to his two dogs he had chained to some nearby trees, since he was afraid they would attack each other (or him) if they went much longer without food.

We fed the old chief and dogs from our rich abundance of WWII C-rations and radioed in to have a chopper pick him and his dogs up as soon as possible. I never saw anyone chow down on C-rations like that before! After the chopper arrived and our unexpected rescue was completed, we had to stay another two to three days to put out the fires (Ha!).

Fortunately, I had a breakdown spin-cast rod and reel which was put to good use in the nearby river. Memories of eating arctic grayling fillets off a shovel are also ones that I will never forget. Ah, for the good old days! 🍷

*Mike jumped out of Missoula from 1967 to 1970, having also served on the Alaska BLM crew in the 1969 and 1970 seasons. Mike is currently vice president of Operations with Excel Communications in Dallas, TX. He previously was with Ernst and Young as a management consultant and American Express Co. in New York. Mike was a part of the NSA Trail Maintenance Crew program in the Bob Marshall Wilderness this past summer for which he says, “My last jump was in the Bob in 1970. Thirty years later, it was like yesterday hiking off down the trail, marveling at the Chinese Wall.”*





# Jump List—

by **Bill Eastman** (North Cascades '54)

*The "Jump List" is a compilation of information the National Smokejumper Association receives from members, associates and friends. It is intended to inform our readers what members are doing and where they reside. You can mail your information to Bill Eastman: PO Box 306, East Greenbush, NY 12061 or e-mail at [eastman@earthlink.net](mailto:eastman@earthlink.net)*

## Alaska

**Jim Kitchen**, '87, jumped for 10 years. Jim is now a prescribed-fire specialist for the Yellowstone National Park. In 1999, he earned a masters degree in public administration from Boise State University.

**James Durtschi**, '82, is a U.S. Air Force fighter pilot flying F-15s. He flew combat missions during Desert Storm. Jim lives in Anchorage and says that he will retire in 2003.

**Chris Farinetti**, '79, jumped for eight years. Chris is the Fire Management Officer for the Fish and Wildlife Service, responsible for the refuges in southeast Oregon and all of Nevada. He lives in Lakeview, Ore.

## Cave Junction

**Lyle Hoffman**, '47, and Jim Pearson were the first skydivers in the Western Hemisphere to pass a baton in free fall. This event took place on June 22, 1958, at Abbotts Ford in Canada. At that time, Lyle had an upholstery and parachute business in Seattle. He relocated to Orangevale, Calif. in 1960, and closed his business in 1992. He now spends his winters in California and his summers working on his mountain cabin near Northport, Wash.

**Michael Wheelock**, '76, jumped for five years. Mike is now a firefighting contractor with helicopters, showers, fire crews, and engines. He lives in Merlin, Ore.

**Roddy Bauman**, '70, graduated from Colorado State University in forest management. He then held fire management positions in the Deschutes, Winema, Rogue River, and Malheur Forests. Roddy is now the Regional Prescribed Fire Specialist for Region 1 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, responsible for six states (Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Idaho, California and Hawaii).

**Doug Bucklew**, '67, jumped for seven years. Since 1972, he has earned his livelihood by flying helicopters and airplanes. Doug ran his first marathon last year.

**Terry Cowart**, '66, graduated from the University of Alaska. During the '70s, he worked as a carpenter and roustabout on the north-shore drill rigs. During the early '80s, he was the construction manager for a general contractor. From 1985 to the present, Terry has been a partner and half-owner of the construction company in Anchorage. He plays a lot of handball and sees no reason to retire yet.

**Jon Klingel**, '65, jumped for six years. He earned a

masters degree in zoology from the University of Alaska, and since 1987, has been a biologist in the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Jon designed and built a home in the mountains of northern New Mexico.

**John Lively**, '57, graduated from North Carolina State University in 1959 with a degree in forest management, and went to work for the Forest Service in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. In 1966, he switched to the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources where he served for 30 years, retiring in 1996 as Assistant Regional Forester. John is now a consulting forester (Lively Forest Management) helping people with forest stewardship planning, management planning, logging road planning and layout, sedimentation control, and timber sales. He lives in Candler, N.C.

**Richard Wessel**, '56, jumped for 16 years and then continued with the forest service as fire staff. He was a deputy sheriff for six years and then ferried airplanes as a pilot for Gobi Transport, Inc. Dick now plays golf in Woodburn, Ore., and more golf during the winter in Arizona.

**John (Tim) Koester**, '55, jumped for six years. In 1977, he went to work with the Soloy Corporation as a production test pilot and sales representative, and he retired in 1996 as the vice-president for marketing. Tim lives in Olympia.

**Tom Elwood**, '52, has been, for 36 years, the owner and manager of a chain of ten body shops in Mexico City: Pintura Horneada Hollywood, S.A.

## Idaho City

**Gordon Quigley**, '55, earned his Ph.D. from the University of Oregon in 1975. Between that time and his retirement in 1997, he was a principal or school director in Eugene, Oregon; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Belgrade, Yugoslavia; Addis Adhaba, Ethiopia; and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Now that he is retired, Gordon is free to travel, and that, he says, is what he is doing, making his base in Eugene.

## McCall

**Karin Kaaen**, '99, graduated from Eastern Oregon University with a degree in fine arts. Her father, Wayne Kaaen, was also a McCall jumper. Karen says of the five rookies at McCall last year, four were women and only one was a man. She wants to be a career firefighter.

**Cheri Dailey**, '99, lives in Wenatchee, Washington, and is an independent distributor for Nikken. Cheri earned a degree in exercise physiology from Northwest Nazarene College.

**Jeffrey Fereday**, '70, after graduating from Lewis and Clark Law School, went to Washington, D.C., to work for the Department of the Interior in the Office of the Solicitor. He then moved to Denver and the law firm of Davis, Graham, and Stubbs. Jeff is now in Boise with Givens Pursley, LLP.

**Rodney Dow**, '68, is famous for having jumped 32 years without getting a GS-7 rating. Rod retired last year and is building a log home near Naches, Wash.

## Missoula

**Leo Griego**, '69, jumped with the 101st and the 82nd Airborne Divisions before jumping fire. Since 1972, Leo has been with the Barstow (Calif.) Police Department. He is now a detective.

**James (Milt) Knuckles**, '61, graduated from the University of Montana. He has been a schoolteacher in Helena and a seasonal employee of the Forest Service. Milt retired from teaching in 1994, and still works summers. He fishes and reads all winter.

**Ralph Mellin**, '60, worked for Morrison-Knudsen and for Rogers Construction Company after earning his degree in civil engineering. Last August, after 33 years in the Idaho Department of Water Resources, Ralph retired as a special projects coordinator. He is now considering some self-employment options in Boise.

**Fred Malroy**, '59, graduated in forest management from Oregon State University in 1962, and retired from the

Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1986 as a timber sales officer. He is now a real estate agent in Scottsdale. Fred says that selling real estate has begun to interfere with his prospecting and competition pistol shooting.

