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## Smokejumper Magazine, October 2002

National Smokejumper Association

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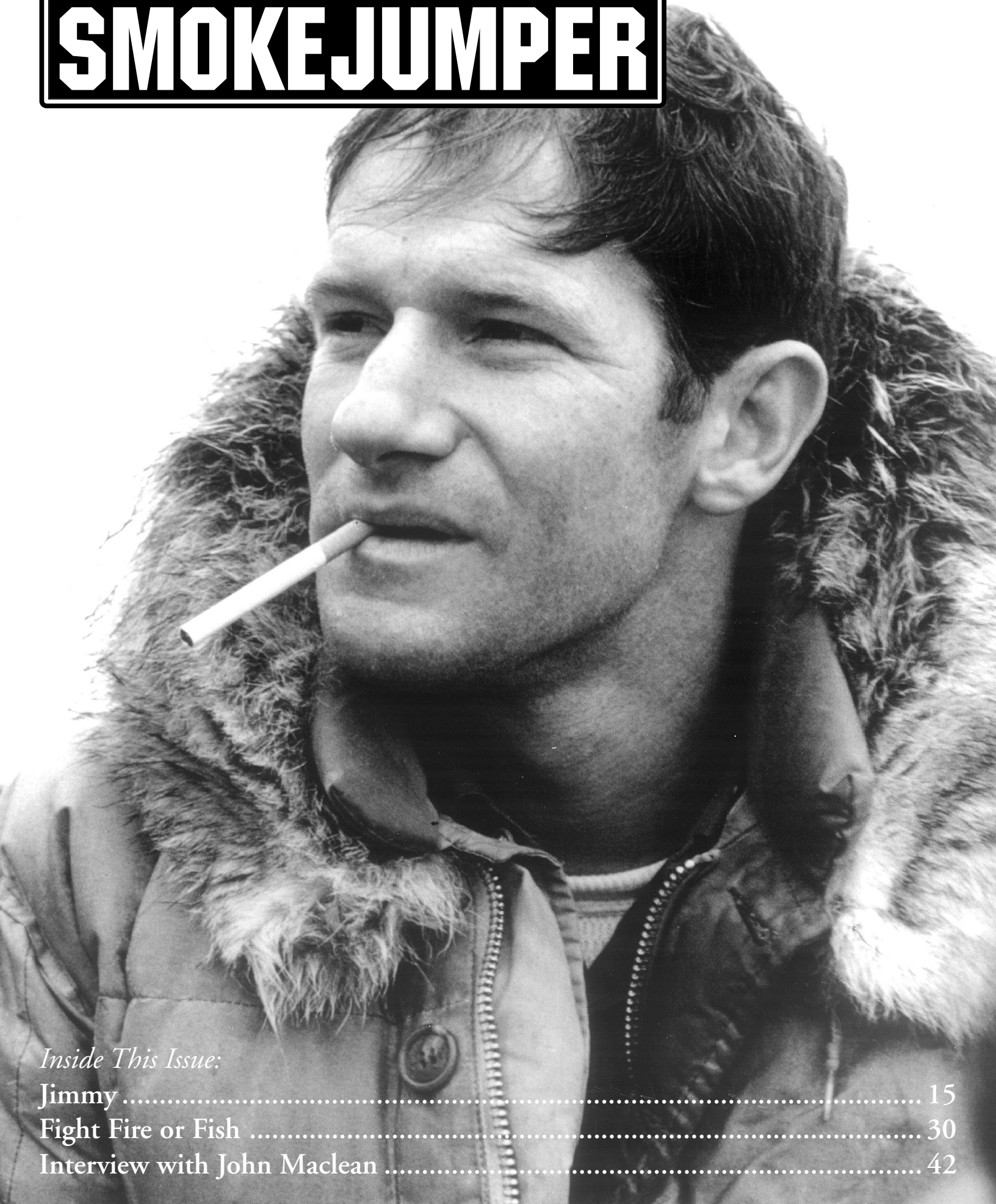
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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
OCTOBER 2002

# SMOKEJUMPER



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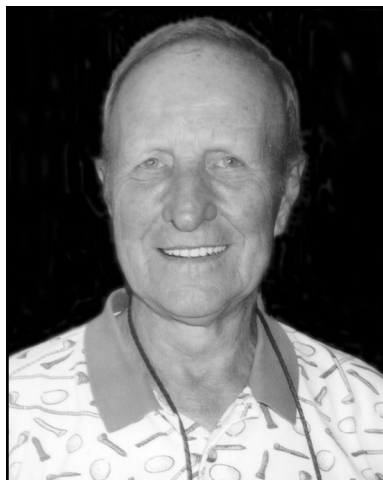
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## Message from the President



by **Ron Stoleson**  
 (Missoula '56)  
 PRESIDENT

AS A FIRST ORDER OF business in taking over the presidency of NSA, I want to say "thanks" and "well done" to Larry Lufkin for his service to the outfit during the last two years. The Association has grown during his tenure as president and we are on a solid footing financially. I hope we can maintain and improve on this position.

The life membership program specially enhances our financial picture and that's why I particularly want to promote the goal Larry set two years ago of having 200 life members. We are nearing 100 life members at present and I think the 200 goal is realistic. A life membership would be a good Christmas or birthday present for a spouse to give their mate. The dues are tax deductible because of NSA's non-profit status as recognized by the IRS. The funds are placed in an interest earning account and therefore provide an assured and continuing source of much needed income to the organization.

The continuing efforts at preserving smokejumper history are at the very heart of our organization's reason for existence. The agreements we have made with the Evergreen Museum, The Museum of Mountain Flying and

the University of Montana will each contribute to this important and worthwhile effort.

Volunteerism is at the heart of the NSA and must continue. However we must recognize the potential dangers to an organization if overly reliant on volunteers. It has always amazed me that we have had such good, professional work from our members. At the same time I have worried about what would happen to NSA if any of these key volunteers became ill or just burned out from all they were doing. In order to avoid building a "house-of-cards" we need to ensure backup systems for all we do. Our business is becoming more complex and some of the things that we have been doing with volunteers may need to be contracted for. However we must always remember that the leadership and direction for the Association cannot be contracted out. We will always need members to be active or we will become irrelevant to the entire smokejumper community.

The next meeting of the full board of the Association will be in Boise on October 12. This will be an important meeting that will probably determine the future of our Association. Tom Uphill has led an effort to produce a draft long-range plan and he is well along in his work. We will be discussing that plan at the meeting. Members are always welcome to attend any of our meetings but we do need to know ahead of time in order to have the proper size meeting room.

If any of you have thoughts on how we can better our organization, let us know at any time but be sure to include ways to achieve the improvement. We get some great ideas but unfortunately we don't get an equal number of volunteers to do the work. Please step up to the plate and help out your Association by volunteering your time. Everyone has a skill that can be used. 🍄

# Smokejumping and the American West

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

The man sitting next to me at the defensive driving course in McCall, Idaho, had a name card, **Larry Swan** — Smokejumper (MYC '68). It had a nice ring to it and I remembered back 12 years. On the evening of August 17, 1959, my family had stopped at West Yellowstone, Montana, on our way to Yellowstone Park. The vacation plans were interrupted when an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale rocked the area.

The earthquake's epicenter was below us, but the greatest damage was a few miles away on the Madison River. A mountain was cut loose and slid into the gorge, wiping out a campground full of tourists and damming the river with tons of rock and debris. Other campers were trapped on a hill that became an island behind the rising waters of Earthquake Lake.

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An airplane appeared at dawn. In the faint morning light, the survivors could see streamers descending from the plane and then parachutists dropping under orange and white canopies. Smokejumpers from the nearby base were landing on the island in the middle of the rapidly filling lake to cut helispots and medivac the survivors. (From *Smokejumper* magazine, I later learned my MYC pilot **Bob Nicol** — MSO '52 was a jumper on this rescue.)

I asked Larry if he would introduce me to the smokejumper foreman during lunch, so I could ask him for a job.

Walking into a jump base in the middle of rookie training and asking for a position on that year's squad is like walking into a medical school and asking to sign up for gross anatomy — there are procedures, papers, referrals that must proceed the applicant. I was not aware of that.

**Del Catlin** (MYC '47), the foreman, was in his late forties and rod straight. He had short brown hair and a clean-shaven square jaw, the kind of a man you would imagine saw his initiation when I was a pup. It was earlier than that. During WWII, Del Catlin made the night jump that liberated Corregidor, the island fortress where McArthur said he would return. Del looked as though he could still make that jump easily.

I listed my limited fire experience but explained that I was physically fit, having spent the previous winter skiing for the Université de Grenoble in France. When he looked me in the eye, it was apparent that he was the man who had the power to give me a chance. I also knew that one-fourth of the class had washed out already and there were places.

"You look in good shape, you might make it," he finally said.

## Getting Tough

Smokejumping was where William H. Lee got the idea in 1940 to start a new unit in the Army — the Airborne. Now the Airborne had come back. One of my trainers was **Neil Satterwhite** (MYC '65), an Airborne ranger. Like **'Doc' Houston** (MYC '71), a Green Beret medic, and **Walt Smith** (NIFC '71), a Marine, Neil Satterwhite saw his initiation in the rice paddies of Vietnam.

Neil jumped in McCall in 1966 and then joined the Rangers. During the battle of Hue in 1968, he was wounded by shrapnel. Hot metal tore into his chest and ripped open his throat. His face was slashed open and teeth scattered. Two fingers of his left hand were blown off, as was part of one calf. He was left in a “dead pile” until a soldier heard a groan and pulled him from the corpses and carried him back to safety. He lay in a hospital bed for a year. He said, grinning at me, “I am here to make sure no rookies slide through training.”

Neil ran the second fastest half-mile in camp and climbed the 20-foot rope like a monkey. He asked no quarter and gave none. One day as we did parachute landing rolls out of the back of a pickup truck cruising a dusty field, I succeeded in doing 80 pushups in full battle array because my rolls were not up to snuff. When I could no longer raise my body with my arms and lay face down in the dust, roasting in my fire-resistant jump suit and breathing through my wire face mask, Neil bent forward to ask, “What’s the matter, Dixon, I thought you hired on to be tough.”

### Rites of Passage

The American West has many rites of initiation. For the mountain man like Osborne Russell, it meant escaping with his life from Indians on the shores of Yellowstone Lake.

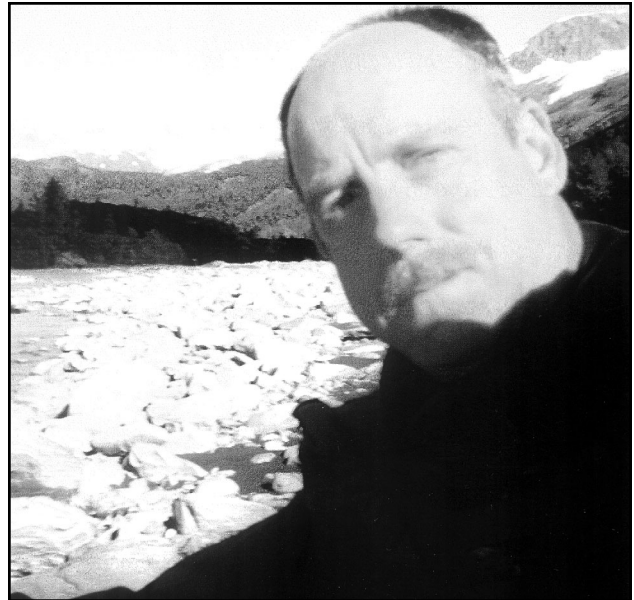
The American Indians had definite rites of passage that involved stealing horses or women from neighboring tribes (Sacagawea was taken as a girl from the Nez Percé in a raid) or counting coup in battle.

For Mark Twain it was his tour on the sternwheelers of the Mississippi, for Teddy Roosevelt ranching and chasing outlaws in the Dakotas. As the West became tamer, it was harder for young men to find rigorous rites of initiation. Many turned to doing what seemed inane and even useless in the previous century — climbing mountains. Some looked even higher.

Smokejumping is a Western phenomenon. The idea was born in the American West in tall timber country. The men that got it started were the daredevil barnstormers and pilots of another era. The actual idea of parachuting men to fight forest fires is attributed to a forest ranger in Utah. After a few demo jumps, the project was abandoned as too risky.

The initial smokejumping experiments were conducted in 1939. The Derry brothers were pioneers who had earlier made their living barnstorming. **Frank Derry** (NCSB '40) made his first jump over L.A. dressed as Santa Claus — an idea born of a need not for glory but for money.

Pioneer jumpers had to develop equipment and techniques to allow men to parachute into some of the rough-



*Jerry Dixon (Courtesy of Jerry Dixon)*

est country on Earth from sea level to 10,000 feet. They needed to rappel from trees if the parachute hung up and still have enough energy left over to fight fire all night long or maybe several nights. The football helmet with wire mask, fire-resistant suit with padding, and leg pocket with rappel rope are essentially those used by the jumpers today.

### July 1971, Idaho’s River of No Return Wilderness

Our DC-3 was circling over an acre of lightning-caused fire. Two would jump into Chamberlain Basin, which spread out before us to the steep breaks of the mile-deep gorge of the Salmon River. My heart was lodged in my throat for the first fire jump. The prop blast sucked the air from my lungs.

Catlin was training a new spotter. We made two false passes until finally **Richard Jeppson** (MYC '67), the spotter trainee, thought he had the plane lined up. There was a tap on my calf and I exploded from the door as **Bill Newlun** (MYC '70) followed. After checking my chute for a complete opening, I looked for the small clearing we were shown from the plane. There was none. Steering through the trees, I twisted my knee on landing. Later I found Bill 40 feet up in a snag with his parachute dangling. He was standing on a branch and grasping the tree with one hand. The other hand and one finger were extended toward the circling plane with Jeppson looking out the door.

### Price of Initiation

Our 1971 season was slow. It was not until fall that I began to realize the price of our initiation. Of the 19

McCall and Boise jumpers that finished training, two had sustained back injuries and one had been knocked unconscious that season. **Jim Voelz** (MYC '71) had been jumping in Oregon during a thunderstorm. He slammed into a snag 80 feet in the air as he was pushed backwards by the wind. His parachute collapsed and he plummeted to the ground, breaking his back and impaling his chin with a branch. Of the nine men in my class that jumped four years or longer, only one escaped injury, "**Desert**" **Pete Amell** (MYC '71) — a cowboy artist from Riggins, Idaho. During the conflagrations of 1988, Pete was injured jumping into a West Yellowstone fire. However, like every other jumper in my class, Pete returned to jump after the injury healed.

On the wall of the rigging room at McCall loft is a photo of a young man with sandy short hair and dark-rimmed glasses. He looks to be the kind of man you would expect to be a high school quarterback or president. Below the photo it reads: "**Ken 'Moose' Salyer** (MYC '54), 12-year veteran smokejumper/spotter. Died July 1965 while dropping cargo to jumpers on Mores Cr. Fire, Boise N.F."

Although death by fire is remote, in 1949 twelve jumpers succumbed in Montana when trapped in a dead-end canyon by wildfire. One McCall jumper died when hit by a burning snag on a fire line.

But somehow the parachute always opened.

### **Fairbanks, Alaska, May 1976**

I was training for my fifth season. In 1974 I helped train rookies in McCall. Like many veteran jumpers, I have come north to smaller trees and soft tundra.

The day was clear and we were making our second practice jump on Birch Hill. It was my 65th jump. The Volpar jump plane cruised at 110 mph to let us out one at a time. I crouched in the doorway to spring.

When we were loading the plane, one spotter stopped the takeoff roll to see if a mannequin attached to a streamer or malfunctioned chute could be found. They were going to throw it out and let it bounce to give this year's rookies at the jump spot a thrill. But the prop didn't arrive. When I exited the plane, one trainer on the ground, believing the mannequin had been dropped, commented that it appeared a jumper's chute had a total malfunction. Then another jumper said, "Hey, wait a minute! If that's the mannequin, why are its hands moving?"

I exited the plane at 1,000 feet. Having had a line over the canopy on a previous jump, I knew what it feels like to have a partial opening. But a streamer means that only a few feet of canopy are catching air instead of 32 feet. With a streamed chute, a jumper falls as if he had no chute at all.

The riser lines were tight against my face. I pulled

them apart and looked up to see there was a ball of nylon where my chute should be. It was a total malfunction and, as I glanced down, I saw the trees race to the periphery of my vision.

And then from *my* lips I heard a word I never before remembered uttering, in questioning disbelief, "Jesus."