**David Marshall**, '59, earned a B.S. degree in wildlife management from the University of Montana, and then became the sanitarian for five counties in Montana. For the past five years, he has been the Solid and Hazardous Waste Program Manager for the Salish Kootenai Tribes in Pablo, Mont. David says that he is on the threshold of a new project, which will be to inventory freshwater clams on the reservation.

**Tom McCullough**, '53, graduated from the University of Washington in 1959 with a degree in Forestry. He went to work for the Oregon State Department of Forestry before becoming a self-employed forest consultant. Tom moved to Salt Lake City in 1983, and is not the owner of Intermountain Aerial Surveys. When asked if he is retired, Tom answered, "Hell, no!"

**Jack Mathews**, '48, served 27 years with the CIA, overseas and undercover, working against the intelligence services of the Soviet Union, Communist Bloc countries, and Communist China. He received medals from President Chiang Kai Shek and from the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam for outstanding service under combat conditions. Since 1983, Jack has been writing and keeping fit. He lives in Santa Barbara, Calif.

**Earl Cooley**, '40, was the first President of the NSA. He made history July 12, 1940, when he made the first parachute jump onto a forest fire, the Martin Creek Fire in the Nezperce Forest. In the spring of 1941, he graduated



(Courtesy Eric Rajala)

from the University of Montana School of Forestry and took a crew of eight jumpers to Moose Creek. For the next 10 years, he worked as the parachute project supervisor of the Missoula jumpers—as project foreman in charge of personnel, camp, and fire training. In 1951, when he reached the age of 40, the maximum age for jumpers at that time, he transferred to Red River as District Ranger. In 1958, he went back to Missoula to take over as Supervisor of the new base at the Missoula Airport, a position he held for 13 years. In 1971, a new position was created for him, working on the Fire Retardant Program as Region 1 Fire Equipment Specialist. He retired in June 1975 after 38 years with the Forest Service, and went into the real-estate business. While working as a real-estate broker, he started the National Smokejumpers Association and held the position of President from 1992 to 1995. At the age of 89, Earl lives in Missoula and is writing another book. His first book, *Trimotor and Trail*, has details of the first fire jump in addition to a lot of good stories.

### Nine-Mile

**Donald Halloran**, '56, was a professor of biology at the University of Wisconsin for 32 years, until 1997. He is now restoring vintage autos and building kayaks in Marshfield, Wis.

**Robert Heeren**, '52, earned a masters degree in forestry from Duke, and then spent 40 years with International Paper Corporation as a forester, forest supervisor, research-project leader, and hardwood silviculturist. Bob retired in 1996. Living in Henrico, N.C., he works with the local volunteer fire department, the scouts, and the Saturn Car Club.

**Richard Wengert**, '51, took his degree in forestry from Purdue, and after two years in the army in Korea, he worked for the forest service in eight states. During his last 10 years, he was supervisor of the Daniel Boone National Forest in Kentucky. Richard retired from the forest service in 1993. He now lives in Winchester, Ky., and works as a self-employed consulting forester.

**Charles Sigler**, '53, graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in forestry. After army service in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, he began his career as a ranger in the national park system, working in the Mt. Rainier, Grand Canyon, Beech Island Reef, and Shenandoah Parks. In 1974, he attended the FBI National Academy, and then became chief ranger in Glacier National Park. Charles retired in 1995, and now skis, fishes, and travels from Columbia Falls, Mont.

**Hal Samsel**, '49, jumped for 30 years. For eight of those years, he worked in power-line construction and in a

sawmill during the winters. In 1957, he became a year-round employee working as a paratraining foreman, a fire-training foreman, and a loadmaster. In 1966, Hal was promoted to loft foreman. He retired to Polson, Mont., in 1980, and now skis, hunts, fishes, and goes to Arizona in the winter.

### North Cascades

**Frederick R. Cooper**, '62, jumped for five years. He earned a degree in business management from Oregon State University, and then worked in personnel offices of three different National Forests: Fremont, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, and Mt. Hood. In 1986 he moved to Washington, D.C., to become director of the Employment Policy Division of the Department of Agriculture, and personnel officer for the Secretary of Agriculture Staff Offices. Fred retired in 1996 after 32 years of federal service. He is now established in a new home and is travelling in his RV when he is not immersed in his duties as chairman of the NSA Membership Committee.

**Leroy Gray**, '57, went to mortuary school in Los Angeles after jumping fire, and became a funeral director. In 1975, he was hired by the Bureau of Reclamation in Grand Coulee, Wash., working for them as a diamond core driller, a heavy-equipment service man, and a truck driver. He retired in December 2000, and now spends most of his time in his saddle shop where he does some saddle repair and makes chaps, head stalls, reins, and other good leather goods. Leroy was one of the four men who jumped on the Eight-Mile Ridge Fire—the fire on which a twin Beechcraft crashed, killing four men.

**Carl Johnson**, '57, became a fire-control aid with the BLM in the Fairbanks District, was promoted to fire-control officer, and retired as district manager in 1974. Since then he has been fighting multiple sclerosis. Carl was one of the four men who jumped on the ill-fated Eight-Mile Ridge Fire.

**Jack McKay**, '57, worked as a school principal for five years. After earning his PhD from Washington State University in 1972, he became superintendent of schools in Sequim, then Selah, and later in Washougal. He is now a professor in the Department of Education at the University of Nebraska in Omaha, spending his summers in Port Ludlow, Wash. Jack was one of the four who jumped on the Eight-Mile Ridge Fire.

**Herb Hidu**, '56, had 16 jumps with the 82nd Airborne before coming to Intercity Airport. After jumping fire, he earned a PhD from Rutgers and began doing pioneering research that laid the foundation for the shellfisheries aquaculture industry in Maine. He is often referred to as the father of aquaculture in Maine. The University of Maine awarded him the Presidential Public Services Achievement Award for Excellence in Teaching and Research. Herb retired in 1992 and is now raising hosta near Alna, Maine.

**Roger Harding**, '54, whose primary professional interest has been forest inventory, served 26 years with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, retiring in 1982 as a resource inventory supervisor. He brought orthophotography to Washington, participated in develop-

**Deadline for  
articles, news and  
features for the April issue  
of *Smokejumper* is  
January 15**

ing the use of satellite data in forest inventory, and introduced digital mapping to the Pacific Northwest. He is known as the father of the Department of Natural Resources Geographic Information System. Roger and his wife, Betty, served in the Peace Corps in Senegal from July 1986 to July 1988. Living in Port Townsend, Wash., Roger continues to be active in the Society of American Foresters, to which he has been elected a fellow.

**Sterling Pickering**, '54, was the captain of an Alaskan salmon-fishing boat after jumping fire; and a professor of neurophysiology at the University of California, Davis, after earning his PhD at Cal. Sterling retired in 1998, and now has a small farm near Davis.

## Redding

**Mike Madden**, '73, is Fire and Aviation Chief in the Lassen National Forest. Mike lives in Fall River, Calif.

**Loren (Bud) Rotroff**, has been, during his entire career, a firefighter and a teacher of fire protection, beginning with the California Division of Forestry in 1957. In 1970, he joined the Federal Fire Service, working for the U.S. Air Force, from which he retired as fire chief in 1979. Bud is now a consultant in fire protection and an adjunct professor at the University of Alaska. He lives in North Pole.

**Robert Betts**, '64, earned a masters degree in anthropology in 1987, and has gone from the jungles of Central America to the muskeg of Alaska, tracking the first Americans. He is now working in North Idaho as an archeologist for the Kalispel Indian Tribe on a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contract.

## Redmond

**Mike Lysne**, '82, jumped for eight years, the last two for the BLM. Mike then became a personnel assistant and is now a management support specialist for the BLM in Lakeview, Ore.

**Scott Rosin**, '73, jumped for five years and then worked as a timber faller for six. Scott now owns and operates Family Farm Enterprises, Inc., which is a tree service, logging, and construction company in Toledo, Ore.

**Doug Houston**, '73, is the North Cascades base manager. He has been jumping fire or supervising jumpers for 28 years—14 at Redmond and 14 at Winthrop.

**Joseph Carnahan**, '72, jumped from 1972 to '78 and then became an assistant fire-management officer in the Deschutes National Forest. Joe lives in Redmond.

**John Berry**, '70, graduated from Oregon State University with degrees in forest management and forest engineering before earning a masters in hydrology. John has worked as a forest hydrologist and as a ranger for the forest service. He is now the district ranger at Clackamas River in the Mt. Hood National Forest.

**Ottis (Bill) Hollowell**, '66, earned BS and MBA degrees from Oregon State University and then a doctorate in jurisprudence from Seattle University Law School. After jumping fire for six years, Bill worked for the Weyerhaeuser Company as a forester until 1980. He has been in private law practice in Seattle since then.

## Pilots

**Dale Matlock** was a pilot in Region 4 for 19 years. He retired in 1989 as Aerial Attack Specialist in charge of safety and training. Dale now has an antiques shop in Boise.

**Harold Ewing** was a navy pilot for 23 years starting at the beginning of the Second World War. He flew for the forest service from 1966 to 1987. Harold now lives in Cave Junction and flies for the Rough & Ready Lumber Company.

## Associates

**John Mclean** is the author of *Fire on the Mountain*, an account of the South Canyon Fire that killed 14 people, including three smokejumpers: Don Mackey, Jim Thrash, and Roger Roth. John is the son of Norman Mclean, who wrote *Young Men and Fire*, a book about the Mann Gulch Fire. John was, for 30 years, a reporter and an editor for the *Chicago Tribune*. He now divides his time between Washington, D.C., and his family cabin at Seeley Lake, Mont.

**Michael Wegenko** served 33 years in the Fire Department of South Bend, Indiana, retiring in 1994. He was promoted from engineer to lieutenant and, for the last 15 years of his career, he was battalion chief. In 1981, he was named Firefighter of the Year. Mike and his wife travel and perform volunteer work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They also spend a lot of time at Little League games with their 10 grandchildren. 🍷

## NSA Members—Save This Information

Please contact the following persons directly if you have business or questions:

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# ONE LAST JUMP

by Ted Dethlefs (Missoula '47)



*Ted Dethlefs (Courtesy of Ted Dethlefs)*

**W**e jumped at the same time and place, Missoula Nine-Mile in 1947, but were in different crews so we never met. I was a forestry major at Washington State University in Pullman, and **Max Aiken** (Missoula '47) had the same major at University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

The only project we can recall being on at the same time was in a search party for a five-year-old boy and his dog, who wandered away from his parents' woodcutting camp at Skalkaho Pass, east of Hamilton, Mont. We were in the same search line. The boy was found at the top of a nearby peak, dead, but the dog was still alive. We were told that whenever a young child is lost, his or her tendency is to go uphill if there is a choice.

Max and I, for the last several years, have been members of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Salem, Ore. Most of this time we have both attended a men's once-a-week breakfast/Bible study class. Now both 74, we got to talking, discovered we had both jumped, then where, and then when.

Max is a member of the NSA; he and his wife attended the last reunion at Missoula and had a great time. He suggested that my wife and I join them at the next reunion, which they are signed up to do.

Finally, comparing notes, each of us said, "I always wished I could do it again." After a while, we asked, "Why not?"

By searching through the Internet, we discovered a skydiving group that would take us on for static-line jumps, which are not only less costly, but required far less training than skydiving. Four hours of instruction and \$110 were required, so we set it up in February for May 27, 2000.

We showed up at the Creswell Airport, south of Eugene on that day, had our instruction, but got rained out. We succeeded the next day, Sunday, after a couple more hours of instruction. It had been 53 years since our last jumps, but it certainly brought back a lot of memories.

It is a far-different experience from smokejumping. The rectangular chutes are much more maneuverable. They open up with far less shock. We fell at 800 feet per minute rather than 1,000 and jumped from 3,500 to 4,000 feet up, so a lot more time in the air. The chutes also travel at 22 miles per hour instead of 8 mph.

The owner and two pretty instructors were wonderful, taking us through every step of the way, from putting on the chutes to explaining in detail every function and how to handle every kind of emergency. We were shown how to get in and out of the plane (a Cessna 5 place, with a seat only for the pilot) and how the paddles worked in bringing us down.

The landing is controlled just the same as a plane landing on a carrier, with a controller handling the paddles. They also had jumpsuits and helmets for us to use.

Getting out of the plane was the most different. Instead of just a door to jump out, we climbed out onto the landing gear one at a time, stood on the wheel, reached ahead for the wing strut, and then edged out a couple of feet to clear the wheel. Then, hanging from the strut, the jumpmaster nodded her head, we arched way back, and away we went.

With as much as about 6-7 minutes in the air it was a delightful experience, with no sensation at all of falling. We were to follow a predetermined route, but couldn't see the controller until at about 1,000 feet (we had an altimeter attached to the back of our left hands), when we could see the paddles.

From then on we were in his control, landing almost at his feet, and if we had done it right we would have landed standing up. As it was, we slid to an easy stop on our seats.