I pulled my reserve ripcord and turned my face so it didn't catch my face mask as it exploded upwards.

The reserve pulsed up the lines of the main and hesitated on the skirt or edge. If it went inside, I was finished. My reserve crept to the outside of the malfunctioned main and then flowed up the side, hanging there. I stared in incredulous wonder at my unopened reserve pressed by the wind into my totally streamered main.

In freefall or with a streamered chute, a jumper falls about 100 feet per second. At 200 feet above ground, one would have two seconds to impact. One. Two. **Bob Steiner** (BOI/NIFC '71) saw my malfunction from the plane. The depression we jumped into on Birch Hill was several hundred feet below the ridge. Bob told me later, "The last time we saw you was when you went below the ridge, trailing two unopened chutes. Everyone in the plane thought you went in."

My mind clicked — the years of jumping, the time under a chute all came to the front. With clarity I saw that I must pull the reserve back in and throw it out. There was only one thought in my head, "How many times can I pull it in and throw it back out?"

As I reached up to pull the reserve, the flow of wind changed over my body and across the two chutes. The white reserve opened with a crack and I saw dust scatter in the air. My main started to billow before I hit the ground.

In the last 200 feet, my mind had cleared and all the bric-a-brac that had rattled about in my head evaporated. My sense of panic was gone and time seemed to stand still — there was an eternity between each heartbeat. My thoughts had gone beyond urgency and I felt as free as I had ever felt in my life. I saw all of my past and all of my future meet in that eternal second.

I had a backache and was in shock but otherwise unhurt. The loft foreman checked my main chute and could find no tangles, no wrapped shroud lines, no burn marks from lines to give testimony as to why it didn't open properly. There was not a shred of difference between my chute and the dozen others that had been jumped that day and opened. I left my parachute on the ground and walked away.

In 1976 the smokejumpers began testing an anti-inversion netting that the Army had perfected to stop malfunctions. In 1977 the netting became standard equipment on all parachutes. To my knowledge, there has not been a single malfunction on a parachute that

has the netting.

## The Jumper's Jumper

Pilots have their ace of aces. The paradigm in smokejumping is the jumper's jumper. For Del Catlin it was **Richard "Paperlegs" Peterson** (MYC '47), a pioneer jumper. For **Tom Hillard** (MYC '67), an Alaskan trainer, it was **Bill Moody** (NCSB '57) — who went to the USSR to jump with the men and women of the Russian smokejumpers.

**Rod Dow** (MYC '68) is a jumper's jumper. He is a lithe man with brown hair and a quick smile. Rod describes himself as "smokejumper and asparagus farmer."

Rod began his fire career in 1967 as a smoke chaser and his passage was in 1968. He has jumped every season since and spends his winters at a hot springs in the mountains of Idaho, returning every spring with the geese to Alaska. Like most jumpers, he is college educated but prefers to make his living jumping out of perfectly good airplanes. He has been injured only once in 20 years — in July 1973, when he says I cut his hair too short. He narrowly escaped injury in 1985, when a 500-gallon fuel bladder broke loose from its parachute and exploded near him. He was knocked over by a wave of fuel that fortunately didn't ignite.

## The First Female

**Deanne Shulman** (MYC '81) grew up in Southern California, the daughter of a physician. Her brother became a doctor, one sister is a vet and another sister has a Ph.D. in biology. Deanne, a fine athlete, could have been anything she wanted to be. She wanted to be a smokejumper. But in the American West smokejumper meant male. After putting in her long apprenticeship on a California helitak crew and becoming a foreman, she applied to jump. She was accepted in June 1979 and went to McCall to train. On a technicality, she was washed out because she did not weigh enough. Later she found out there were jumpers that weighed less than herself.

Deanne sued the Forest Service and won not only a cash settlement but also the right to try again. She returned in 1981 and succeeded. At one point she made the standard rookie packout over four miles of rough terrain, carrying almost her own weight in parachutes, shovels, Pulaskis and gear.

In 1982, when I returned to McCall to jump, Deanne was in her second year. For me, after six years of not jumping, it was like starting over. Putting on a parachute and climbing into a plane with the door off was something I had done in my head a thousand times since 1976, but no matter how I thought I would react, I continued to see the tops of trees blurring to the periphery of my vision.

Another training jump, another jumper in the door. Whomp. Whomp. Two jumpers cleared the plane in front of me and once again the air blurred my vision as I stood at the threshold. No hesitation and we had an opening. How wonderful, how miraculous.

So much had changed since my absence. New buildings, new people, new planes, new pilots and now a female jumper. There were female Air Force pilots and astronauts before a woman broke the ranks of the jumpers. I wondered if they had lowered the standards. There was talk of getting rid of the P.T. requirements, since no one had ever proved that tough macho jumpers got hurt less than thin willowy ones.

The first thing that struck me about Deanne when I saw her jump was that she had earned her wings. In a single season, she had become an adept parachute handler and could fly between the trees with the best of them. She had put in her long and difficult apprenticeship on ground pounder crews, and the standards for jump school had, if anything, been increased. Her weight was probably an advantage, because she landed light. Working with her, I could see she fought fire every bit as well as her male counterparts.

Once, when 19 of us were returning from a fire, Deanne put on shorts and let her hair down out of her hardhat. Not only could she jump out of airplanes, fight fires and carry a pack that weighed 100 pounds, but she was also a very attractive woman. That can be threatening to males versed in the traditions of the Old West. This was a fire in Nevada in July 1982. One McCall jumper actually had the gall to get in Deanne's face, saying, "You're taking a job from some guy who could be jumping." She fired right back.

After I jumped with Deanne, it was obvious to me that any jumper of her caliber was an asset regardless of gender. In the open door of a jump plane or in full jump gear under a parachute, it is impossible to tell if the jumper is male or female and it does not matter.

## Last Jump

My last fire jump was in August 1982. When I exited the DC-3, I could see the Idaho Sawtooth Range spread out before me under a cerulean sky. The plane swept left and it seemed for the first time I noticed it going away. I remembered one young rookie I had met that year who seemed barely old enough to shave. His eyes were alight as he excitedly described his fire jumps. I asked him if he thought he would return. "You bet," was his response. "It's a good job and there is no better way to see the country." 🦋

*Jerry Dixon currently teaches gifted students in Seward, Alaska. He can be reached at: [js2dixon@hotmail.com](mailto:js2dixon@hotmail.com)*

# Two Montana Girls Give a Smokejumper a Ride

by Jason M. Greenlee (Redding '99)

*Dedicated to my two friends from Pair-a-Dice*

**A**s we all know, genetics has absolutely nothing to do with a little thinning on the top of a man's head. Ask any guy with thinning hair and he will tell you right up front that it is scientifically proven that our problem is that we just have too much testosterone and it's cloggin' our hair follicles. You want to be a whimp? Go ahead and sport a Fonzie ducktail. You want to be The Man? Go with Ed Harris. Don't ask me why, that's just biology for you.

Well, I just had a haircut, and I was looking pretty spiffy. I happened to be doing my best Bruce Willis at the entrance of the Costco parking lot at the moment that this story begins. Like all jump stories, this is absolutely true, of course.

I was standing there, and I had a new truck battery at my feet. My truck was in the parking lot of Crystal Video in Missoula waiting for its new battery. My thumb was out. It was like I was a sort of Jimmy Dean with thin hair in tight jeans and black t-shirt. Jimmy Dean needed a ride.

It didn't take long for two chicks to pull up. Now let me explain right here that I do like to flirt once in a while, but I do not, I repeat, do not fool around. Women are getting wise to that sort of thing. My wife says don't fool around, so I don't fool around. After all, she's four inches taller than me and gaining. She says it's the jumping, but I say it's all them chemicals. Anyway, she lets me flirt, but I do not fool around.



Jason Greenlee (Courtesy of Jason Greenlee)

So the girl in the passenger seat yells at me. "Hey you got a battery. All's you need now's a truck! He, he, he!" She thinks she's pretty damn funny.

I'm up for this, so I hook my thumbs in my belt and lower my voice. "Going into town?"

"Nope." Tires screech and they're gone. No problem, plenty more where they came from. A whole Costco parking lot full.

A few more cars pull out and then here come the same two girls again. They have Montana plates and a lot of dust on their car. The back seat's full of dust too, plus some old newspapers, groceries, paperback books, a couple horseshoeing tools, a tire iron and a few church flyers. I climb in, after pushing some of the stuff they've collected onto the floor.

Now these are two very cute homegrown country-fried Montana girls. I estimate the driver is a about my age — fortyish, well, OK, fiftyish. The one with the wise mouth has got to be the mom. I can tell that by the way she's nudging her daughter in the ribs and giggles.

I can envision the two of them riding bareback out to a little schoolhouse on the Montana prairie, echoes of hooves and laughter resounding from the snow capped peaks around them. They just looked that way, riding around in their dusty sedan with a back seat full of church flyers and tire irons.

I decide to open with something that would show my powers of observation. "You girls from Montana?"

"Yep, we're from Paradise. Used to be Pair-a-Dice, but then some damned preacher moved to town and changed its name. He, he, he!"

"Ever heard of Chicken, Alaska?"

"Been there."

"Know why it's called Chicken?"

"Nope."

"Cause the settlers wanted to call it Ptarmigan, but they couldn't spell that. Har, har, har!"

It's true.

"He, he, he!"

"I got a picture of my wife. Wanna see her?"

"Sure. My gosh, she's tall. Are you two smokejumpers?"

"Yep, only she did it just one year and then went and got a real job — one with adult supervision. Har, har, har!"

"What the heck would you two want to jump out of a perfectly good airplane for? He, he, he!"

"Well, it ain't the jump that hurts; it's the sudden stop. It's makin' me shorter ever' day. Har, har, har!"

"We know a jumper. Her dad lives in Paradise. We've read the book and been to Mann Gulch, too. Met Bob Sallee there.



He's cute. He, he, he."

Now these were obviously real Montana girls. I could see mom hanging laundry with the wind rolling over the prairies beyond her picket fence. I could see the daughter chasing crickets across the dried-out yard. To me, right then the whole state of Montana came down to these two giggling fun-loving, fearless women, out for a ride to town on a hot summer day in their dusty car with a back seat full of church flyers and tire irons.

"Hey, heard the one about the three guys that died?" I offered.

"Nope."

"Well the first one came up to the gates of Heaven, and Saint Peter said, 'What's your IQ?' and he said '200.' And Saint Peter said 'Did you get yer Ph.D.?' 'Yep.' 'OK, then go on in.' And the second one came up and Saint Peter said 'What's your IQ?' and the second one said a little slower '120.' And Saint Peter said 'Did you get yer master's degree?' 'Yep.' 'OK, then go on in.' And the third one came up and Saint Peter said 'What's yer IQ?' And the man said really slow 'I guess around 80, or sumpin' like that.' And Saint Peter said, just as slow, 'Did you get yer deer?' Har, har, har."

I really tear myself up sometimes.

"He, he, he!" came the reply from the front seat.

We pulled up to the Crystal. I hopped out and grabbed my battery.

"Hey, you stay in touch, Smokejumper! Here's a bank

deposit slip with our address. If you're ever by Paradise, stop in. He, he, he!"

"Hey, Mom, maybe he'll take money out of your account with that slip!"

"Nope, that there's a deposit slip. All's he can do is put money in. Feel free, smokejumper! He, he, he!"

And so, as I watched them pull out into the traffic and wave, they disappeared in a swirl of dust, church flyers and old newspapers.

And for the second or third time that day, I appreciated being in Montana. I couldn't wait to tell my wife about the two cowgirls I'd met from Pair-a-Dice.

And some time maybe the two of us will stop by that dusty yard, stoop under the laundry line, knock on the old screen door, say "Hi," and swap some more good laughs. Maybe there'll be some horses hanging around and a mountain peak or two to admire. The old school house won't be far off, either. And if my guess is right, there'll be some nice hot apple pie waiting to be tasted. And that car's back seat will probably have some new collectibles laying on it. 🍷

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER STEPHEN RHODES

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STEVE, OR DUSTY AS many remember him, was a rookie at North Cascades in 1958. From 1959 to 1961 he jumped out of both Winthrop and LaGrande, and returned for a final season in 1964.

Steve was born in Okanogan, Washington, three years and three days before Pearl Harbor. He lived on his family's dairy farm until 1947 when his father purchased a general store in Nespelem, Washington, on the Colville Indian Reservation. He grew up there, graduating in 1956 with seven classmates in the last class of Nespelem High. He entered Washington State University in mechanical engineering that fall.

The following summer Steve landed a job with the Okanogan District's survey crew. Impressed with the dashing jumpers he saw lounging at the Conconully Ranger Station after a fire jump, he applied

for a position at the North Cascade Base for the following summer.

The rookie class of '58 was large by NCJB standards, 16 in all. This was also the class that experienced first hand the tragic Eight-Mile Ridge plane crash that took the lives of jumpers Gus Hendrickson and Jerry Helmer, Pilot Bob Cavanaugh, and Bob Carlman, from the Okanogan Forest general office. The fire was close to the base, so the rookie class was trucked in under the supervision of Elmer Neufeld. While working the south side fire line they heard the plane go in, and were the first to arrive on the scene. Thanks to Elmer's cool-headed leadership, an orderly search for survivors was undertaken, but to no avail. The accident occurred two weeks before the first practice jump and caused much soul searching for the entire rookie class. Despite the accident

and the fact that for most of the rookies this was a first plane ride as well as a first jump, 100 percent of the class made the jump and got their pin.

On a lighter note, Steve was also the co-guest of honor, along with Terry McCabe, for the base's annual Shirley party that year. The details of that adventure are best left for Terry to explain.

Supported with his jumper earnings, student loans, bussing dishes for the KD sorority, and a National Science Foundation grant, and after a side trip of one year of business classes, Steve finally got his degree in mechanical engineering in 1961. On his way back to the base in 1961 he stopped by Richland, Washington, to marry Diane Goodenow. With \$75 and a fully paid for 1957 Buick, he treated her to smokejumper's honeymoon at a



*Stephen Rhodes (Courtesy of Stephen Rhodes)*

campground on Lake Wenatchee. She wasn't as impressed as was he when he first saw Lake Wenatchee hiking out of a fire the year before, but the marriage survived and produced four children (Stephen in Duluth, Jacqui and Lisa in NYC, and Tara in Chicago).

The season was good that year, with nine fire jumps and plenty of overtime. As a consequence, after setting up housekeeping at the Idle-a-While Motel in Twisp, Diane spent more time with a borrowed 60-pound Weineramer than her new husband. As the season closed Steve returned to WSU to join the faculty as an instructor in mechanical engineering, lecturing in thermodynamics, heat transfer and fluid mechanics, while starting work on his master's degree.

After two summers of academic work, no summer job prospect, a depleted bank account, and an urge to get his 50th jump pin, Steve returned to NCJB in 1964. Leaving his pregnant wife and one-year-old son with his parents in Omak, Washington, Steve spent most of a slow season at La Grande. The four fire jumps did yield the 50th jump

pin. But the summer away from his family, two days with two hours sleep on a fire line, and an early snowstorm on the Three Sisters huddled in a paper sleeping bag, convinced him it was probably time to get on with life.

After receiving his master's degree in 1965, Steve left WSU and joined Boise Cascade Corporation's central engineering group in Boise, Idaho. There he worked on pulp mill construction engineering and new business development. In 1968 he was transferred to BCC's Detroit Automotive Products division in Warren, Michigan, as manager of marketing and engineering. Detroit Automotive produced the No-Spin differential (Detroit Locker for you drag car buffs), and marked the beginning of Steve's involvement in the automotive parts business, where he has spent most of his career.

In 1971 Steve joined Dyneer Corporation with responsibility for that company's Change-O-Matic Locker and Spartan/Ketcham Bathroom Products line in Queens, New York. Ketcham was a venerable line of chrome and gold plated tubs and shower enclosures, and had been used in the Truman White House restoration. But the company had come on hard times, and after liquidating much of the business, Steve returned to the Midwest as president of Dyneer's Spun Steel Division. Spun Steel was the major supplier of pulleys to the automotive OEM market. He stayed there until 1978 when he was promoted to vice president for Dyneer's Automotive Products Group.

In 1980 he made the first of several trips to Japan to study Japanese manufacturing techniques, and from that became an early proponent of the Toyota Manufacturing System. In 1985 he left Dyneer to become president and CEO of LeRoy Industries, in LeRoy, New York. LeRoy was the major supplier of machined steering knuckles and rear spindles to Ford, and Steve saw this an opportunity to more effectively apply the Toyota

system than at Dyneer. However, a dispute with the chairwoman made that opportunity short lived, and within nine months he was looking elsewhere to apply his theories. For the next 18 months Steve sought out companies suitable for a leveraged buy out, and in 1987, with financial backing from Charterhouse Group, acquired Carpenter Enterprises Limited, a machining company in Flint, Michigan. Carpenter supplied intake manifolds, front engine covers and brackets to General Motors.