It's probably not such a big deal for some of you younger jumpers, who may be skydiving on a regular basis, but for us "oldies" it was a most-memorable experience and a great way to have "One Last Jump." 🍄

*Ted Dethlefs graduated from Washington State in 1949 with a bachelor's in Business and in 1952 with an master's in Recreation. He is retired from Oregon States Parks as a community recreation specialist/technical writer. With his wife Lu, he has five children and six grandchildren.*

# ANALYSIS OF THE ADFFF FINAL REPORT

by Jim Veitch

The Aerial Delivered Firefighter (ADFF) study was completed early in 2000. The ADFFF Study looked at how Aerial Delivered Firefighter resources were being utilized, and to ensure they were managed at their most efficient and cost effective levels. A Management Options Team (MOT) then reviewed the study and considered outside comments before releasing its recommendations in late September 2000. The MOT's Final Report was very positive about the effectiveness of Smokejumpers. The Report was; however, critical of how the Forest Service manages its aerial resources. Many veteran and active Smokejumpers contributed important comments to the MOT. These comments had a major impact on the final outcome of the report. It was recommended that no Smokejumper bases should be closed at this time. Comments from all sources highlighted the management problems that led to the poor utilization of Smokejumpers. The Report found that, *"Current cultural philosophy within the Forest Service, regarding ADFFF resources does not foster efficient use. There are inherent biases that stereotype these resources (i.e., smokejumpers are only good on wilderness fires, smokejumpers cost too much, helicopter modules are more flexible). Comments indicate these biases exist at all organizational levels."*

The Report states that aggressive initial attack is the key to minimizing the loss of property and money in wildland fire. It goes on to say that aerial firefighters are *"highly effective, and offer a great deal of flexibility to deliver initial attack resources."*

Nine recommendations were made that fell within three broad categories. 1. Smokejumper management should be centralized and streamlined. 2. Smokejumpers and other aerial resources should be increased. 3. Forest Service organization and culture leads to poor management of aerial resources. The Forest Service management structure is antiquated, inefficient and provincial in its utilization and dispatch of Smokejumpers. This is a management problem at the highest level of Forest Service Fire & Aviation Management. A problem that only the Washington Office (WO) managers can fix by overhauling management structure. To break the crippling provincial hold on Smokejumpers the report recommends that Smokejumper, *"budgets and administrative support ... (should be managed)... at the highest organizational level possible."*

The Report states: *"Our current decentralized dispatching system is based on a 90-year-old model. (Order and Send - based on existing need instead of expected need) We are on the threshold of new information technology which will allow us to move resources to where they are needed in advance of fire events." "A key ... (is)... dispatching the closest resources ... (as calculated by time)... to fires and moving or pre-positioning resources in critical areas."*

The Report goes on: *"It was very clear to the MOT that we need to improve how ADFFF resources are utilized. A plan needs to be developed by the fire managers and coordination center communities to freely move these national resources to where fire activity is expected or is occurring." And, "Ingrained cultural biases will be difficult to change. Any recommendations that go outside the existing norm will be met with resistance."*

The ADFFF study set out to judge the effectiveness of aerial firefighters, it ended up praising the firefighters and condemning the managers.

On 28 July 2000 (two months before the Report was released!), Jose Cruz, Director of Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management sent a letter describing how the MOT recommendations would be handled. *"We will not consider consolidation of smokejumper bases at this time." "We will not increase the number of smokejumpers at this time." "We will fund ADFFF resources following existing procedures. Regions may increase or augment funding for National Shared Resources (NSR) as local conditions and situations dictate."* (Business as usual). But the Director promised to, *"develop more efficient and effective operating procedures and strategies such as pre-positioning and increased utilization of ADFFF resources."* The Director ended by saying, *"The economic assumptions and methods used in the report are not without controversy. Therefore, before engaging in major changes in the ADFFF program, there are numerous operating inefficiencies that must be corrected first and foremost."* Out in the mountains it is felt that the MOT recommendations have been quietly set aside.

After the severe 2000 fire season Congress unleashed 1.6 BILLION DOLLARS in new funds. Not one cent of WO money is for Forest Service Smokejumpers. In contrast the Bureau of Land Management WO is increasing jumpers by 20. What will the FS do with the money? The money is going to upgrade helicopter contracts and crews, and to increase the number of Hotshot crews and engines. Any increase of Smokejumpers must come from Regional budgets (not National funds) and is thus subject to the ingrained cultural biases mentioned in the Report. Redding may increase jumper head count by 20 and Missoula by 25 but none in Region 6 (Redmond and North Cascade). No meaningful action is being taken to overhaul the archaic dispatch system that contributes so much to the poor use of Smokejumpers.

The FS Washington Office is floating with new money. They have a fresh, new ADFFF study that points to fundamental management problems. The response is to pour money into a system *"based on a 90-year-old model" ... "ingrained with cultural biases."*

The Forest Service Washington Office must start focusing on the core issue, management and efficient use of resources. It is time for *"the existing norm"* to change and time to remove the hobbles from Smokejumpers. Congress is interested in how all the new money is being spent. NSA members can contribute to change by writing Congress and Forest Service managers urging them to rebuild fire management on a modern model. Letters can be sent to your Congressional representatives and to:

Director, Fire and Aviation Management  
Forest Service, USDA  
14th & Independence SW, P.O. Box 96090  
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

*Jim Veitch lives in Australia and is an Alaska Smokejumper. He can be contacted at: [jveitch@gil.com.au](mailto:jveitch@gil.com.au)*

# An Interview with Greg Greenhoe

by Jim Veitch

Greg Greenhoe was the Chair, Management Option Team, ADFP Study and is the Deputy Director – Fire, Aviation and Air, USDA Forest Service, Northern Region.

In late October the NSA Smokejumper submitted a number of questions to Mr. Greenhoe about the Aerial Delivered Firefighter Study which was completed in September. Many NSA members contributed to the study with comments. Mr. Greenhoe's answers show the important role NSA members can play in the decision-making process of our Federal agencies. We wish to thank Mr. Greenhoe for taking the time to respond and to our questions and congratulate all NSA members who contributed to the process.

**NSA SMOKEJUMPER:** Many people submitted comments to the MOT. How did these comments contribute to the report recommendations?

**Mr. Greenhoe:** As a group the Management Option Team (MOT) felt that it learned as much from the comments as we did from the study itself. The comments allowed us to see the perceptions of the users of ADFP resources and helped us get an understanding on how they could be more efficiently used in the future.

**NSA SMOKEJUMPER:** How many submissions did you receive from the Smokejumper community?

**Mr. Greenhoe:** Including e-mail messages and formal letter around 120 comments total, around 90 of those from the Smokejumper community.

**NSA SMOKEJUMPER:** Were the Smokejumper submissions mainly emotional or did they contribute in a reasoned manner?

**Mr. Greenhoe:** Some were emotional but I felt all were professional and contributed to the work of the MOT.

**NSA SMOKEJUMPER:** What role do you see for organizations like the National Smokejumper Association (NSA) in contributing to governmental decisions?

**Mr. Greenhoe:** In the new age of information management it is very important to helping make both the ADFP community and the user community aware of upcoming studies and reports. This gives the decision-makers more information to work with and allows everyone to participate. I see this only improving the decisions we make. This was really this first time that Internet resources have been used in such a manner on an administrative study such as this one.

**NSA SMOKEJUMPER:** The Final Report mentioned competition between two camps, helicopters and Smokejumpers. What are your views on this matter?