Whether the third time was a charm, or because he finally had the support of his board of directors, Carpenter proved to be well suited for the Toyota Production System. It became the first North American company selected by a Japanese automotive manufacturer to supply machined knuckles and spindles, and remains the dominant supplier in that niche today. With the addition of Nissan, Mitsubishi and Honda as customers, Carpenter grew to \$120 million sales before it was acquired by Eagle Picher Industries.

Steve also developed a relationship with Hitachi Metals Limited, the largest independent foundry operation in Japan, through Carpenter. In 1988 he became chairman and CEO of EMI Company, a ductile iron foundry in Erie, Pennsylvania, a joint venture between Hitachi Metals and Charterhouse. In 1992 Steve was also appointed chairman and CEO of Hitachi's Ward Manufacturing Company, one of the largest manufacturers of malleable iron pipe fittings in North America. In 1993 he joined Hitachi Metals America full-time as a director and president of HMA's Casting Products Group, a \$300 million supplier of aluminum wheels and ductile iron suspension parts for the automotive market, and malleable iron pipe fittings.

With retirement looming at the end of 2003, Steve and Diane are mapping out plans for the next phase of life, which will certainly include attending as many smokejumper reunions as possible. 🦉

# Almost Losing One

by Charley Moseley (Cave Junction '62)

**T**he Twin Beech's engines were roaring at full throttle as we raced westward out of the Methow Valley towards a fire near Mt. Baker. It was early August of '63, with the North Cascades as dry and hot as two rats making love in a wool sock.

Our spotter, **Tony Percival** (North Cascades '54), came back and yelled a most serious question at four tightly-suited and uncomfortable jumpers. "Were any of you guys with **Ray Rivera** (North Cascades '61) last night?" Three no's and my weak "yeah." Tony wanted to know: "What happened?"

"Well, a bunch of us were over at a bar in Okanogan and having a pretty good time until Ray decided to play darts with that big ole pig sticker he carries. The dart-board and the fun sort of disintegrated about the same time and we got out of there. What do you do with a guy with a foot-long knife?"

Tony was on one knee, shaking his head and preparing to ask another question, when our pilot **Ralph "Crash" Williams** yelled back, "Tony, dispatch has an emergency fire for us." Thank you, dispatch — Ray was in enough trouble by himself without any help from this rookie.

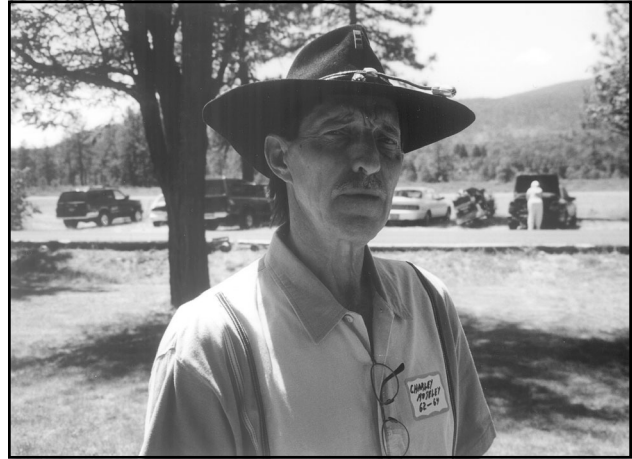
Not counting **Dick Wessel** (Cave Jct. '56), Ray and Tony were the first jumpers I ever met back in '61, and they were damned impressive: over six feet tall, lean, hard and incredibly strong. I stood in total awe as they left our fire and quickly walked off through the Doug fir with those 110-lb. packs — whistling! I wanted to be just like 'em. Ray's inability to handle alcohol was now blurring my image and worrying Tony.

The troubled air outside was bouncing us around pretty good when Tony came back with info about a new and important lighting fire close to one of our lookout towers west of Conconully. "You and Paul get ready, we are almost there." We did.

The tower was on a high knob surrounded by a park-like scene of knee-deep dry brown grass and scattered pines (a John Wayne movie site). Our fire was small, but blazing up pretty good. A two-manner?

Tony asked my old salt jump partner, **Paul Boyer** (Cave Jct. '61), "Can y'all handle it?" "Hell yeah!" And I'm wondering if this is CJ toughness or alligator mouth with canary butts. If a fire looks hot from 2,000 feet, you know it's gonna be a lot hotter from three feet. It was.

Every spotter I ever worked with was good, but Tony



*Charley Moseley (NSA File)*

was exceptional. He barely looked at the mandatory drift streamers, relying more on the smoke column and his gut feeling, based on much hard experience. Even in high winds, he always kicked us out so that in the last few seconds, we were right where we should be.

The wind was up and time was critical, so Tony let us out quite low but headed down slope just in case the mains malfunctioned. They didn't and we each quickly picked out a bushy pine tree right next to the fire and crashed into them.

No ground landing for me. My legs paid for my college education via a track scholarship at Alabama, and northern Washington has rocks everywhere. Even the rocks have rocks.

My boots stopped some two feet from the ground. I quickly unsnapped my capewells, dropped down, shed the jumpsuit, broke off a pine limb and started beating out the fire less than four minutes after leaving the Twin Beech. Not bad for a rookie jumper.

Paul laid out a double-L signal streamer for "all is okay" and joined me on our fire. We had about half the fire under control before Tony even dropped our fire pack, and we were quite pleased with ourselves as sounds of the Beech faded away. No sweat! CJ to the rescue! *We is Smokejumpers Deluxe!*

A sudden loud clap of thunder made us jump, focused our attention back out into the valley and presented an immediate problem. A tacky small thunderhead was headed our way and the downdraft wind was bending treetops in our direction. The fuel mixture of

pine straw and dry grasses was volatile. Add a little wind and it was trouble—big time!

We re-doubled our efforts with Paul on one side of the fire and me on the other, as we could now hear the wind coming. Beat fire out! Break a new limb off — and beat more fire out! I never worked harder or faster in my life, and yet my brain kept measuring the time and fire line left and there was no way to get there. The wind was picking up and fanning the fire head all around. That fellow in the tower was going to need his best pair of running shoes.

Paul was a wrestler at Western State in Colorado and, like me, a total competitor and unfamiliar with defeat. Neither of us had ever lost a fire, but we were losing this one. Our lungs and muscles were crying for oxygen and begging for relief when a cheerful “voice from heaven” called out from above us: “Hey —can you fellows use a little help?” We hadn’t even heard the plane come back.

**Mike Fort** (North Cascades ’61) and **Ralph Holtby** (North Cascades ’61), attached to two beautiful parachutes, were corkscrewing in against the strong wind. They slammed into the hillside, ass over teakettle, and came up shedding gear and laughing. My kind of people.

While flying away, Tony had kept looking back at our situation and had decided to come back and drop Mike and Ralph. That is a true professional attitude in anybody’s book.

Even with the new bodies helping, our fire put up

a hard fight and it was touch and go. A lightning bolt exploded a pine some 200 feet away, making us all yell out in startled reaction. No place to hide. The new ozone atoms smelled syrupy sweet and complemented the blue/white light dancing up and down the nearby phone line. It was a crazy frenetic scene, but we never let up or gave up. We were jumpers with a mission and we loved it.

Our new leader, Fort, was like a man possessed — whooping and hollering, coaching and beating out fire with both hands. He personally saved my gear and chute.

We all came together at the fire’s head and it was over so suddenly that we were a little confused at first. No more fire. No more need for adrenalin! What do we do?

We sat down, then we lay down — spread-eagled out on the steep slope — gasping for air, laughing, yelling and praising each other. The relief and joy for a job well done just welled up and out of each of us. To be a smokejumper had never felt more special. 🦉

*After Cave Junction, Charley spent time with Air America. Upon returning from Laos, he went to law school during the “off-season.” He started four years in Alaska as a jumper and initial attack officer at Galena in 1969. Today, Charley is still “living on the edge” in the oil business, handling the position of manager for Patton Petroleum. He can be reached at 601-735-4173.*

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

# ADAM LAUBER (REDDING '99)

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by **Chuck Sheley**

IT IS ENCOURAGING AND refreshing to feature Adam Lauber who is the youngest NSA Life Member. We are always concerned about the future of the organization and welcome the fact that we have one of the younger jumpers as a Life Member. In addition to Adam, we have a year 2000 rookie on the payment plan and look forward to his full membership soon.

Adam worked on the Tahoe N.F. in Region 5 on an engine

crew after beginning his fire fighting career on the Shasta-Trinity N.F. in 1995. Two seasons as a sawyer on the Prescott Hotshots added to his fire time before rookie training at Redding in 1999.

Growing up outside of Toledo, Ohio, Adam was exposed to the fire community at an early age. His father, uncle and two cousins were all firefighters for a municipal department and he participated in the Explorer program at

age 16. While on vacation near Cooke City, MT, in 1988, his interest in smokejumping was peaked as he saw a group of jumpers demobing from a fire.

After attending Kent State University for a time, he realized that college wasn’t for him and headed west to pursue his dream. Adam is currently jumping at the Redding base and spends his winters in Truckee, CA, with his wife Cindy and daughters Jordan and Piper. 🦉

# The Barracks Bash

by Neil E. Satterwhite (McCall '65)

In the 1970s, more importance and less common sense was placed on the enforcement of regulations and policies than in today's world and workplace. This was especially true as it applied to the smokejumper unit in McCall, Idaho.

One of the most flagrant violations of policy was to be found guilty of bringing alcoholic beverages onto U.S. government property; more serious still was to be caught drinking these spirits in the residential barracks for single smokejumpers.

An action regarded as entirely disgusting and demonstrating no savoir faire was to be found drinking these intoxicating beverages in the resident barracks, accompanied by a stereo blasting out the popular rendition of "Get Ready" by the rock-and-roll band Rare Earth at 1,000 decibels on any given work night during the hours of 1:00 A.M. to 3:00 A.M.

The criteria used to judge "appropriate sound quality" of music in those days was whether the "boys" stumbling home from the Foresters Nite Club in downtown McCall could hear the lyrics of the song (after, once again, being requested to vacate the bar premises at closing time).

With few exceptions, the one event blamed — and typically given responsibility — for the emergence of the most "deviant behavior" among the McCall smokejumpers was the lack of fire activity. More specifically, that referred to the absence of "fire jumps" for any extended period of time. A related contributing factor in the particular incident I am about to revive from the past may have been the lack of enthusiasm many of the "jumpers" maintained for the work details assigned on a daily basis by smokejumper project foreman, **Thad Duel** (McCall '56).

Depending on whose list you were on for the week, it was common practice in the jumper unit during the 1975 fire season to assign certain individuals in the first plane-load of jumpers to work projects out of town. One of the favorite work sites was the on-going construction effort of the "million-dollar" horse barn and corral in Paddy Flats. This work site was located more than thirty miles and about an hour's travel time from base camp and our support aircraft.

The project was considered critical to the Payette National Forest. The intent of the design was to build a complex at a specific elevation that would assist in the acclimation of the horses during the winter. The initial idea was to prevent heart attacks among the horses when they were put to work each spring on the backcountry packing details.

In 1975, I was one of only a few single smokejumper

squad leaders who lived in the resident smokejumper barracks. My supervisors frowned upon this arrangement — my living in such close proximity and fraternizing with subordinate members of the unit. However, being a poor, recently graduated college student, other living alternatives were neither acceptable nor affordable. I did pay and make retribution by making many conscientious efforts to counsel the younger smokejumpers about the evils of alcoholic consumption and the subsequent inappropriate behavior which often emerged as a direct consequence of drinking to the excess.

I must acknowledge that, after twenty years of personal senility, some of the facts in this story may have become foggy. I do remember that, in July of 1975, the men in the McCall Smokejumper Unit had gone over two weeks without a "fire jump" or any other type of fire fighting activity necessary to break the monotony of the Paddy Flat Syndrome!

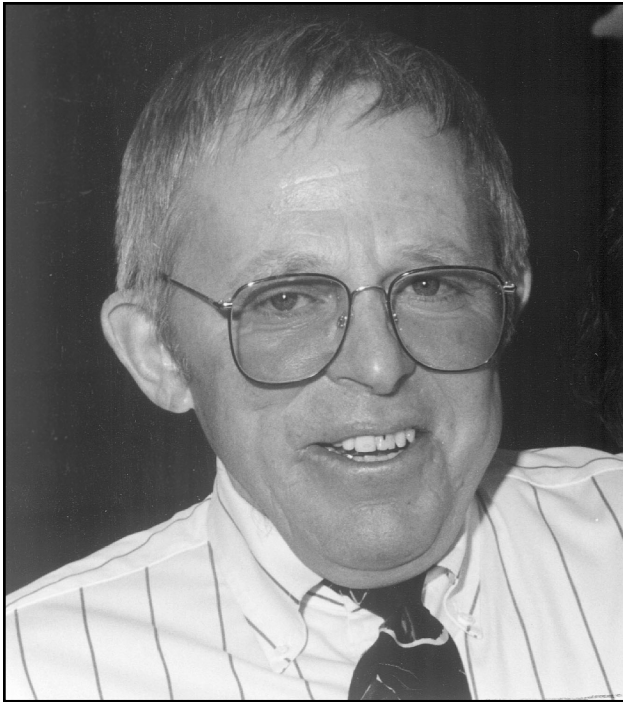
While discussing possible solutions based upon similar prior circumstances with other "senior" smokejumpers, it became immediately clear that history and tradition dictated the need to instigate a "barracks bash" to improve the morale of the troops. As planned, the entire episode began quite innocently enough with a few beers at several local watering holes in McCall during an early Wednesday evening.

However, the situation began to deteriorate around 11 o'clock and disintegrated steadily as both the evening progressed and consumption increased. Around midnight, anything remotely resembling common sense or discretionary skills was totally lost to the group when we purchased several cases of beer to go. We promptly headed for the barracks to rouse any of the "fools" who were in bed sleeping, or those who tried to ignore our invitation to celebrate and join in our group chants, prayers, and songs to the "fire god."

We were soliciting multiple amounts of lightning strikes be delivered immediately to the national forests of Region Four and the surrounding McCall vicinity as well.

We were to discover later during this particular week that our requests had already been successfully answered by the "fire deity" at 7 o'clock the same evening. There was a fire call from the Salmon National Forest for a DC-3 load of 12 jumpers to descend on the Salmon River Breaks at daylight the next morning.

Our leadership personnel chose not to notify those of us living in the single jumper barracks of this existing fire situation, so the ensuing party continued on without interruption into the wee hours. I was an acknowledged



*Neil Satterwhite (Courtesy of Neil Satterwhite)*

lightweight when it came to drinking booze, and I collapsed and/or passed out around 1:30 A.M. in my bunk bed or one close to it. The stereo continued to blare, and there accumulated approximately an inch of beer and/or water on the barracks floor from the spontaneous beer and water fights, which erupted as the party continued.

Some of the guys decided it would be an enjoyable “practical joke” to carry me, in my comatose condition (on my bed), down to the front steps of the jumper loft and to deposit me at that location for all to observe and harass when they reported to work at 8 o’clock that morning. I was informed later that several of my “friends” were able to pack me, my bed and all, to the steps of the loft where they left me and returned to the barracks bash.

Later on, a few of the guys had second thoughts, concerned that I might have difficulty explaining why my body and bed were located on the loft’s front steps, in full view of any public vehicle or the general public traveling past the jumper headquarters facility. They returned and carried me back up the hill to the jumper barracks, but found it impossible in their impaired condition to get me through the barracks doorway. Therefore, they left me on my bed, halfway into and halfway out of, the barracks entryway.

Unfortunately, this was the same location that Del Catlin (McCall ’47), foreman of the smokejumper unit, found me when he arrived at 4 A.M. to alert me to the fact that I was scheduled to be the squad leader and spotter in charge of dropping the DC-3 load of jumpers on the Salmon National Forest.

Del was eventually successful in waking me up, but I was still drunk and it was not a difficult decision on my part to cheerfully refuse to board an aircraft, let alone drop

a planeload of parachutists on a forest fire. This decision was not greatly appreciated by Catlin at the time. When he returned later that morning from the Salmon National Forest flight, he appeared to be in an agitated state of mind. A couple of the guys who had jumped were hurt (some were no doubt still drunk) when they exited the aircraft and hit the ground.