**Mr. Greenhoe:** Both communities are very proud of the jobs they do and have very strong feelings about which is "the best" resource for Initial and Extended Attack. I think there was a lot of fear that the MOT would recommend downsizing one resource for another. What we found is that they complement each other and that it cannot be

viewed as a competition between resources. As the study showed both resources are under-funded and additional funding would be cost effective. We felt that we did not have enough information to be able to exchange one resource for another.

**NSA SMOKEJUMPER:** The Final Report emphasized the need to overhaul the national fire dispatch system. Do you see any indications that this might happen and in what time frame?

**Mr. Greenhoe:** I think there are two things here; Information Management (real time tracking of all resources) and the Command Function at the dispatch level. We need to know what we have, where it is, where it needs to go and the command authority to get it there. Our whole dispatch system is based on an on-the-ground need and request rather than moving resources in advance of the need. I think ROSS (Resource Ordering and Statusing System) will give us the information of where our resources are and better intelligence will let us know where they are needed. Now we need the command function to get them moving.

**NSA SMOKEJUMPER:** The Final Report recommended an increase of 50-60 smokejumpers. Recent indications are that this will not happen for 2001. Why would that be so?

**Mr. Greenhoe:** In the final decision the WO did not accept our recommendation for centralization of the smokejumper program. We felt the savings from this would have given us the funding to increase the program by 50-60 jumpers. Several regions are looking at centralizing administrative functions at the regional level and increasing the numbers as the savings dictate. Also several bases are located on National Forests that add jumpers at their Most Efficient Level of funding. With MEL funding coming in 2001 we will see additional jumpers at these bases. With a combination of centralization of administrative functions and MEL funding I would not be surprised to see 50-60 additional jumpers in the national in 2001.

**NSA SMOKEJUMPER:** The Final Report recommended an upgrade of helicopter performance.

Recent developments indicate that most areas are funding this. Won't this put more funds into the helicopter program and neglect the findings concerning Smokejumper staffing?

**Mr. Greenhoe:** Helicopters are justified by local NFMAS analysis so at the MEL level there will be additional funding. But a lot of forests were going to shared contracts (as recommended in the report) and doing "Best Value" contracting. This is where you indicate the funding available and the vendor bids "days of availability" and "type of platform". Selections are then made on the best value. Many times this includes a higher performance aircraft. This is just better use of the dollars that are available.

Another recommendation was the crew size. We recommended a minimum helicopter crew size of 10 so

that additional helicopter managers could be pulled from the crew to staff Call-When-Needed helicopters to respond to large fires leaving the exclusive use helicopter in place for initial attack.

NSA SMOKEJUMPER: Have there been any indications that national aerial resources will be funded off the top?

Mr. Greenhoe: Perhaps at the regional level but not at the WO level at this time. The report recommended we fund National Shared Resources at the highest possible level and consolidate administrative functions to maximize the dollars that reach the ground.

NSA SMOKEJUMPER: Have there been any indications that aerial fire resource management will be centralized?

Mr. Greenhoe: Again, some regions are looking at doing this on a Regional level but I don't see it at the National in the near future.

NSA SMOKEJUMPER: The Final Report stated, "Current cultural philosophy within the Forest Service, regarding ADFP resources does not foster efficient use." Could you give examples and steps that might overcome the current culture?

Mr. Greenhoe: This is what I was talking about above. Our process is to have a need first before we move resources. Then the resources are moved on a request basis. A lot of times resources are not made available due to a perceived need on that unit. We need to take a big picture look of what is available and move it to where it is needed before we have a big incident.

NSA SMOKEJUMPER: Now that the ADFP report has been submitted what indications are there the report will change Forest Service policy? Are you disappointed or encouraged by what you've seen so far?

Mr. Greenhoe: I think the report eliminated a lot of myths and fallacies about the programs and gave us a lot of information on how these resources are used. Some of the recommendations will be adopted and some will not for the present time. Yes there will be tremendous change over the next few years and the ADFP Study and MOT Report will just be part of that change. I think regional and local managers have already begun to use these recommendations and look at how they are utilizing these resources. I am very encouraged.

NSA SMOKEJUMPER: Please feel free to add any other comments you might feel appropriate or that might be edifying to our readership.

Mr. Greenhoe: I was very impressed and pleased with the comments and recommendations of the Smokejumper Community, especially those who were jumpers many years ago and remain loyal and concerned about the program and where it is going.

Smoke jumping remains a very valuable tool in appropriate fire response for three reasons: Speed, payload and range. Until another method of getting large numbers of firefighters to an incident quickly, over long distances, is discovered then there will be a need for this method of delivery. 🍄

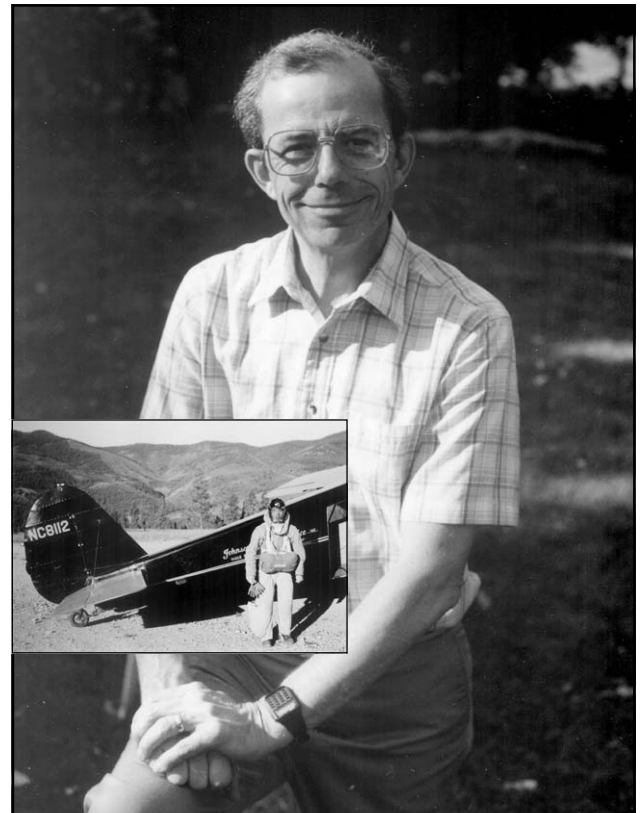
## What Richard Widmark Didn't Tell Us About Backfires

by Jack Spencer (Missoula '52)

In the summer of 1952, after graduating from forestry school, I traveled to Missoula, Mont., with three fellow forestry students from Virginia Polytechnic Institute to sign on with the Smokejumper Project. Earlier in the year, we had all seen the film "Red Skies of Montana," and when this technically flawed film played at the only movie theater in Blacksburg, Va., it electrified us with the bravery and daring of those young firefighters.

We were also struck by the fire training the film provided us, especially the dramatic scene at the end of the film. In this scene, Richard Widmark, who played the role of the surviving foreman of the doomed smokejumper crew, parachuted to another forest fire some weeks after the disaster. With typical Hollywood disdain for the facts, the foreman remembered what he had learned from the earlier tragedy, and cleverly controlled this crowning fire by waiting to set a backfire until the most propitious moment—when the wind from the back draft of the oncoming fire was strong enough to blow his hard hat off his head.

Ignorant of the defects of the film, but filled with the heroic background music and equipped with solid inside fire fighting tips from Hollywood like the hard hat tactic, we



Jack Spencer (Courtesy of Jack Spencer)



pushed our way through the crowd leaving the theater. Right then we resolved to become smokejumpers who would make even Richard Widmark proud of us. Confidently, we drove west and began our smokejumper training in June at Camp Menard.

Experienced jumpers with one or more summers of experience trained separately from us recruits, because they had an advanced training regimen (although we doubted if they knew about the backfire/hard hat tactic).

I suspect that most of the recruits secretly feared their first parachute jump, although they would not have admitted this to their most-trusted friends. They feared that Richard Widmark would learn of it and complain to a bitterly disappointed nation that the smokejumpers were being overrun by wimps and were rapidly going to hell. I was certainly afraid of my first jump because I had never been in an airplane before, and had an unfortunate tendency as a child to get car sick when riding in an automobile on a level, straight road.

Simple Christian charity, they said, compelled the veteran jumpers to pass on to the novices the “truth” about parachuting from a plane. The untested men could go home and seek other, less-physically demanding employment before their first jump, while they were still able to walk and make reasonably intelligent decisions. They confidentially explained to us that the government did not want the public to know the true facts about the injury rate to smokejumpers. Society could not accept the fact that a man rarely made a safe landing, but was usually permanently maimed, or at least psychologically scarred for the rest of his shortened life.

We recruits thought that the veterans were just pulling our leg because they all looked to be in excellent health, but we couldn't be sure. They explained that they were simply fast-healers and had fully recovered over the winter from the painful, wretched wounds of the previous summer.

The experienced jumpers made their first refresher jumps several days before the new recruits made their first jump. On the morning of the season's initial jump, the new men were sent out of camp on a training assignment, while the veterans carried their nylon bags of gear to the dirt landing strip nearby to suit up and load onto the waiting planes. In the distance, throughout the morning we could hear the drone of the Ford Trimotors and Travelaires. Those planes labored to carry the men through the still, cool air to 1,500 feet above the landing spot near camp before releasing them to God only knew what fate.

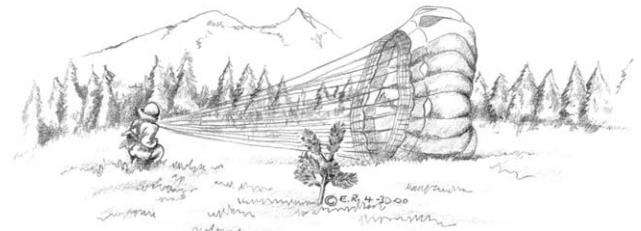
When we returned to camp for lunch, our worst fears were confirmed. Sprawled on the ground in front of the mess hall was a pitiful group, swathed in “blood”-soaked bandages. Many were on crutches, those who could talk were murmuring in dazed, hushed tones about the horrors of the *LANDING*, even though there had been no wind. At that moment, the efficacy of a summer job back home as a clerk in a hardware store seemed very sensible to me. “Let someone else make a name for himself using the backfire/hard hat technique,” I thought. “I hope to have a long, fracture- and concussion-free life ahead of me.”

But after a few interminable minutes, the scene was revealed as a sham when we discovered that all had landed safely

and had returned to camp for a first-aid class. It was while practicing applying bandages to each other that evil, but creative minds in the group hatched this clever plot to scam the untested tenderfeet.

Several days later, it was the freshman jumpers' turn to put aside the well-intentioned prattle of the veterans and to face, like men, the 1,500 feet of empty space that lay between themselves and the earth. The day began ominously, with one of the cooks calling the trainees to breakfast before daylight by slowly tolling the large metal triangle in front of the mess hall in a funereal dirge, instead of simply clanging it vigorously, as he usually did.

When we arrived at the weathered, wooden building, we were greeted just inside the door by a large, cardboard, smiling Halloween skeleton hanging from the ceiling by a



*(Courtesy Eric Rajala)*

drift chute, that brushed us as we entered. The cooks were not their usual gruff, indifferent selves on this day, but were unusually jovial and helpful, as if they were preparing our last meal, and would soon see the back of us. The tables were decorated with other humorous items, designed to encourage us to ponder the preciousness, brevity and uncertainty of life. Motivational experts today might regard all of this as harmful, negative reinforcement. In 1952, it was regarded as separating the men from the boys.

We all proved ourselves to be men that day. When the spotter signaled the jumper to go, every man did as he had been trained to do. Some may not have had complete faith that the static line would open the parachute as we had been told it would, but they pushed away from the plane's door anyway, arms tightly folded across the reserve chute snapped to the front of their harness. They felt that to humiliate themselves in front of their peers was worse than augering headfirst into the ground with a chute that would not open.

I count myself in this group, and was pleasantly surprised when, after the opening shock, the canopy blossomed like a large, white, fluted angel over my head. I hung dumbly in my harness, still trying to remember the childhood prayer that I had urgently needed a few seconds earlier, and noting how quiet it was outside the plane, how clean the air smelled away from the planes' engine exhaust fumes, and how pleasant it was to observe the earth coming up to meet me without any effort on my part.

A bothersome noise began to drift up to me that I identified after a few moments as the enraged voice of one of the foremen on the ground snarling into his bullhorn pointed up at me: “Don't just hang there in your harness—start guiding that damned thing!!!”

Guiding? Why would I want to interfere with this life-

saving apparatus when it is doing such a commendable job of getting me back on the ground all by itself? I thought. But then the reliable left side of my brain took charge, admonishing the fun-loving right side that the whole point of this game was to try to land as closely as possible to a large orange crepe paper cross the trainers had laid out on the ground.

Left brain then began issuing terse commands to my hands to reach up and pull one of the two blue-colored guidelines above me amongst the white nylon shroud lines, pointing out all the while that I had just completed several weeks of intensive training that *included How to Guide a Parachute*, and that I should be doing this instinctively by now.

As my boots touched the ground far from the crepe paper cross, I executed what I thought was a textbook roll—coming to a thankful, if undignified rest with my face mask immersed in a fresh cow pie. As I got to my feet, dripping muck, and exhilarated at still being alive and whole, it occurred to me that I had come a long way from Blacksburg, Va., and the halls of académie.

When our four weeks of training were over, I was sent to the Kaniksu National Forest to scale government logs at a small sawmill near Clark Fork, while I waited for my name to work its way to the top of the jump roster in Missoula. The summer of 1952 was a below-average year for fires in Montana and Idaho, however, and I was only called back to jump once—on a small, lightning-caused fire in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area in Idaho. I did walk in to many fires on the Kaniksu Forest that summer, but none of these fires offered the right opportunity to apply the backfire/hard hat technique with which I planned to use to make my mark in fire control.