In the final analysis, however, everything turned out all right — the injured jumpers were retrieved safely, the DC-3 returned safely, and the forest fire was suppressed. When Del Catlin returned to McCall and consulted with the forest supervisor, I was suspended from work for one week without pay for not being mentally and physically prepared to do my duty as a squad leader. Although the “barracks bash” technique had once again proved its effectiveness in breaking the “jinx” on the lack of fire activity, it had also taken a negative toll on several of the McCall smokejumpers involved in the total fiasco.

The remainder of the summer of 1975 was to proceed in a more-subdued fashion for yours truly — with the possible exception of my 100th jump on a fire later that October on the Manti Lasal National Forest in Utah. A bottle of bourbon I was carrying in my cargo gear to celebrate the occasion broke and ran down the floor of the aircraft. Despite this, my belief in the value of extraneous and impulsive behavior to solve personal boredom lives on until this day, as does my love for the McCall smokejumpers and their many contributions to my life, humorous memories, and personal survival. 🍷

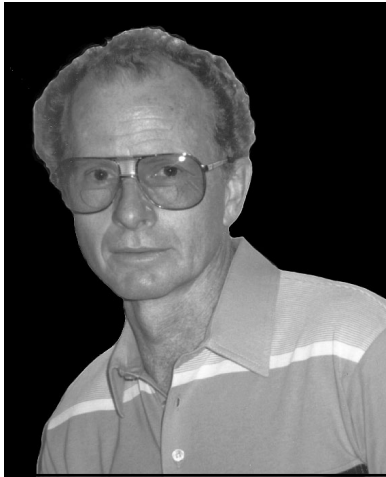
*Neil is a native of Idaho, graduating from Twin Falls High School in 1961 and attending Idaho State University following high school. He started his fire fighting career with a helitack crew on the Sawtooth National Forest in 1961.*

*After jumping at McCall in 1965 and 1966, Neil graduated from Idaho State with a degree in secondary education, and received a second lieutenant’s commission in the United States Army. He took training in artillery at Fort Sill, Okla., and Airborne and Ranger School in Fort Benning, Ga. After being assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, N.C., he volunteered for duty in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division in 1967. As an artillery forward observer with infantry company, Neil was wounded in action February of 1968 and medically evacuated to Madigan General Hospital, Fort Lewis, Wash.*

*After being medically retired from the Army with the rank of captain in April 1969, he went back to graduate school, receiving his master’s degree in counseling psychology/rehabilitation at the University of Arizona in 1973. Neil returned to smokejumping in 1969 after retiring from the military, and continued to jump while in graduate school. He has worked with the State of Idaho Vocational Rehabilitation Services, managed a Young Adult Conservation Corps YACC camp for the Forest Service on the Toiyabe National Forest, Reno, Nev., and managed a juvenile-detention facility six years in Carson City, Nev. Neil is currently retired from the Idaho State University College of Technology. He can be reached at GNSatterwhite@aol.com*



# Sounding Off from the Editor

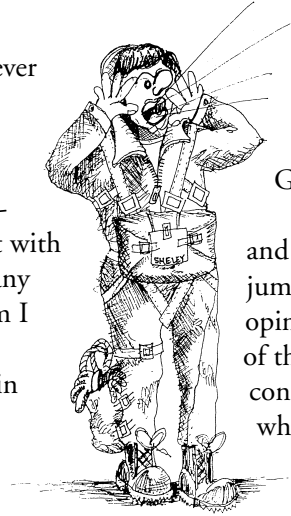


by **Chuck Sheley**  
(Cave Junction '59)  
MANAGING EDITOR

THE GOBI LIVED AGAIN for three days in June as over half of the living (for whom we had addresses) who ever jumped at Cave Junction attended only the second CJ reunion ever. The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was one of the earliest established bases starting in 1943 and it was always a small, close-knit group

with only 395 jumpers ever trained before the base closed in 1981.

As with most who attend any of the smoke-jumper reunions, we left with a high that lasted for many days. I saw friends whom I had not seen in over 40 years. There were those in attendance who were attending their first reunion, as they had not taken part in any of the national reunions. It was a great chance for me to put some faces to the names I type on a regular basis working with the NSA database. All of us from CJ owe a special thanks to **Gary Buck** ('66), **Wes Brown** ('66), **John Robison** ('65), **Gary Thornhill** ('68), **Garry Peters** ('63) and **Clancy Collins** (McCall '67) for their work on making this a great and successful event. We only hope that after



they recover from this one, we will have another gathering at the Gobi before long!

The success of the base and the national smoke-jumper reunions are, in my opinion, related to the success of the NSA which acts as a conduit among the jumpers who are spread across the U.S. Our database of names and addresses continues to grow. There is

a feeling similar to finding a long-lost family member when we obtain the address of someone who has been "missing" from our records. A jumper will log in through our Web site and become a member thereby adding another name to those "found."

Regardless of where you jumped, your support via membership in the NSA is important to keeping this organization functional. Remember that the USFS or BLM is not interested in smokejumper history and that the NSA is working in that area. If we do nothing other than act as a keeper of names/addresses and provide communication and information through the magazine, we have provided a valuable function. The average membership has risen to 4.3 years. Please remember that it takes a tremendous amount of volunteer time to handle memberships. Answer your renewal letters promptly and sign up for the longest time you can afford. Without you, we will cease to exist. ♣

## Special Offer!!

Reunion 2000 photographer **Douglas Beck** (CJ '70) turned over the remaining group photos to the NSA. These are color 8 x 10 and available for **\$5.00 S/H included**. We have the following photos:

- |                    |                          |                     |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Alaska Group    | 2. Boise Group           | 3. Idaho City Group |
| 4. Cave Jct. Group | 5. Cave Jct. Group /Gobi | 6. McCall Group     |
| 7. Missoula Group  | 8. North Cascades Group  | 9. Redding Group    |
| 10. Redmond Group  |                          |                     |

*Use the merchandise order form and indicate which photos you want for your collection.*

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# Jimmy

by John Culbertson (Fairbanks '69)

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*The Tevis Cup race is a 100-mile endurance race over the old pony express trail between Truckee and Auburn, CA. Jimmy finished the ride on his first try in the 1978 race. (Courtesy of Bonnie Rodgers)*

*This story first appeared in the Jan. 1998 issue of the Static Line. It was widely read and appreciated by the membership. John has consented to update the article. We want to print the original version that is found below in addition to John's update.*

**M**any jumpers and pilots will remember Jimmy B. Pearce from the old Alaska base on Airport Way, and later at the newer facilities at the "T" hanger at Ft. Wainwright. Ever a fixture in sneakers and Levis, cowboy shirts cut off at

the sleeve and a Marlborough hanging on his lip, Jimmy was the only jumper I ever saw who worked out skipping rope to the country ballads of Marty Robins. On anybody else it wouldn't have worked. The rhythm was all wrong, especially when viewed from the distance of the rock-charged workouts of the '90s. But for Jimmy it was just right. A white man with rhythm, he would pause for a smoke while changing tapes and exude confidence and satisfaction.

Watching from the corner of the weight room, where I attempted to squelch my never-ending supply



of urban nervousness with another set of pull-ups, Jimmy couldn't have been more different than me if he tried. An orphan from Kansas, Jimmy had been on his own for a long time. A former paratrooper, ranch hand, and USFS firefighter, he had lived on the Modoc Reservation in northeastern California for a while. He then drifted back to being a hired hand outside of Alturas near the reservation.

Jimmy's idea of a good deal was rolling down the road in his Mercury convertible to pester the waitress at the Beacon Coffee Shop in Alturas after the jump season was over in Alaska. He had money in his pocket, top down, country music blasting, hair slicked back with Vitalis and his street shoes on. I was freezing my butt off, as this event usually occurred in mid-December, but as Jimmy said, "When ya got a fine car like the Merc, ya gotta show it off."

I first met Jimmy in Seattle at the Sea-Tac Airport. The ultimate good deal of my nineteen-year-old life had just occurred in the form of a free ticket from Los Angeles to Alaska, courtesy of the BLM. Having some hours to kill while waiting for the flight, I inquired if there were any other people listed on BLM flight status, and if so, please page them. Drink in hand, Jimmy came drifting out of the lounge in the company of a pleasantly plump barmaid, asking the world in general, "Who could be wanting little ol' me?" I fessed up to paging him, and then he looked me up and down, asking "Are you a real cowboy?" I must have been quite a sight. Not knowing a thing about Alaska, other than watching *North to Alaska* three or four times, I had taken all my cues from John Wayne and the Owens Valley High Sierra films and so had fitted myself out in true dude ranch form. I admitted I didn't even know how to ride a horse. Then he asked, "Is that a gold pan strapped to your pack?" I told him, "Yes Sir." We quickly ascertained that we both were gold panning fanatics and had spent our days off from the Forest Service prospecting. In fact, he had a pan in his pack too.

Jimmy turned to the lady on his arm and said he needed to speak to me. Then in the most courteous and respectful manner told me to go into the men's room and take off those "silly-looking clothes." When I returned in running shoes and a ball cap, he handed me a drink and said, "Now that's you." I knew I had met a friend for life.

I told Jim I was nervous about this jumping business but he brushed it off, saying that he had done it in the Army and it wasn't "no big thing." He commented, "The way I see it is we do whatever they want us to do, then take out pans along on the jump.

When the work's all done there's gotta be some fooling around waiting to get out. We're going to find gold." Speaking of gold, Jimmy asked if I didn't think it was sorta funny that the BLM was paying for our flight to Alaska and would give us free room and board. They had even sent letters informing us that we would be paid overtime for the flight. He said, "Ya know the Forest Service is just so dang cheap I have a hard time believing the BLM would be so loose with their money. "We had no idea we were looking at the tip of the iceberg! Well, the years went by and Jimmy and I couldn't get enough of Alaska. We both loved to work and we worked our tails off for the BLM. I found in Jimmy someone more mature and settled than myself, but still blissfully lost in the conviction that hard work is a reward in itself and that life is a never ending adventure. We beat down flames with our spruce boughs till we were cold and shivering, and then rallied to do it again, as though the fire was a personal challenge and the reputation of the jumpers rested on our shoulders.

We filed on state land, and then found ourselves too busy to improve it. We panned for gold, never got rich; hoboed rides on the Alaska Railroad once looking black as the soot of the coal car we landed in and rode to Healy. We caught huge strings of grayling, got chased by bears, fell in love with native women, were befriended by old sourdoughs, watched native crews dance and sing in a language we could not understand, got drunk on cheap wine, sat around a thousand camp fires, howled at the moon and stared at the long sub-arctic twilight. During the winters, Jimmy taught me to ride a horse and wet me up for one of the most painful experiences of my life, a real cattle drive, with real cowboys.

Like his love of country ballads, Jimmy loved to listen to poetry and we were both fascinated with Robert Service. He laughed to the "Cremation of Sam McGee" and got sentimental with "The Men That Don't Fit In."

I bought a copy of *The Spell of The Yukon* and in the evenings would read out loud while Jimmy would doodle with his pen and paper, eventually creating a whole set of logs and stationery for the jumpers.

Along with some crazy ex-Missoula types, we bought a bright-red '55 Pontiac convertible for \$45. It had an Indian chief on the hood that lit up at night and burned two quarts of oil per tank of gas. There were so many holes in the floor that we left a trail of beer cans and Rocket brand reclaimed motor oil containers wherever we went.

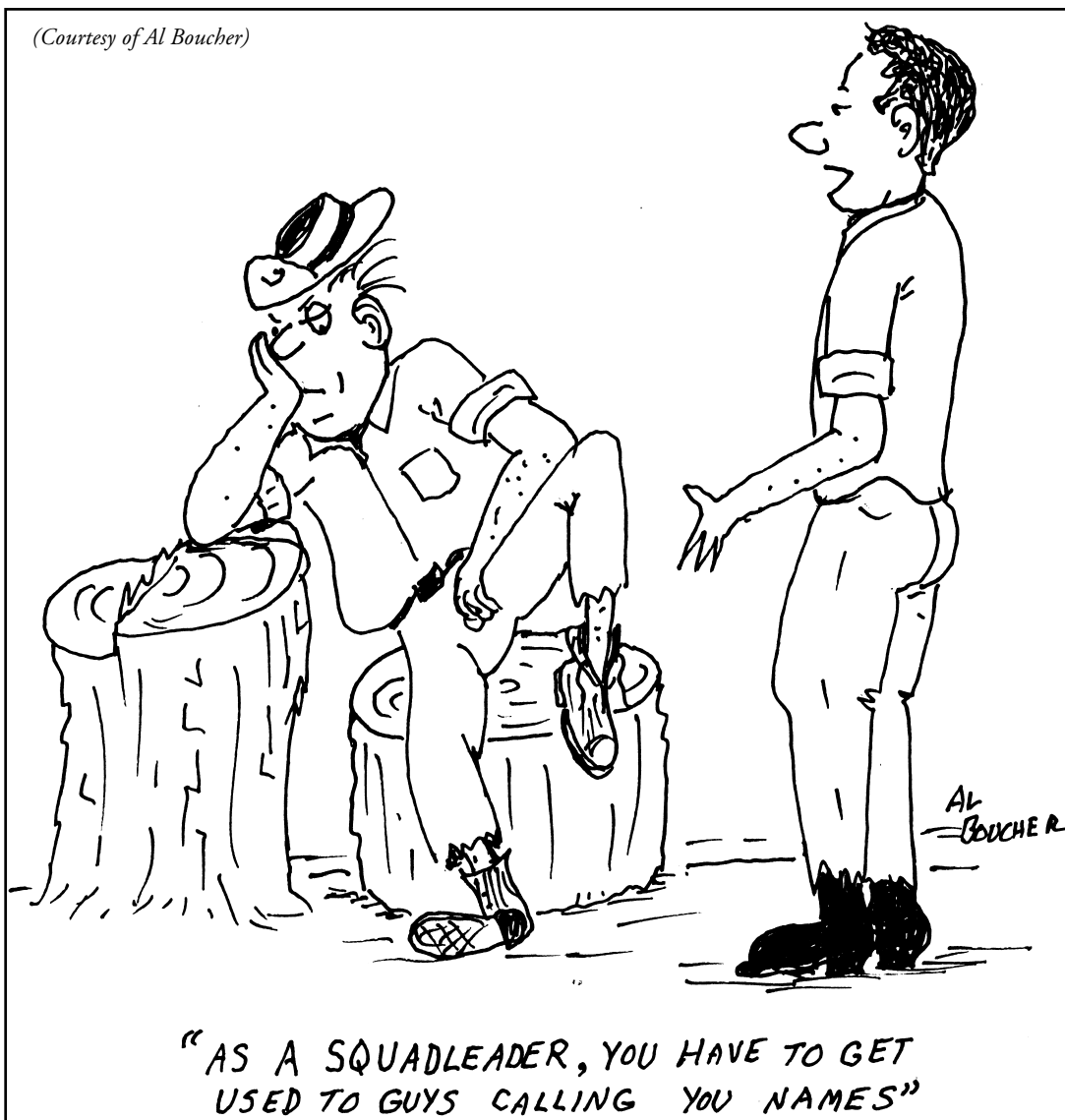
One fall Jimmy signed us on with **Bob Betts**

(Redding'66) on a search for a Sasquatch or "Bush Man" in Alaska. We never found the "Bush Man" but we thought we were on the best adventure in the world. In late fall he decided to ride a full-dress Harley "Hog" motorcycle south on the snow-covered Alcan Highway. I remember the few jumpers who were left at the loft standing in the snow giggling hilariously as Jimmy took off, his down-filled arctic work suit billowing in the wind, making him look like the Michelin Man. He fell eleven times between Big Delta and Tanacross. For his own safety he was finally arrested by a state trooper who befriended him and drove Jimmy down to Haines.

Jimmy was forever the one to turn the other cheek, looking out for others and lending a helping hand. I wasn't there to help Jimmy when the troubles of his world came down on him. In the winter of '78/79 he took his life on a ranch near Davis Creek at the foot of the Warner Mountains in northeastern California. As always when someone takes his life, there was a great deal of soul-searching and just plain sadness when Jimmy died.

It was several years before I could bring myself to go back to the Alturas country and spend some time in Jimmy's stomping grounds. The door, next to the bunkhouse he had turned into a home, swung in the wind and the ranch was closed and unworked. Red, the horse Jimmy taught me to ride, was no longer in the stable. I put a bouquet of sagebrush on his grave

(Courtesy of Al Boucher)



and lay down on it for many hours listening to the wind and watching the clouds pass.

I cried so hard I threw up and that evening walked the long ridge behind the bunkhouse. The next creek to the north I met two small boys, brothers age seven and ten, pushing old bikes up the hill for one last death-defying run before supper. They were in old torn clothes, cheap shoes and covered with dirt. The kind of hardscrabble kid Jimmy probably had been, except these kids had a little trailer house and a mom and dad who rented some land down the canyon.

The older boy said they had seen me walking for some time as they had been in the hills all afternoon. He said, "You're looking for Jimmy aren't you! You're one of the smokejumpers ... he was our friend too." The younger kid looked all around the hills, like a kid will do when he's working up to talk. He looked at the sagebrush, juniper and pinion in the cold purple

twilight and then said, "We still see him sometimes, he walks up here.

He's OK."

## Afterword 2002

When I finished writing the story about Jimmy Pearce, and particularly when I saw it published in the *Static Line*, I had a feeling that a phase of my life was over. I had carried Jimmy's memory around inside me for a long time and then one night decided I should write about him for the rest of the jumpers. I did so with a conviction that it was my job as his buddy, and then, with a little work of the pen, the job was done.

Jimmy's picture still sat on my desk, and when I looked at it I saw he was now much younger than me. My memories, the stories and the picture were from the past. They had a set quality, the hard stuff weeded out. The youthful story of buddies and adventure prevailed, a story I played over and over in my mind when I needed assurance from the downside of a hard day. I thought Jim lived in a private world of my memory. Boy was I wrong!

As soon as the story was out I started getting calls and letters. Jumper buddies, pilots, old friends from the past, jumpers I had never met, all with stories to tell. Then I started getting calls from people who weren't jumpers.

The picture I took of Jimmy on the Yukon River and the story that goes with it found its way on to the Internet and clicked with some people. I received calls from all types. Some grieving, some feeling inspired by the moment. Letters came and told of people's memories, of sadness, of some shared bond they seemed to feel through Jim. A radio station dedicated a night of old country western music to Jim's memory. A drunk called, sad and lonely in the night. An old man told of a best friend lost in World War II. All were courteous. All cared a lot.

In time I heard from folks in the Alturas country. Bill Lowes, who had loaned me "Red" to ride on the roundup and whose house was empty when I returned to Alturas, tracked me down and told some great cowboy tales. Bill, talked in third person to Jim about Red and my total lack of horsemanship. "Even that kid could ride him."

And then Jim's family contacted me. "Jim's family?" I kept saying to myself, Jimmy's an orphan, that's impossible, Jim doesn't have a family; it's just Jim, his friends and me. But I was wrong. Jim had a family. A wonderful bunch of people.

Jim had been orphaned in Kansas City, under tough circumstances. He and his sister Bonnie had then been separated at an orphanage where the boys and girls

were not allowed contact. Bonnie's story of Jim as a little boy hanging on the orphanage fence while looking at his sister in a separated playground brought back all those times Jim wanted someone's attention and would fret that he wasn't worthy of it. I felt hit in the head with a 2 x 4. The hard stuff started coming back.

But along with the hard came the good. Jim's family just loved the heck out of him. Their description of his antics as a caring brother, uncle and role model rang true to the Jim in my memory. Jim's horse, Juby, still has offspring with the family. Jim's Tevis Cup belt buckle resides with his nephew John Rodgers, who at fourteen, lived with Jim as he trained for the Tevis Cup.

I had to admit that there was a whole lot more going on in Jim's life than I had in my memory. Jimmy didn't tell me everything, or maybe I didn't listen so well. The picture on my desk didn't seem so much in the past anymore. I had to give up my little private memory of Jim and let in a whole bunch of other folks. Stories I thought had come to a halt kept right on running. After all, that was what Jimmy was all about; people. And when a character like Jim passes, he lives on in more than just one mind and with more than just one story to tell.

Jimmy wrote a letter to the smokejumpers in the last month of his life. When he wrote the letter, Jim was not having an easy time, the ranch had been sold, Jim lost his job as foreman and a close friend had died. Jim started drinking and smoking again; something he saw as a sign of weakness. On the bright side, Jim had earned his Tevis Cup belt buckle on the first try and was making strategy for a stronger finish next time. He missed the jumpers a great deal and looked forward to joining up with the crew again. Winter was coming on and he hopes to get through to spring. The letter was not finished and was never mailed.

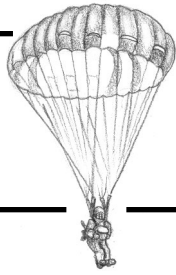
Jim's family asked me to get the letter to the crews Jim worked with. I know Jim worked with folks from many places. Jumpers, pilots, overhead, mechanics, cooks, the man that peeled potatoes, you name it. As Jimmy always said, the letter "Ain't no big thing." It contains no secrets or revelations. He meant it for the jumpers to read, it just got mailed twenty-three years late. And I do believe it helps to say good-bye. I will mail a copy to anyone who worked with Jim, he meant it for you. 📧

*Thanks to Bob Betts (Redding '64), Bob Quillin (Fairbanks '71), Titus Nelson (North Cascades '66), John Finnerty-Evergreen pilot, and Chuck Sheley (Cave Jct. '59), members of Jimmy's old crew who helped me sort things out.*

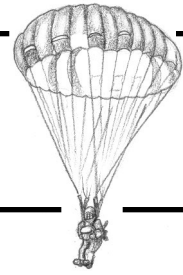
*John Culbertson lives in Carpinteria, Calif., with his wife Kathy and four children. He can be contacted at: 4516 La Tierra, Carpinteria, CA 93013 or [jkc@sbceo.org](mailto:jkc@sbceo.org)*

# Reunion at the Gobi, June 2002





# Odds and Ends



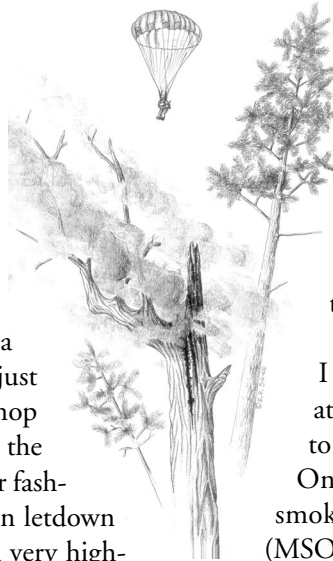
by **Chuck Sheley**

**Fred Donner** (Missoula '59) relates that at the close of the 1959 season, Missoula sent two crews of one squad leader and five jumpers each to the Cleveland National Forest for the autumn California fire season. One crew left in the **Ray Schenck's** (Missoula '56) cab-equipped pickup truck and **Billy Hester's** (Missoula '58) Renault. The Renault broke down just outside of Sacramento. With no repair shop available and the crew due near San Diego the next day, the fearless intrepid squad leader fashioned a tow-strap out of a 100-foot nylon letdown rope and tied the car to the pickup for a very high-speed tow. The rest of the crew were Jerry Daniels (died in Bangkok on April 29, 1982), Bill Murphy, Harvey Robe and Fred Donner.

**Eric (the Blak) Schoenfeld** (Cave Jct. '64) related more thought on women entering the world of smokejumping. "I'd rate including gals in smokejumping as one of the more successful 'social experiments.' It became common in Alaska to have a female jumper on one's fire. Sometimes our crew consisted of more than one gal. On one fire north of the Yukon River 17 of us were doing a leisurely 'chink & chatter' mop-up. No hurry-work slowly.

"Working alone I hear this intermittent 'chirping' sound upslope. Later I encounter **Kelly Esterbrook** (Redmond '86) and **Sandy Ahlstrom** (Fairbanks '90) who are obviously enjoying quite a bit of conversation while they diligently perform the day's task. After a sit-down for a snack break, we go our separate ways. Their 'chirping' continues at a considerable lower volume."

Heard from **Jim Dail** (Cave Jct. '55) after he saw **Warren Webb's** (Cave Jct. '54) name come up in the April 2002 issue. "At the end of the 1955 season, I returned to North Carolina State University to continue my studies in engineering. One night as I sat in my dorm room Warren walked by my opened door. What a surprise! It seems that he was on a tour of the U.S. He had driven a car from the West to the Northeast at which point his car broke-down. After disposing of it, he continued his journey via hitchhiking. I found him an empty bed



in another dorm room and we proceeded to find **Jim Ferrell** (CJ '54), also a student at NC State. The following morning, Jim and I returned to our classes and Warren left for points south. I would be delighted to hear 'the rest of the story.' Neither Jim Ferrell nor myself returned in '56 so we do not know the outcome."

By the time this issue comes out in October I hope all of the above were able to get together at the Gobi Reunion in Cave Junction in June to continue the story.

On May 1, 2002, several Salem, Oregon, area smokejumpers met at the home of **Ted Dethlefs** (MSO '47) for a couple of beers, laughs, and a chance to swap jump stories and other lies. In attendance in addition to Ted was **Fred Cooper** (NCSB '62 and NSA membership chairman) who helped instigate the get together and **Max Aiken** (MSO '47), **Mike Daly** (IDC '57), **Dick Kreitzberg** (MSO '52), **Craig Rockwell** (NCSB '68), **Bob Stutzman** (MYC '45), and **Greg West** (FBX '64).

Funniest story of the evening was that Ted and Max, both MSO '47 rookies, did not know each other until they met in church in Salem in 1998. A couple of years ago they cemented that newfound friendship by journeying down to Creswell, Oregon, and, after six hours of training, made not one but two static line jumps. Some of us just don't know when to quit! The group plans to reach out to jumpers from Portland, Corvallis and Albany and next meet for beers, burgers and a tour of the new Evergreen Aviation Museum in McMinnville, Oregon.

Speaking of the Evergreen Aviation Museum, got word from **Tracy Buckley** who handles the work at that facility: "I purchased several used display cases, ten feet high by four feet wide and deep earmarked for the smokejumper display. The siding will need to be replaced and roof/dust control panels manufactured. We received five new aircraft for display bringing our total to a whopping 40! A C-130, Grumman OV-1D Mohawk and a Bell UH-1H are among the five new additions. Our one-year anniversary is Thursday (May 2002) and we seen 220,000 visitors so far.

**Wild Bill Yensen** (McCall '53) writes to remind all of the

R-4 reunion in McCall next summer. He will also be throwing a party on July 11<sup>th</sup> (2003) to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his first fire jump. Lloyd Johnson spotted Bill out of the Travelair on the War Eagle fire.

**Don Marble** (Missoula '60) passes along that **Ben Speak Thunder** (Missoula '87) is the chairman of the Fort Belknap Indian Community located in Northern Montana.

Don also relates that **Bob Gorsuch** (Missoula'47) was the district ranger on the Bungalow Ranger District of the Clearwater N.F. from 1956 to 1963. The ranger's dwelling was made from logs that were sawed square and the outside of the building was covered with shingles. This building was disassembled and the logs numbered and stored at the Powell R.S. Later the National Forest Service Museum developed a site near the smokejumper center. They accepted the old Bungalow Ranger's dwelling as a gift and re-constructed it on the museum site and it will be the visitor information center.

In October 1999 the Idaho Oral History Center (IOHC) — a division of the Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS) — began interviewing four former smokejumpers. While the project initially focused on individuals who jumped from the McCall during the 1940s, it expanded to include smokejumpers of the 1950s to the 1990s. At the project's conclusion (March 2002), the IOHC recorded the stories, memories, and opinions of 30 different men and women who helped suppress blazes in the forests of not only Idaho but also forests throughout the U.S. West. They call this endeavor their "Smokejumping and Forest Fire Fighting Oral History Project." If you want information you can check the Web page at: <http://www2.state.id.us/ishs/smokejumper.html>.

If this Web page does not satisfy your interest about this project, please call or e-mail.

Researchers and interested individuals can contact the IOHC ([treeves@ishs.state.id.us](mailto:treeves@ishs.state.id.us) or (208) 334-3863) or the reference desk at the ISHS's Library and Archives ([sbarrett@ishs.state.id.us](mailto:sbarrett@ishs.state.id.us) or (208) 334-3356). You can also visit or write: 450 N. 4th St., Boise, ID 83702-6027.

**Jerry Dixon** (McCall '71) relates that he was recently talking with **Mark Black** (MSO '71) FMO of the Chugach Ranger District in Seward, AK. Mark said the USFS recently completed both an interpretive sign and bronze memorial to Mark Westover of Anchorage who was a firefighter lost in the line of duty 33 years ago in a helicopter crash while working the same fire as Jerry. In July 1984 Jerry hiked from Exit Glacier to Cooper Landing and came upon the inter-

pretive sign that is on the trail to Russian Lake. It talked about the fire but not about the firefighter who had died fighting the fire. Due to the efforts of many, Mark Westover, then an 18-year-old firefighter, will now be remembered with this memorial.

Many in the jumper community were saddened with the passing of **Delos Dutton** (Missoula '51). Got an interesting note from **Pat Scheid** (Missoula '58) concerning an experience he had with Dee while in Missoula. "I recently learned of Dee Dutton's death. Although I don't think he remembered me when I spoke with him at the Redding reunion, I told him how he made possible one of the most wonderful experiences of my life when he added me to the manifest of jumpers for the Hedgen Lake earthquake rescue in the Gallatin NF in Aug. 1959. That morning I was one of the many Missoula jumpers gathered outside the loft enviously watching the men selected for the rescue. As they were suiting up and boarding the DC-3, impulsively, I went into the office and quickly told the dispatcher — Dee Dutton — that I had experience in rock climbing and mountain rescue. Dee, who was obviously very busy, didn't say anything and I promptly rejoined my friends on the tarmac. Then I heard those beautiful words from Dee over the loud speaker 'Scheid, suit up'. Memories of that day will never fade and that is how I will always remember Dee Dutton."

Pat also called to my attention a mistake in crediting help for the article "They Jump for Your Life" from the April issue. Pat did the work in getting permission to publish from the original source. I credited **Pat Shearer** (Missoula '67) for the help. Don't know how I did that but on one of my 30 e-mail days I made the mistake. Apologies to both Pats.

I was talking to **Neil Shier** (CJ '46) at the Cave Junction reunion in June. Neil related that he really enjoyed the reading of John Maclean's *Fire On The Mountain*, which he obtained from the National Library of Books for the Blind. The reader was named Jim Johnston and did a great job. Neil also related how much he enjoyed the reunion seeing some old buddies he hadn't seen since 1946.

**Fred Cooper** (North Cascades '62) passed along this bit from the *Salem Statesman Journal*, July 9, 2002:

### Smokejumpers Help Put Out Wrong Fire

Baker City—Six smokejumpers parachuted to a fire sparked by lightning strikes and worked all day to control

the blaze five miles west of Anthony Lakes in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Unfortunately, the jumpers were supposed to land at a fire about 12 miles away, on the adjacent Umatilla National Forest.

“We didn’t order them, but we were glad to have them,” said Steve Snider, a fire management officer in the Wallowa-Whitman forest.

The Redmond Air Base, which sent the smokejumpers Sunday morning, had to order another crew for the Umatilla fire, said Dewey Warner, manager of the Smokejumper base. The mix-up apparently was caused by a transposed map coordinate, Warner said.

How about this for an interesting statistic? The current group of smokejumpers is 8.75% female. In the New York City Fire Department, females comprise 3/10 of 1% of the uniformed force. Associate **Chris Sorensen** came up with that surprising bit of info. The ratio on TV must be closer to 30%.

As I’m getting closer to wrapping up this issue, the “Touching All the Bases” column is the last one that is put together. With the severity of the fire season, I knew there would be problems getting information from the bases, as they would be real busy at this time in July. If that column is slim this issue, you know the reason.

**Rick Hudson** (Boise ’73) is my source of information for the McCall base reports. Earlier, **Andy Hayes** (Missoula ’79) had passed along a report from the Cibola detail in New Mexico, which was a new assignment as far as I knew.

Rick’s e-mail gave additional insight into this project:

“I just returned to McCall after a 52-day detail in Albuquerque similar to the Silver City detail. **Richard Nieto** (McCall ’87) is presently the Cibola N.F.

## 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.

fire officer and saw an opportunity for jumpers to assist fire resources in north central New Mexico with severity funding. A 30-jumper crew comprised of Missoula, McCall, Redding, Redmond, Grangeville, West Yellowstone and North Cascade smokejumpers jumped and pounded fires on the Cibola, Gila, Dixie, Carson, Santa Fe, and Apache-Sitgraves National Forests. The crew cohesion was outstanding. Once the region learned how quick, efficient and flexible jumpers can be as initial attack and overhead, we saw consistent activity in late May and throughout all of June. The approach of monsoon moisture and higher humidities in Region 3 and increased activity in Regions 1, 4 and 6 closed the base in Albuquerque July 10.”