After a little more school and two years in the Army, I came to the Klamath National Forest in Northern California to begin my career as a professional forester, still waiting for my opportunity. Fire control was a small but critical part of my job, involving large blocks of time from late spring to late fall. After three or four years of experience, it seemed to me that California firefighting largely involved scraping fire lines with hand tools, and digging and mixing mineral soil with burning material in the mop-up process—much as it was all over the west. Backfiring opportunities seemed extremely rare, especially for someone like me, with much still to learn about firefighting.

My opportunity came on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest where I'd been sent with a sector team, led by District Ranger Les Clark, to fight a large lightning-caused fire.

We arrived at the new fire camp in time for the night shift. The plans chief briefed us that a lone bulldozer operator was already building fireline on our sector of the fire, and that our job was to follow in his wake and burn out the unburned fuels between the 'dozer line and the main fire.

The fire had already burned several thousand acres on the side of a mountain and was backing down the slope towards the fireline. It was important, therefore, to burn out as much line as possible during the night shift because burning conditions were expected to be extreme the next day. Les went ahead to find the 'dozer operator and then to locate the most-direct path for the fireline, in order to link up with one being constructed towards us from the other side of the fire. The rest of

us would follow later, after a crew of 30 or so loggers had been found for us at the fire camp.

This was it! This was what Richard Widmark had trained me for! In darkness pierced only by our vehicles' headlights, the open stakeside trucks carrying my crew and me groaned up the steep dirt road in second gear, until we arrived at the place where the 'dozer had begun to carve its long ribbon of mineral soil that disappeared through the sea of brush and on into the night beyond our sight.

The crew was anxious to light the fuses and start burning, but I instructed them about my timing scheme. They seemed skeptical but anxious to see if it worked. We watched the main fire burn slowly down towards us.

Where was the wind of the backdraft as the fire sucked in oxygen to sustain itself? Can it be that this fire is burning too slowly in the relatively cool and moist night air to produce a backdraft? Did Richard Widmark fail to mention that this tactic only worked on hot, windy days? Did Richard Widmark really know what he was talking about?

We watched the fire come closer, and still our hard hats remained on our heads. Some of the crew even adjusted their hard hats so they would blow off in a mild breeze. But there was not even a zephyr as the fire burned down to the edge of our 'dozer line where we stood—and went out!

BAM!! RATTLE!! RATTLE!! Somebody's hard hat was off and rolling downslope! "Did you feel that wind?" asked logger who had just knocked his buddy's hat off with his hand. "Must've been at least 40 miles per hour."

"Yeah, right," others chimed in. "It just came out of nowhere."

"That's good enough for me," I said, having lost all faith in Richard Widmark's firefighting skills. "Light up a couple of those fuses and let's get to burning!"

We spent the rest of the night burning out the line—one man trailing his hissing, spark-emitting fusee in the dry ground litter, about 40 feet upslope and inside the fireline, and working ahead of the second man who dragged his fusee just inside the fireline. We found that once the upslope set fire began to burn uphill well, it created enough draft to bend the flames of the lower set fire and to cause it to burn rapidly uphill to join the first fire.

Together, they continued upslope to merge with the main fire, not in a cataclysm of flame, but in a modest but satisfying consumption of ground fuels that did not burn hotly enough to kill live trees. The result was a stand of live trees within a blackened area, devoid of any islands of unburned ground fuels, that could cause possible strategic problems to firefighters after daylight when temperatures rose, relative humidity fell, and the wind was strong enough to blow the hard hat right off your head. 🦘

*Jack Spencer received a bachelor's in forestry from Virginia Tech and a master's from the University of Montana. After two years in the army, he started as a forester on the Klamath National Forest. When he retired from the North Central Forest Experimental Station in 1996, he had 42 years of service. Jack currently lives in St. Paul, Minn., and volunteers with the Society of American Foresters.*

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# Honoring Our Heritage—A Legacy For The Future

by F. Dale Robertson, 12th Chief of the U.S. Forest Service (1987-1993)

*Following is a speech by F. Dale Robertson given to a meeting of U.S. Forest Service retirees in Missoula, Mont., on September 5, 2000. The speech was given immediately after Chief Dombeck bestowed Chief Emeritus status to Dale. Chief Dombeck was sitting in the front row during the speech. Dale received several standing ovations during his presentation. This information and the speech were passed along to Smokejumper magazine by Membership Chairman Fred Cooper (North Cascades '62)*

## ED CLIFF STORY

I would like to start by telling you a story about one of my heroes in the Forest Service—Chief Ed Cliff. One day during my second summer of working for the FS, I came home from marking timber and picked up the *OREGONIAN* and there was a big headline: “Ed Cliff is the new Chief of the FS.” I remember being impressed that Chief Cliff was appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, the ex-governor of Minnesota.

Due to a long story that I won't go into, I ended up in the Washington Office in 1962 as a GS-9 Management Analyst trainee. Here I was in Washington, D.C., at the bottom of the “totem pole” working as a “trainee” not knowing much about what I was doing. Well, as it turned out Chief Cliff

lived in old town Alexandria and rode the bus to work. And, I lived in the “low rent” district just beyond Alexandria. As luck would have it, Ed and I rode the same bus to work and we occasionally sat together. One reason I have such a soft spot in my heart for Ed is that when we sat together on the bus, he never failed to put his brief case down and talk with me. He told me a lot about the history of the Forest Service and gave me his perspective on many of the issues that the FS was dealing with in those days.

After 2 years in Washington, DC, I transferred to the National Forests in Texas as an assistant ranger. On my last day, Chief Cliff came down to my office and spent about 30 minutes telling me everything he knew about the NF's in Texas. I am probably the only assistant ranger to ever have gotten direct, personal guidance from the Chief!

Well, 25 years later, I was trying to fill Ed's big shoes as Chief. And, one day I got a call from Orville Freeman, the

Secretary who appointed Ed as Chief, and he wanted to take me to lunch. I later found out that what he really wanted was a Smokey Bear doll for his granddaughter. Over lunch, Orville talked a lot about Ed Cliff, and told me how he went about selecting Ed as Chief over the other contenders for the job. As a final step, he interviewed each of the candidates for the Chief's job and asked them to write a 2-page essay on their vision of the future of the FS. He said that

he was so impressed with Ed's interview and write-up because Ed came across as a “man of the land” and just fit his image of what he thought the FS should be all about. Secretary Freeman said those impressions were the deciding factors in appointing Ed Cliff as Chief of the FS.

I tell you this story because Ed Cliff, as I knew him and as many of you knew him as well, really did represent the “heart, soul and conscience” of the Forest Service. Unlike today's diversified FS, there was a great deal of convergence in the thinking and values held by the field people and their leaders. Many of my fond memories of the FS, go back to those days that Ed was Chief.

There was a general political consensus over how the NF's should be managed and the FS was well-respected, trusted, and looked to for conservation leadership. Supervisors and rangers had more flexibility to work things out with local communities and make decisions based on their experience and professional judgment without a lot of detail planning documents and paperwork. To me, those were “the good old days” in the FS!

## BUT TIMES HAVE CHANGED!

As always, the FS changes with the times, as it should, to reflect the changing needs and new priorities. To illustrate how thinking in the FS has changed over time, I would like to just briefly talk about the roadless area issue—a hot topic today which had its roots in the Ed Cliff era!

The “First Roadless Area Review” was initiated by Chief Cliff in about 1971. I know that he and Deputy Chief Ed Schultz, were concerned over the controversies that kept popping up in various locations throughout the NF's over timber sales infringing on large roadless areas. The idea at that time was that the FS would deal with this issue by inventorying all roadless areas over 5,000 acres and decide which ones should be protected until Congress could get around to considering Wilderness. The rest of the roadless country would be freed up for multiple use management without being complicated by future consideration for wilderness. Well, that was probably one of the biggest “miscalculations” of all time in the FS. I think both Ed Cliff and Ed Schultz would probably turn over in their graves if they knew that (1) those temporary roadless area boundary lines are still on the map 30 years later and (2) the current

Administration and Chief are seriously considering designating all of them roadless in one "big decision" in Washington, DC. This proposal and how it is being handled goes against the grain of our Heritage of the FS!

#### THE PATH TOWARD A MORE REGIMENTED AND FORMALIZED FOREST SERVICE

Another event that I think is important in the history of the FS is the passage of NEPA by Congress in 1969. The National Environmental Policy Act required land management decisions to be formalized in environmental documents prepared by interdisciplinary teams and subjected to formalized public involvement. As much good as NEPA has done, and I don't want to underrate that, I believe it did



(Courtesy Eric Rajala)

start the FS down the path toward formality and regimentation in terms of the procedures by which the FS gets its work done.

At this point, I would like to add another Ed Cliff story. Sometime in the late 1960s, I had the opportunity to do some staff work for the Chief on how the FS would implement the recommendations of the "Public Land Law Review Commission Report". I vividly remember when I finished my presentation; Chief Cliff gave my boss, Russ Cloninger, and me a little lecture. He said, "this involves way too much regimentation of the FS and would limit the flexibility of the field to work with local people in managing the NF's." So I went back and completely rewrote the paper to reflect Chief Cliff's philosophy. And, that lecture always stuck in my mind. Well, let me tell you something, what we were talking about in those days is nothing compared to the situation today!

And, NEPA was just the start down this path. It has been re-enforced by many other environmental laws and planning laws like the RPA and the NF Management Act - and further complicated by interpretations by the judges of the land. All of these laws have required more formality and the consideration of issues in ever-widening circles and at an ever-higher context. So, it should be no surprise to us that the FS is losing some of its heritage of being an informal, friendly, personable agency responsive to the needs of the local people. More issues than ever before are being highlighted and decided at higher levels with all kinds of people outside the FS getting involved and influencing the outcome. For example, today, the habitat requirements for endangered species are a DOMINANT USE of the NF's and the local ranger may have little to say about how that affects the management of their District.

Due to the breakdown in the POLITICAL CONSENSUS over how the NF's are to be managed along with the overly complicated planning and decision-making process, I think the "PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE" today in the

FS, is toward non-management of the NF's. It takes extraordinary commitment, time, and energy to see any kind of development-type project through to completion. As a result, I think the FS has become much more of a 'PLANNING AGENCY' and less of the 'CAN DO, ACTION ORIENTED AGENCY' that is an important part of our heritage. Until the current planning deadlock is broken, I believe natural resource management will be strangled and the FS will continue to have serious budget problems. I think the FS is in a deep hole, budgetwise, and I don't see them getting out of it until they can produce more tangible benefits beyond just planning documents and paperwork.

#### THE FUTURE OF THE FOREST SERVICE

However, over the long-term, I'm more optimistic about the future of the FS. I say this because the NF's are simply too big and important to ignore. Even though the NF's represent only about nine percent of the land area, their importance are far greater than that in terms of the Nation's natural resources. How well these lands are managed over the long term has a lot to do with the overall environmental and economic well being of the American people.

The FS heritage has been to use the concept of "SUSTAINABLE MULTIPLE USE MANAGEMENT," which has now been updated to more clearly recognize ecological values, as the best way to balance the management of the NF's and maximize their benefits to the American people. Putting aside all of today's high-sounding rhetoric, I really don't see any reasonable, viable alternative to this general concept over the long term. Sooner or later, Canada will no longer be able or willing to bail us out on wood products,



(Courtesy Eric Rajala)

Sooner or later, OPEC will not be able to bail us out on oil while we IGNORE THE POTENTIAL of oil and gas on federal lands. Sooner or later, we will not be able to tolerate letting the NF's become an economic burden to small, rural dependent communities. And finally, Mother Nature is now re-teaching us a valuable lesson in the West, and especially in Montana, that there is a huge price to pay in letting Nature manage

the forest without the help of professional resource management. Doug Leisz's recent letter to the President did a great job of describing this problem in rather blunt, but realistic terms! I hope the political appointees in Washington and the FS are listening and receptive to Doug's message.

(Continued on back page)

# Blast From the Past

## First Time Jumpers Used Near Walla Walla

Parachutists, dressed like space ship operators, leaped from a plane over the Blue Mountains to help control two small fires on the Walla Walla

district over the weekend.

The parachutists were **Jim Dawson** (Missoula '53), **Dave Cuplin** (Missoula '48), **Allen Farmer** (Missoula '53) and **Bob Nicol** (Missoula '52). Foreman of the crew was **Al Cramer** (Missoula '43).

This was the first time jumpers have been

used on the Walla Walla district. While Dawson and Farmer are jumping for the first time this year, they both have 13 leaps each. Dawson is a student at the University of Colorado while Farmer is enrolled at the University of the South at Sewanee.

Cuplin, a regular forest service employee,

started jumping in 1948 after a hitch in the Airborne Infantry. He has made 68 jumps. Nicol, a student at Montana State University, started last year and now has 19 jumps to his credit.

*Walla Walla Union  
Bulletin*

August 17, 1953

## Honoring Our Heritage—A Legacy For The Future

*(Continued from previous page)*

To paraphrase Gifford Pinchot, the success of the FS depends upon the understanding and support of the people, which is ultimately reflected through the political system. Or, to put it in another way, the "STATE OF THE FS" to a large extent reflects the "STATE OF MIND" of the American people toward natural resources. The environmentalists and their high sounding, and often dishonest, rhetoric

are way off the mark. And, to some extent, so are the timber industry and related economic interests. The FS, as a professional organization, is in a very unique position and carries a heavy responsibility to paint a more balanced picture to the American people about the importance of natural resource management.

With the current situation, I don't see any quick fix. It has to be a long-term, turnaround story. The more immediate question is what kind of picture is the FS now painting for the American people? Is it balanced, realistic, and building upon the rich heritage of the FS? Starting down the right path is what is important today! 🌲



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