Got a nice note from **DoraEllen Flint** who worked at the Missoula Base for many years. She is now retired in Rhinelander, WI, after 30 years with the Forest Service, the last 17 in fire control. It seems like she has joined the F.S. Retirees and they have a blank look on their faces when she mentions smokejumpers. The NSA video is on the way to Wisconsin with hope that DoraEllen will be able to educate some of these people about the profession.

As I was putting the final wraps on this issue, an article from the Reno newspaper was forwarded to me, which will be of interest to those who saw the recent airtanker tragedy on all the major new networks:

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© 2002 the *Reno Gazette-Journal*  
7/13/2002

The widow of an airtanker pilot killed in a crash when the wings broke off while fighting a wildfire in the Sierra last month is blasting the Forest Service for ignoring safety problems.

“These men are national treasures, but in the end they are treated like, and die like dogs,” said Laurie LaBare, whose husband, Craig LaBare, and two others died June 17 when the wings of their C-130A fell off near Walker, Calif.

“It’s absolutely ridiculous to put pressure on these men to fly these planes ... these pieces of junk,” she told KATU-TV in Portland, Ore.

The C-130A built by Lockheed in 1956 was among dozens of surplus military aircraft the Forest Service put

in the hands of private contractors in the 1980s as part of a controversial exchange program aimed at fortifying its firefighting fleet.

The plane that crashed in the Sierra, photographed by KOLO-TV of Reno as the wings snapped and it burst into flames, was owned by Hawkins & Powers Aviation of Greybull, Wyo.

LaBare, 36, was killed along with pilot Steve Wass, 42, Gardnerville, Nev., and flight engineer Michael Davis, Bakersfield, Calif. The contractor reported to the Federal Aviation Administration in 1998 that the plane had two, 1-inch cracks in the wings. But Gene Powers, company owner, said he replaced the wing in 1998 and was confident in the plane's airworthiness.

"We do a better job of maintenance than anybody in the business," Powers said. "My own grandson could have been flying that plane. No one knows ... not even the (federal investigators) why that plane crashed, and anything you hear at this point is pure conjecture."

But one of his former pilots disagrees. Greg Speck said he worked as a pilot for Hawkins and Powers until he quit three years ago because of concerns about maintenance. "I walked away, and it may be the reason I'm still alive," Speck told KATU-TV.

Laurie LaBare, who lives near Arcata, Calif., said she heard the crew speak often about problems with spare parts and repairs. "Very often they would be second guessed. Sometimes they'd be told they wouldn't get a repair until the thing stopped flying," she said.

A similar account was described in an internal Forest Service review in 1995 after a pair of fatal crashes in 1994. A memo obtained by the Associated Press at the time said maintenance was put off until the problems were so severe the aircraft couldn't

get off the ground. "In many cases the only time a mechanic is sent is when it is so bad the crew cannot fix it," a maintenance program manager for the Forest Service reported in a June 1995 memo to his boss in Redmond, Ore.

"Flight crews should not be doing most of the maintenance to the aircraft. When we allow this to happen the only things repaired are the items that are broken to the point the aircraft cannot fly," Richard R. Watkins wrote. Safety concerns were brought to the attention of then-agency chief Jack Ward Thomas in 1995 by Patrick J. Kelly, then the agency's regional aviation officer for Oregon and Washington.

"The air tanker program seems to be in a state of decline," Kelly wrote in the memo Aug. 22, 1995, citing Watkins' inspections. "The air tanker accidents and incidents with serious potential of the past several years only highlight the concern."

The team generally dismissed the inspectors' criticism as lacking specific evidence and documentation, but nonetheless issued a list of recommendations intended to improve safety of the air fleet.

Laurie LaBare said she's in financial trouble and likely to lose her home. She said the Forest Service has not offered any assistance. "They say these guys are heroes, but when it comes to paying survivor benefits? anything? they just cut you loose. The government says, 'so sorry, you're a contractor, no can do,'" she said.

Forest Service officials said any death benefits would be the responsibility of the contractor.

"We share the angst of these families," said Alice Forbes, acting assistant director for operations of the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise.

"But the bottom line is that the Forest Service contracts with these resources so we don't have to pay for



the health benefits or the death benefits. That's the contractor's responsibility."

After reading these comments I have questions of my own. If these planes are not maintained properly who better than the pilots should have the knowledge

of that situation? The way I see it, there is a choice a pilot takes when he assumes a job like this. One is not forced to fly the aircraft and work for any particular contractor. Asking the USFS to pay death benefits for contractors is way out of line. Anyone flying an airtanker should have his/her death benefits (and life insurance) figured out ahead of takeoff. 🧠

## Gobi to the FBI

by Jerry Howe (Cave Junction '65)

**T**his ain't no shit. Tex Welch (CJ-60) says that's how all jump stories start. In 1966 I left the Gobi after a volleyball collision with Dick Wessel (CJ-56), a cracked bone in my foot and my second draft notice in my pocket. By November, my foot was better and I enlisted in the U.S. Army Security Agency. It was a four-year enlistment, but the recruiter said 90 percent of ASA personnel are stationed overseas. I requested Vietnamese, Chinese or Russian language school. During basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, we were about to put on the gear for the pudgel sticks. I was really looking forward to this day and was planning a little combat with a couple troublemakers in my platoon when the first sergeant told me I had a phone call.

A major at U.S. Army Personnel asked me if I would like a direct commission as an MP, which I took and was then sent to the language school at Monterey, CA.

One day, a civilian administrator at the school stopped for a chat and asked me about where I was from and what I did before the Army. I told him I had been a jumper in Oregon. He asked if I would speak to his Boy Scout troop. I was going to CJ anyway and borrowed some gear and gave a demo to the Scouts. He was very please and wrote a letter to the commandant thanking me. The next thing I know I was called before a review board. One of the officers sitting in front was a Green Beret captain with a chest full of metals. "I see from your file you were a smokejumper. How did you like Missoula?"

I replied that I was a Gobi jumper, from the land of big trees. After he replied that he was a Missoula jumper, I told him I hoped he had the opportunity to jump out of the Gobi someday. He had a big smile on his face and I received my commission.



*Jerry Howe (Courtesy of Jerry Howe)*

It was a very interesting experience. I had only been in the Army for 10 months and now I was and officer without a clue. It was good experience and set the tone for my later FBI undercover career. After leaving the Army in September of 1969, I was on my way back to the Gobi when I got word that the FBI had an appointment date for me.

I am positive that being a jumper and giving that speech to the Boy Scouts opened the door to the direct commission and to being accepted by the FBI. Thank you, men of the Gobi. 🧠

# Horsing Around

by Larry Welch (Cave Junction '61)

**T**he crew numbered about twenty-five. They came from all walks of life and from all parts of the country. Most were college boys trying to work their way through school. Jumping was an excellent seasonal job, as the fire season usually started about the time college let out and ended in the fall about the time school started again.

On a good fire year (lots of fires), the crew might travel anywhere from Alaska to New Mexico, but most of our time was spent in the Northwest — Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Northern California.

Although the jumpers were all different from each other because of previous environments, nearly all shared a common trait. There seemed to be a certain quality in all the men who chose to do this kind of work. People who must place their lives in each other's hands develop some kind of bonding that would not happen under normal conditions. Most of the jumpers became very close friends due to this bonding and a common search for adventure.

Most of the fires the jumpers were called to fight were caused by lightning. To be close to the fires when they started, the jumpers would fly wherever lightning storms were forecast and stand by for a fire call.

This constant travel and never knowing where you would be the next day played havoc with any long-range plans, especially dating.

## Caves and Curfews

Twenty miles up a steep switchback mountain road from our home airstrip was a cave that was a tourist attraction. A number of young women worked in the cave's lodge, coffee shop, restaurant and bar — just about as many as there were jumpers on base. The girls were required to live in a dorm and were not allowed to leave the cave area. The jumpers kept the road hot between the two spots.

The land around the cave was so steep that most of the buildings, including the dorm, were built in a notch cut in the mountainside. The girls soon learned they could beat the 11 P.M. curfew by jumping from the steep mountainside, landing on the second story fire escape and crawling in a window.

You can't even sit on the side of a steep mountain without sliding downhill every time you move, but those cave girls could navigate those steep mountain trails at

full gallop in the dark of night and locate every flat rock in a mile area. The cave women were part guide, part mountain goat, mostly good-looking and all a godsend to some lonely boys who often went a week or two without seeing more than one other human being, much less a good-looking female.

On one visit to the cave, another jumper and I led a couple of cave girls to the parking lot via back mountain trails. Dorm curfew time came and went. My date and I said goodnight a few times, and she leaped gracefully from the mountainside onto the fire escape and disappeared through an open window. I made my way back just in time to see my comrade opening the car door to let his date out. They had both been partaking of the devil's brew and, unbeknownst to him, she had passed out. When the car door opened, she spilled fluidly onto the parking lot.

He would have been doing well to navigate that trail by himself, much less carrying one hundred thirty pounds of unconscious girl. Then he would have had to jump, carrying her, to the second floor fire escape.

He hadn't thought of all this when he decided to carry her back. He put both his hands under the small of her back and lifted. She was completely limp and folded backwards. The buttons on her blouse popped undone from stem to stern. This gal had super heavy-duty industrial hooters. I'd never seen so much white flesh in all my young life.

My friend knelt down beside her in the light of a full moon and clumsily buttoned each and every button. During this whole episode, my usually talkative friend could only say, "Goodness — goodness — goodness Gracious" and then repeat himself. After more than two hours, she finally came to — a great relief for two scared boys. We finally got her back into her dorm and got ourselves back to our job just in time to not be late.

## The "Pink Dink"

When the jumpers ended up in some distant airport and got stranded for the night, they would usually be on foot. In order to get a date on such short notice, the jumpers would walk to the local restaurants and other establishments until they found one with enough girls. Then one of the better-looking jumpers would be elected to get a date with the girl we judged to be most able to line the rest of the jumpers up with dates.



Larry Welch (NSA file)

There were a few airports that were used so much that they became satellite bases. Extra parachutes, fire packs, rations, etc. were stored at these bases. At one such base a few miles from the nearest town, some jumpers and pilots chipped in and bought an old ambulance and painted it pink using a brush and roller.

This transportation became known as the “Pink Dink.” The Pink Dink would carry everyone into town and return to the airstrip at bedtime with the jumpers who needed a good night’s sleep. The ones who didn’t would find someone willing to transport them back.

On one such occasion, a local girl became enamored with a jumper and decided to join him in his top bunk. Upon completing her top bunk romance, she shook the guy in the bottom bunk and asked for a light. What a lady! Upon discovering that the bottom bunk was occupied by an older guy — a pilot, I think — she apologized, but I was told he said, “Aw, that’s alright, little lady, I’m too seasick now to sleep anyway.”

### **The Gorilla and the Tank**

In some parts of the country, the vehicle you drive is known as your rig; in that part of the country, they referred to their transportation as their outfit.

Three rookie jumpers were on their first trip away from home base and ended up being the only ones who hadn’t jumped on a fire by nightfall. They landed at the satellite base with the Pink Dink.

They took the Pink Dink into town, stopped at a local bar-restaurant and got out to go eat. A car with three

girls pulled up, and one girl rolled down the window and said, “We can see by your outfit you are smoke-jumpers.” This term — outfit — was a new one to the rookies, and simultaneously three rookies bowed their heads to check their flies.

The rookies were thirsty, but not old enough to buy drinks at the bar. The girls explained that one of them was the daughter of the bar owner. They offered to take the rookies to another town to the big rodeo and promised to have them back before first light. The jumpers had to be airborne at first light but had no obligations till then, so what a deal!

Two of the girls were cute petite things, and the other wasn’t bad-looking or obese, but she was a large-frame heifer ready for market in more ways than one. The Tank (as she became known) said, “You can choose between the two smaller ones, but that Gorilla is mine.” No one argued; after all, it was her mom who owned the bar.

The Gorilla and one of the petite girls had been in steady eye contact since the car window was rolled down, but that date had to be postponed till next time, because by jumper code he could in no way be a wet blanket and spoil the other jumper’s evening. So it was, “Let’s rodeo!”

After the rodeo, they all came back to the bar that was closed by this hour, but the Tank had keys. Poor Gorilla had more than he cared to handle and pretended to pass out, but the Tank revived him with mouth-to-mouth, etc. Gorilla rolled over on his stomach, so his vital signs would be more difficult to check, and he feigned death. The Tank tried some weird sort of bump-and-grind CPR. Finally, the other two rookies came over and told her that poor Gorilla had expired. As I said, she was a persistent heifer. One of the jumpers asked if she was waiting for resurrection, but before she could answer, one of her friends said, “Not resurrection, just rigor mortis.”

Luckily, dawn was nigh, and the other two rookies dragged Gorilla to the Pink Dink, and they were off to the airstrip. By a half hour after sunup, all three jumpers were floating down in their parachutes to dig a fire line, put out a fire and get a good night’s sleep, deep in the woods far away from civilization.

### **Blind Date**

Over the fire season, the jumpers get to know each other pretty well. One of the jumpers decided to invite his friend, now known as Gorilla, home with him and line him up with one of his old high school friends.

When you ask someone how good-looking the prospective blind date is, and he answers something about what a good a cook she is, or that she plays the piano and makes her own clothes, you get an idea that she might not be a beauty queen. Even when Gorilla was told that

his date would be better looking than he was, it certainly didn't give him any comfort.

The two jumpers went to the store where the girls worked, and Gorilla was introduced to his blind date and the other jumper was introduced to her friend.

After they left the store, Gorilla wanted to know why in the world his friend didn't keep that fox for himself. Gorilla was warned to mind his manners because his high school friend was like a sister, and she wasn't one of those girls that we always discussed around the campfire.

When the two jumpers picked up their dates, Gorilla and his date were in the back seat and the other couple was in front. The conversation hadn't gone far until it became very noticeable that the chemistry developing wasn't with the person it was supposed to be. After fifteen minutes of travel, they stopped for gas. The girls went into the powder room, and the boys discussed the dilemma, but decided it would be best to ride it out, and no feelings would get hurt.

The girls came out of the powder room and jumped in the car, but not in the same seats in which they had arrived. I hate to admit it, but sometimes girls are smarter than boys! Not a word was said about the switch. Everyone really hit it off great. The jumper and his high school friend even got engaged.

Fire season was too soon over, and Gorilla returned to his college, but he and his date planned to see each other at their friends' wedding. This never happened. Gorilla's jumper friend got killed before the wedding. The next fire season, Gorilla jumped out of a different base, so Gorilla and the girl's paths have never crossed again. 🔦

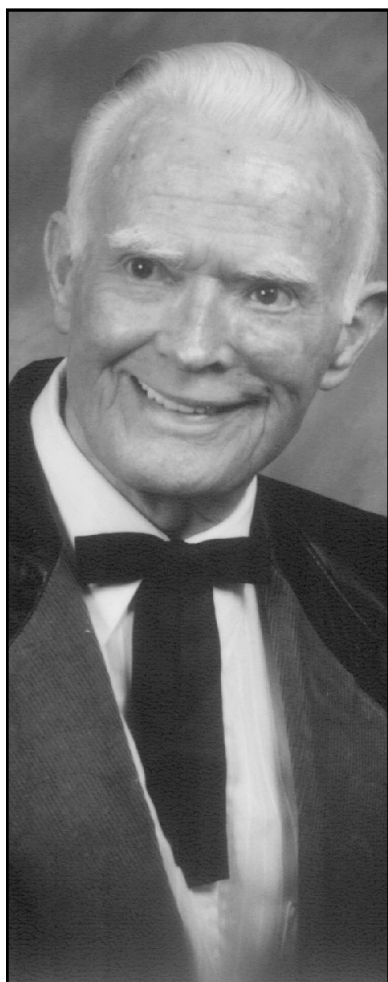
*Larry Welch jumped at Cave Junction in 1961 and '62 before transferring to Fairbanks where he jumped through 1968. After returning to CJ for a few more years, his career ended with a broken pelvis in the 1992 season at Redmond. Larry taught school for 34 years and was a rancher in Texas during that time.*

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## MEMBER PROFILE

### LARRY CASEY

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Larry Casey (Courtesy of Larry Casey)

*The following was printed in the Coos Bay, Oregon, The World, December 2001 and written by Josh Belzman.*

TENNIS BY MORNING, gardening by noon, singing by night and an occasional gallop through the skies. There isn't a dull moment in Larry Casey's day and he wouldn't have it any other way.

Raised in Montana during the Depression, Casey knows the value hard work. The 78-year-old former U.S. Army Air Corps gunnery instructor and lifelong forester still spreads his wings across a myriad of pursuits. "I've been flying light aircraft ever since the war," he said, explaining he is part owner of a Cessna 172 and continues to fly once or twice a month.

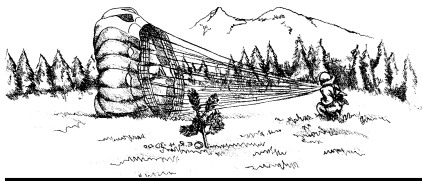
Casey's love affair with flying began when joined the Army Air Corps in 1942. He was the youngest of five brothers who were all in the service. "Our parents put up five stars in the window," recalls Casey. Throughout the war Larry

trained fighter pilots in the 50<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group. "I did flight training in the South where there were no mountains," he said. "When I returned to Montana, I decided I'd study forestry."

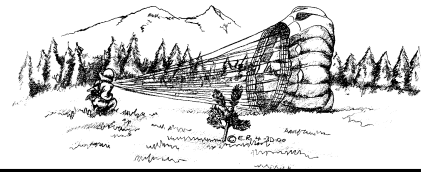
When he retired from the forestry business in 1982, Larry couldn't bring himself to slow down. "I get up at 4:30 to play tennis," he said. "The name of the game is to keep moving if you want to live to be old like me." Casey does volunteer landscaping for several local parks and gardens.

Larry also hones his singing voice singing with the Belles and Beaus at assisted living centers throughout the area. His favorite program is in March where "I can sing up a storm" for the St. Patrick's Day program. 🔦

*Larry jumped at Missoula in 1946 and graduated from the University of Montana School of Forestry in 1949. He can be reached at 2678 Stanton St., North Bend, OR 97459-3208*



# Checking the Canopy



by Thomas R. Decker  
(Idaho City '64)

## Talking Naked: More Than A Jump Story

THIS IS A STORY THAT I've been holding in for years. Although it's not necessarily a virgin story — i.e. an untold one — it's never been used in a sermon or even in an Army briefing. It goes something like this: "There I was, suited up for my first fire jump as a USFS Smokejumper, in a twin engine Beech, and the drop zone was the Paradise Valley Club, the famed nudist colony 35 miles from Boise."

Want to know more? Most people do! The questions generally begin like this: "Did you actually jump into a nudist colony?" The answer is yes; the date was June 1964, and it was on Minneha Creek in the Boise National Forest.

Then people ask, "Was there actually a fire?" Thinking literal fire here: the answer is yes; some kids from Boise sneaked in "to get a peek," and one of them dropped a cigarette in the pine duff, and voila: instant fire!

The third question that people ask — If they know I'm a minister — is, "Were you a minister at the time?" They ask politely, thinking

that a minister surely would not be caught dead jumping into — much less flying over — a nudist colony. And if the minister did, the minister surely wouldn't look!

The answer is this fire jump neither moved me in the direction of the ministry nor deterred me from it. It was but a fleeting moment in smokejumper time. To this day, I cannot explain it other than to say that the nudists were neither spectacular nor different. I remember thinking, "They look ... so ordinary." And yes, I looked!

The existential question of this jump story, the question that begs an answer, is, "Did you see any nudes?"

This is not unreasonable since it was a nudist colony! But the fact is that these weekend nudes must have had a streak of modesty because from the time the Forest Service Beech began to circle the fire, the nudists realized that there would soon be airborne firefighters descending from on high, so they began to don halter tops and cut offs so as not to be caught naked close to the fire. By the time we got there, most of them looked like weekend campers who forgot their sunscreen. No big deal.

**Pete Fallini**, one of Idaho City's rookie jumpers, was heard to say later in his flat, nasal, affectless voice, "Yaaas, I did see a couple of the luv-e-lies that didn't have their tops on. They were just standing there watching us ... and we were watching them ... all the while trying to dig this fire line." He'd wait a bit and then say, "By golly, it was hard, but we did it." One couldn't tell by the tone of voice whether he



was impressed or bored by this sighting of Idaho's only public nudes.

But he did enjoy stringing his questioners out. While they were all thinking, "Well, what did you really see?" He would leave his listeners hanging with the visions of smoking fire lines, bobbing hard hats, flailing

Pulaskis, and whining chain saws counterbalanced with bashful nudes, in various states of undress, ogling the sweaty firefighters from a respectful distance.

People ask, "What'd you do?" Their question expects that the jumpers did something risqué like ripping off fire shirts and Levis to fight fire in the buff! Boots and hardhat, not optional! But the truth is that we dug fire line, pounded out sparks, and put out the fire, just like we were trained to do. It was that simple.

I've had lots of experience telling this story, usually to small groups when some paratrooper brags about being airborne. I let 'em talk, and then I spring it: "I'll go you one better." And then I load them into the Beech to fly to Minneha Creek on that hot Sunday afternoon with the rendezvous with nudist destiny, knowing that their questions will come as surely as sparks fly upward.

The point is that our lives are made up of stories. Mostly they're family stories, stories of growing up and getting married and having kids and growing old. Woven into our stories is where we worked, or whom we were with at the time, or what happened, but always it's about relationships, even when it touches

on the immense tragedies of life. Whether these stories are tragedies or comedies depends on how we tell the story. It's important to remember that the outcome depends a lot on how the story is told. In the meantime, it takes time to develop the story. You listen to the nuances and find its rhythms and shapes, so every once in a while, you bring the story out, dust it off, and tell it again.

After you've lived with the story for a while — maybe even for years — it all begins to make sense and you know where it fits into the scheme of your life. Only then does it become your story. After a while it's not the event any more that's important, but it's the story

itself. It's what it does for people. Telling the story somehow makes us more human, more believable, and more apt to be taken seriously when that time comes for us, as it surely will.

The fire jump story is a story about young men coming of age, but even if your story is a loveless, sad tragedy, we still need to tell it because it's ours. Garrison Keller once said something like, "God doesn't write tragedies; he only writes comedy." And then he pauses for effect and says, "... but he gets bad actors." It's a comedy not because it's funny, but because it's a part of the love story that God writes with creation, with each one of us, and we're in it.

Along the way, we live these stories, and we fall in love with each other, and eventually we may even fall in love with God. The great story, the great mystery is that He's been in love with us all along, and that too is a part of our story. But for now all we hear is some old guy saying, "Let me tell you about the time that I parachuted into a nudist colony," and deep down we suspect that the real story is much, much bigger. 🌲

*Colonel Tom Decker jumped Smokey's Rock Pile in Idaho City in '64 and '65. He is chief of the Department of Ministry and Pastoral Care at Madigan Army Medical Center at Fort Lewis, Wash. He can be reached at: [deckertr@earthlink.net](mailto:deckertr@earthlink.net)*

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

### JAMES E. RATHBUN (McCALL '58)

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by Ted Burgon

WHERE MANY YOUNG MEN began their smokejumping after high school and as college students, Jim first spent four years in the U.S. Air Force from 1953 to 1957. He attended old Boise Junior College, now Boise State University, for two years. He later received his B.S. in forest management from the University of Idaho, graduating in 1962.

In 1958 he became a rookie at McCall and jumped until the end of the 1961 season.

Jim began his career in 1962, as a permanent Forest Service employee on the Hornet Ranger District, Payette National Forest (Idaho). In 1966 he was appointed district ranger on the Enterprise Ranger District, Dixie National Forest (Utah). In 1968 he was reassigned as DFR on the Powell Ranger District (Utah). He was reassigned as DFR on the Emmett Ranger District on the Boise National Forest in 1971. In 1977 he accepted the position of regional planner for the Southwestern Region (New Mexico). From 1981 he was appointed as the deputy forest supervisor on the Klamath National Forest (California). His final position before retirement in 1989, was forest supervisor on the Kootenai out of Libby, Montana. In 1990 he retired to Libby so he could fish, hunt and do some consulting.

Jim wrote that he does some writing mainly about "the failure of the Forest Service and other agencies not complying with the law."

Jim attended high school in Waterloo, Iowa. Ken Salyer (McCall '54) was one of his best friends who began jumping out of McCall while Jim was still in the Air Force. They continued the friendship via the mails. When his enlistment was up in 1957 he headed to Alaska via Boise. He stopped to see Ken and remained in the area. That summer he was able to

get on a trail crew out of the McCall District. The following summer he married Julie Phillips, the sister of **Bud Phillips** (McCall '55) and went on the McCall preseason project. (Ken was later killed in the crash of a Twin Beech near Norton Creek, in the Idaho Primitive Area in 1965, while dropping cargo to four jumpers he had just spotted. Jim commented that Ken was a great guy and a great jumper.)

He and Julie raised five children and have five grandchildren. As with most jumpers and other forest service personnel he commented, "Julie put up with a lot as we traipsed around the West with the Forest Service ... and still does, I'm told.

"One thing that I remember very well about the McCall jumper organization is that they instilled a great work ethic in the men that worked there. One thing that you just didn't want to happen was to have someone outwork you on a fire or project. ... It is one of those things that serve you well throughout life. I wish all young people could have the experience."

Jim has held a red card in every line position from squad boss to fire boss II, under the old large fire organization. The first week he went to work, in 1957, he spent three days learning to fight fire. "I learned that night was the best time to hit it and dirt is what you used. ... I'm not so sure that big engines, helicopters and slurry are the most effective means to fight fire."

Jim concluded with, "Those were truly some great days. The experiences have lasted me a lifetime. That is why I felt it was well worth the life membership subscription." He then added, "Actually, my wife insisted that I get the life membership. She enjoyed our years with the jumpers and the Forest Service as much as I did." 🌲

# Fight Fire or Fish

by Delos Dutton (Missoula '51)

**W**hile enjoying retirement from my U.S. Forest Service career in fire management and smokejumping, I try to catch a few fish. On June 10, 1992, I took a trip to Lake Billy Chinook with high expectations of catching a lot of kokanee trout, but this trip did not go as planned.

When I arrived at the Perry South Creek campground, I was surprised to see people leaving in a hurry. As I parked my truck and boat trailer, I was met by an excited campground official. He informed me that the forest was on fire and that I would have to leave. I asked, "Where is the fire?" He pointed up the creek to a small ridge, and there I saw a large column of smoke. When I took a shovel out of the truck, he said, "I can't let you go up there." I replied, "You have a good day, too," and headed for the fire.

The fire was narrow but very long and was rapidly moving up the slope. It was burning in patches of mid-size fir trees and a small clearing covered with dry grass. I had to walk very fast to catch up to the leading edge of the fire, which would soon be spreading to another patch of trees. There was good dirt there and I used my shovel to take out the leading edge of the fire and then moved from one side to the other to stop the fire from going any farther up the hill. I realized that I would not be able to do this for very long and would have to choose one side to work on, but now I had a good black area as an escape route.

Help came from an unexpected source. There was a twin-engine airplane circling overhead with an open door. I had high hopes for help but that was lost as I saw the streamers drift along way up the ridge. The fire situation was getting very bad, and with the steep slope, heavy patches of fuel, and wind conditions this fire would soon grow very large.

I watched the airplane as it made the next pass and was very pleased to see two men make their jumps. Soon the plane had dropped 12 men and that gave us a fair chance of controlling this fire.

What a great surprise! As I continued my attack on the fire, I heard, "Hey, Dutton, what are you doing on my fire?" Standing there was **Ron Rucker** (Redmond '76). I replied, "I was here first, and there is enough fire for the both of us. You can take one side and I will take the other."

Ron said, "But I have 11 men with me." We shook

hands, and he told me he had his crew prepared to go to work at the base of the fire. Ron is a smokejumper foreman at the Redmond Air Center, and we had met several times as I had inspected their base while I was an equipment specialist in the Regional Office.

Another aircraft was circling above the fire and Ron stated that the DC-6 had a load of retardant for this fire. In a few minutes it made its drops, and we were covered with the retardant. This cooled the fire down. Ron said that he had one of my smokejumpers from Cave Junction on his crew. It was **Willie Lowden** (North Cascades '72).

Ron said, "Come on down, and I will introduce you to the men." The smokejumpers gave me a good welcoming and went back to work. They had a lot of fire line to construct and they would have to remove the lower limbs from the trees close to the fire line so the fire could not get up in the crown area. There would also be a lot of mop up required.

What a great fire fighting team. They were very professional in the way they attacked the fire. They had two chainsaws and all of the crew worked as a team. They were putting out more than 100 percent effort to build their fire line. It was very obvious that the fire would soon be history. The men all had a lot of smokejumper experience except for **Louis Morrison** (Redmond '91). It was his first fire jump and the rest of the crew was making him do all the hard work!



*Delos and Marlene Dutton, August 2001 (Courtesy Dee Dutton)*

(Actually that was not true, the entire crew was working very hard.)

I decided I had enough excitement for the day and proceeded down the hill to the road and met the engine crew with their 300-gallon tanker. The man in charge greeted me in a good natured way asking me, "Where is your hard hat and why don't you have on a long-sleeve shirt and how about those tennis shoes?"

I explained I was just a volunteer firefighter, and he pulled out a pink fire time-slip so I could get paid for my work. I told him to forget it, this fire was on me.

When I returned home with my clothing all covered with fire retardant, ashes and the smell of smoke, my wife, Marlene, wanted to know where in the hell I had been.

"I thought you were going fishing?" she said and asked, "What is that tune you are humming? It sounds like, 'What a Wonderful World.'"

This fire was on the Sisters Ranger District of the Deschutes National Forest and was on Green Ridge. The men had jumped from aircraft 173Z, a C-23A Short Sherpa, piloted by **John Litton**. John is now working on the Angles National Forest in Lancaster, Calif., and is Aviation Unit manager at Fox Field. He is an instructor on lead plane operation in the Beech Baron aircraft for retardant drops and is still current in the Sherpa aircraft.

The spotter was **Mark Gibbons** (Redmond '87). This summer Mark was recovering from an old injury but doing work as a spotter.

The assistant spotter was **Mike Brick** (Redmond '76), who was also the parachute loft foreman.

**Ron Rucker** was the smokejumper in charge. He is now acting operation foreman. His crewmembers were:

- **William Shawn Edmunds** (North Cascades '90). Bill now works for Lane County on road maintenance and likes to hunt and fish.

- **Phil Gerhardson** (Redmond '88). Phil became a full-time house inspector in Boise after 10 seasons of jumping

- **Louis Morrison** (Redmond '91). Louis has moved on into the real world in search of work.

- **William Lowden** (North Cascades '72). Willie has been logging since he left the jumpers, but this year he is back in the fire management program. He works for Fire Trax with **Bob Wilken** (Cave Jct. '78) out of Sheridan, Wyo. They spent May and June in the Southeast doing prescribed burns and wildfire suppression in Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. In Mississippi they worked with **Ray Farinetti** (Cave Jct. '64), burning for the Nature Conservancy and for the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service.

- **Daren Halladey** (Redmond '91). Daren works for the Oak Ridge Ranger District on the Willamette National Forest. In addition to his forestry work, he also has the opportunity to fight forest fires. He enjoys hunting and fishing.

- **Pat Condon** (Redmond '91). Pat left jumping to play professional basketball in Europe for a couple seasons. He is currently head men's basketball coach at the College of the Siskiyous in Weed, Calif.

- **Andy Byerly** (Redding '92). Andy moved to Utah and returned to wilderness work.

- **Bill Doyle** (Redmond '91). Bill returned to a project he was working on in the Antarctic.

- **Tom Fitzpatrick** (Redmond '86). Tom became the training operation foreman and now he has accepted a job as fire management officer on the Sister Ranger District.

- **Jim Hansen** (Redding '87) Jim jumps summers and is going to school after the fire season.

- **John Hawkins** (Redmond '87). John works half a year with the jumpers and the other half as a training officer.

During the 2000 fire season, I visited with Pat Kelley at a U.S. Forest Service 30-year club meeting. He was Redmond Air Center manager at the time of this fire. He said that when Ron Rucker returned from the fire, he told him, "You will never guess who I saw on the Green Ridge fire! It was Dee Dutton and he still throws a mean shovel of dirt."

(The jump records for this crew were taken from *Twentieth Century Smokejumpers 1940 to 1999* and updated by **Mark Corbet** (LaGrande '74). The following people helped supply data for this story: Mark Corbet and Mark Gibbons at the Redmond Air Center plus **Grant Beebe** (NIFC '90) and **Mike Apicello** (Cave Jct. '78), the public affairs officer at NIFC. 🔦

*Dee jumped Missoula 1951 and 1952 and New Mexico 1953. He then went into the U.S. Air Force from July 1953 to July 1955. He returned to Missoula where he continued jumping until 1966. Dee became project leader for the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in 1966 and served through June of 1975. He then became fire equipment specialist in the R-6 office. He served on details to Washington Office on a project to standardize fire suppression equipment servicewide. Since this story was submitted to the magazine, Dee passed away on Saturday, May 11, 2002, from a massive brain bleed. He went out doing what he liked to do as he was fishing and had just caught an 18 pounder when he collapsed.*



# Smokejumpers and the CIA

A bibliography by Fred Donner (Missoula '59)

When I first came to Missoula, I heard the word “Saipan” spoken in hushed tones. I also heard about something that sounded phonetically like “see aye ay.” Myself a hick from the sticks, I didn’t know anything about either “Saipan” or “see aye ay,” but I did know enough to keep my mouth shut and listen. I soon figured out that someday smokejumpers and the CIA would be written about, but I had no idea it would take almost 40 years for the stories to emerge.

A small number of smokejumpers who became CIA staffers or contractors going back as far as the late 1940s have been named in these pages already and the subject was touched upon in the smokejumper history video. *Raiders of the China Coast* by Frank Holober (an associate member) was mentioned in the July 2000 issue, which named half a dozen smokejumpers and quoted Holober’s description of one. The book details CIA operations from Taiwan against Mainland China during the Korean War.

The book *Project Coldfeet: Secret Mission to a Soviet Ice Station*, by William M. Leary and Leonard A. LeSchack, was mentioned in a lengthy article in the April 1997 issue. It is about two Fulton Skyhook operations in the Arctic that involved a number of jumpers operating out of Marana, Arizona. The actual book clearly identifies Coldfeet as a CIA operation, a fact omitted in the article. Dr. Leary, a history professor, has written extensively on CIA air operations, particularly in East Asia, and received CIA awards in the process.

Dr. Leary wrote an article in the December 1997/January 1998 issue of *Air and Space Magazine - Smithsonian* entitled “Secret Mission to Tibet.” Jumpers are named and quoted. An excellent book on CIA operations in Tibet is *Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for*

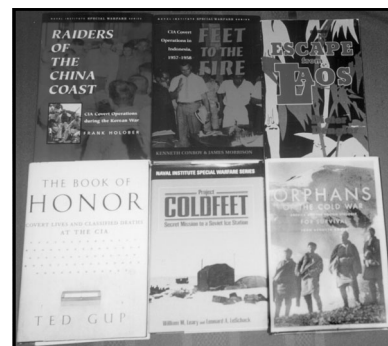
*Survival* by John Kenneth Knaus. No jumpers are named, but the author does describe the “Missoula Mafia” who alternated “between their regular job of putting out fires and keeping them alive in Tibet.”

Eugene DeBruin (MSO '59) was shot down in an Air America C-46 over Laos on September 5, 1963. He, one Chinese and three Thai survivors of the crash (two pilots were killed) became prisoners of the Pathet Lao. They were joined in captivity by a Navy pilot, Dieter Dengler, and an Air Force pilot, Duane Martin. In the summer of 1966, the seven of them made the largest POW breakout of the Vietnam-Laos War. Martin was later killed before rescue and one of the Thais was recaptured and later freed from another camp. Dengler was eventually picked up by a friendly helicopter. Gene, the Chinese and two Thais are still MIA’s.

Gene has been written about several times in this magazine, most recently in a July 2001 article describing Dieter Dengler’s funeral at Arlington National Cemetery on March 16, 2001, but the only known book about the escape has not been mentioned. Dengler’s autobiography, *Escape From Laos*, published in 1979, is hard to find but worth the effort.

A more recent book about Laos is also hard to find. *Harvesting Pa Chay’s Wheat: The Hmong and America’s Secret War in Laos*, by Keith Quincy, names various jumpers involved and will also tell you how the first Hmong refugees came to the Bitterroot Valley south of Missoula. *Spies and Commandos: How America Lost the Secret War in North Vietnam*, by Kenneth Conboy and Dale Andrade, directly quotes one of the same Laos jumpers who was involved in North Vietnam operations and also gives details on “Saipan.”

Lengthy details on the CIA training base on the island just north of



Guam that was closed by President Kennedy in 1962 can be found in *The Search for Amelia Earhart* by Fred Goerner, although no jumpers are mentioned.

Kenneth Conboy, with co-author James Morrison, also wrote *Feet To The Fire: CIA Covert Operations in Indonesia, 1957-1958*. The title essentially tells the story. Needless to say, smokejumpers were there.

*The Book of Honor: Covert Lives and Classified Deaths at the CIA*, by Ted Gup, is a distinctly unauthorized book, but is nevertheless now in the public domain. It is about the 70-some stars on the CIA Memorial Wall in the Agency headquarters lobby. About half are named in the nearby memorial book and about half repose in anonymity. Gup identifies and writes about most of the unnamed stars (and a few of the named), for better or for worse. Relative to the death of one individual, he names a number of jumpers and describes Marana operations in some detail.

(This article was cleared by the CIA Publication Review Board as containing no currently classified information.) 🗿

*Fred Donner, a retired Defense Intelligence Agency officer who worked Southeast Asia, used his first Social Security check earlier this year to become a NSA life member. He can be reached at fredandbev@earthlink.net.*

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

# MURRY TAYLOR

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MURRY'S FIRE FIGHTING CAREER began in the summer of 1959 on the Sierra N.F. in California. He rookied at Redding in 1965 with Floyd Whitaker, Charlie Caldwell and Rich Englefield being a couple of his early-day rookie bro's.

Starting in 1966 he worked six years full-time as a timber harvest management officer on the Klamath N.F. and as a recreation and lands officer in Southern California. During his tenure in Southern California he authored the San Jacinto Wilderness Management Plan — the first in the nation to place limits on visitor numbers and group sizes.

In 1972 Murry quit the Forest Service for what initially was intended to be a two-year leave "to get smokejumping out of his system" He never went back to the Forest Service. He found in the Alaska smokejumpers a group and work environment rich and satisfying beyond all expectations. For the next six years, Murry jumped out of Alaska making trips to all the lower 48 bases except for Silver City and West Yellowstone.

From 1979 to 1986 he dropped out of smokejumping and worked his land in Northern California with draft horses while making public testimony before the county Board of Supervisors regarding soil erosion and the degradation of fisheries habitat



*Murry Taylor (Courtesy of Murry Taylor)*

imposed by industrial logging practices. It was during that time that Murry helped establish the Scott Valley Eleven, a local land use planning group. After two years of intensive coordination between local citizenry, the U.S. Forest Service, the California Department of Fish and Game and other agencies, they developed and helped pass into law the Scott Valley Area Plan. It was the first specific area management plan to be adopted by the state of California.

In 1987, at age 46, Murry returned to the jumpers working at Boise and then returning to Alaska where he finished out his career. That career ended with 355 total jumps of which 205 were fire jumps. He is also proud of the fact that in the 14 years that he jumped after returning at age 46, he always passed the high standard fitness test the first time each season. He figures that he ran somewhere around 10,000 miles in his years of training as a jumper.

Murry says that he was never seriously injured during his 27 years but did require knee surgery in 1996. He jumped fires in eight of the western states, Alaska and Canada. A major portion of his life has been spent working with and coming to know the key players at every smokejumper base in the country. In addition to knowing them as smokejumpers, he feels that even more, he is privileged to know them as people struggling with broken hearts, broken bodies, failed marriages and the death of friends and comrades.

For the past twenty-seven years Murry has spent the winters living in the mountains of Northern California at the edge of the Marble Mountain Wilderness. There he has built a log home on forty acres of timber and meadows. From October to April he spends time writing, applying labor-intensive forest management to his land, participating in local conservation issues and making an occasional sojourn to Mexico.

Murry's parting farewell to smokejumping was the publication of *Jumping Fire*. Its reception among smokejumpers, firefighters and the general public has been very satisfying. As mentioned in the dedication, it was written "for the smokejumpers." It is a token of thanks for all that the experience has done for him. The story of smokejumping is a story of extraordinary human endeavor; a story that strongly embraces the tenet that there is virtue in giving your best in life, keeping the faith, and never giving up. That is a story that Murry has lived and knows well. 🙏



# Touching All Bases



## Alaska

by Mike McMillan (Fairbanks '96)

Greetings from Alaska. Five rookies joined the crew this spring, bringing our head count to 63. They were greeted with six inches of new snow in 10-degree temps and a band of six eager trainers led by **Doug Carroll** (Fairbanks '94). Their month-long training ended on May 22 when they jumped their first fire. That fire went big and is still burning nicely two months later. The Alaska Rookie Class of 2002 is: **Jeff Cramer**, 22, Sawtooth Hot Shots; (Jeff can now keep an eye on his big brother **Bill Cramer** (Boise '90), **Pete Hearn**, 32, Vale Hot Shots; **Jeff Mann**, 30, Silver State Hot Shots; **Paul McGuire**, 26, Arrowhead Hot Shots; **Ryan Ringe**, 29, (has size 15 feet and you should see his boot). Ringe worked with the Idaho City and the Entiat Hot Shots.

The rookies did a great job of cooking two 100-lb. pigs at the Pig Party, renting a professional barbeque pit the size of a Volkswagen amid cries of foul play from the snookie class. The snookies, still reeling from the shame of serving up a raw pig in 2001, hope to enact a "natural means only" policy for future pig roasts. The crew has not yet reached a consensus, still debating the difference between guidelines and policies.

Reorganization and upgrades at the base are as follows: **Dalan Romero** (Fairbanks '83) is still base manager. **Bert Mitman** (Redmond '70) is the deputy branch chief. **Mel Tenneson** (Fairbanks '86) is the new crew supervisor, replacing **Jim Raudenbush**, (Fairbanks '81) now in Boise. **Doug Carroll** is the training coordinator. Squad leaders are **Mike Bradley** (Fairbanks '95), **Dave Hade** (McCall '77), **John Lyons** (Fairbanks '90), **Marty Meierotto** (Fairbanks '94), and **Jay Wattenbarger** (Fairbanks '92).

**Ty Humphrey** (Fairbanks '98) is a fire-training specialist. **Dave Bloemker** (Fairbanks '97) is a parachute-training specialist. **Paul Lenmark** (Fairbanks '96) is the new EMT supervisor. He replaces **Fred Hernandez** (Redding '88), now on a detail as military zone AFMO. **Togie Wiehl** (Fairbanks '91) is the loft coordinator. **Ivan Smith** (Missoula '95) is a loft specialist. **Rick Thompson** (Fairbanks '89) is the paracargo coordinator. **Jim Lafferty** (Idaho City '63) joins the Alaska crew, flying jumpers to fires in the Casa.



Our first fire jumped this year was on Kodiak Island, May 5th, thanks to a bear hunter burning a Pop Tart box. An eight-man load jumped a windy inlet, swatted 1000 acres of grass in a shift, then waded to a floatplane for demob.

A three-week standby in McGrath had the bros doing several "stupid flips" for comic relief.

The last one to flip a tails had to do the following: Spend mealtimes in the shed, firebox food only for a day (Meierotto). Wear 2' x 8' boards on both feet, all day. (**Matt Allen** Fairbanks '94). Remain on a cot all day (Matt Allen). Stay underneath a bridge all day. **Jon Kawczynski** (Fairbanks '96) was the troll until the load was quickly released.

On Independence Day the next load in town jumped McGrath's softball field after the holiday parade. Their red, white and blue canopies floating overhead added a colorful touch to the celebration.

By mid-July, most jumpers had about five fire jumps in Alaska, having shared our June bounty with several booster loads of USFS and Boise jumpers. Fires near the Chena and Tolovana Hot Springs had the bros retreating. On one occasion several gear bags caught fire, the only casualty being a handgun. This caused some to ask, "Why does a loft supervisor need a .44 magnum anyhow?"

So far a total of 296 jumpers have been dropped on 45 fires and cabin protection assignments. Twenty-two of our 63 jumpers have gone south to California and Nevada. Back at base, skies are sunny and the garden is lush with vegetables, but dry lightning and man-caused fires are scarce.

**Tony Marchini** (Fairbanks '01) won the Big Flip, an event milder than wild this year with half the bros gone and no boosters.

Fire jump milestones this season: **Matt Allen** jumped his 50th. **Ty Humphrey** jumped his 50th. **Chip Houde** (Fairbanks '88) jumped his 100th. **Jon Kawczynski** is at 99, itching for just one more. **John Lyons** jumped a two-manner near Stebbins for his 100th.

**Jared Weber** (Fairbanks '01) helped wife **Heather** have a daughter, **Shelby**, on June 17. **Marty Meierotto** and fiancée **Dominique** will be married October 12 after ten years together. **Dominique's** concerns about their wedding reception turning into a drunken smokejumper bash were

quickly put at ease. With his arm around his bride-to-be Marty gently reassured her. “Don’t worry about that for one minute, Sweetheart. It will.”

## Boise

by **Steve Nemore** (Redmond ’69)

As of July 15, 2002, the Boise Smokejumpers are on a record setting pace ... fire jumps, fires, and total number of days on fires. So far, we have jumped 97 fires with 612 jumpers. Most of the fire action has been in Colorado and Utah. We’ve had 25 Forest Service jumpers in our midst since early May. Mixed loads (both ram air and round parachuted jumpers on the same airplane load) have returned to our operation and the mix is functioning well. We now have 12 Alaska jumpers detailed to us and hopefully we’ll get many more as the Alaska season gets rain.

Boise is operating seven sub-bases: Carson City, Nevada; Cedar City, Utah; Canon City, Colorado; Battle Mountain, Nevada; Ely, Nevada; Grand Junction, Colorado and Twin Falls, Idaho ... as the fire conditions and predictions dictate. We have four Twin Otters in our fleet with a Dornier 228 from Alaska and extra Otters from the Forest Service as needed.

Fire conditions are as severe as the media reports. Several of the fires jumped in Colorado and Utah were gobbling before or during the jumping, and the jumpers had to organized themselves as a fire overhead team and helped local police facilitate evacuations, built fire line anchor points, organized local volunteer fire engines, and directed dozers, airtankers, and helicopters while the landowning agency brought in Fire Management Overhead Teams. That kind of firefighting is a lot different than a remote two-manner. This variability in smokejumper mission and tactics will continue as more people live in the wildlands and fire conditions seem to get better every year (better meaning low fuel moistures, hotter temps, more wind, and lower humidity’s all making fires burn “better” and more fiercely).

Veteran jumper **Dennis Terry** broke his right femur on a fire jump in late May and is healing on schedule with various pieces of stainless steel sewn, bolted and clamped onto the fractured bone.

We tried for 85 total jumpers this year and now have 79. The reduction is due to people getting new jobs and temp assignments within the fire community. **Scott Salisbury** is now the assistant aviation manager for BLM Arizona, 16-year veteran **Bud Derham** got a permanent job at the RAWs group (Remote Area Weather Stations), and super veteran **Tim Pettitt** (5 bases, 26 seasons, 236 fire jumps) also got a permanent job at RAWs group.

Temporary assignments: Air Attack — **Danny Arnold** and **Tim Caughlin**; Helitack crew — **Rich** (or was it **Rob**?) **Turner**, **Joe Rogan**, **Dan Zach**; Coordination Center —

**Emil Magallanes**; Hotshot squad leader — **Paul Hohn**; fire management officer — **Bob Hurley**.

Fire season has been not yet been fully realized for the northwest ... but it’s on the way and we are expecting lots of action well into September. Our jumpers are cycling thru Boise for a brief look at home and then they get back onto the list and sent back into action. Our focus is on being tightly organized, totally prepared and ever vigilant to the dangers of our profession. It’s a long season. ... Drive on!

## Cibola Detail

by **Andy Hayes** (Missoula ’79)

The Cibola National Forest in New Mexico was also looking at the driest winter and spring on record and along with R3 fire staff made the decision early to beef up the initial attack resources in the region. Thirty additional smokejumpers were stationed in Albuquerque at the Double Eagle Airport west of town.

The crew was made up of jumpers from all of the Forest Service bases with Missoula taking the operational lead. The crew made 85 fire jumps on 14 different jump fires. We boosted Silver City one time and reinforced them on three different occasions. The crew spent 813 person days doing fire suppression between May 20 and July 8. We sent ground crews of between 9 and 23 out six different times to account for 353 of these person days. We filled four different overhead assignments on two larger fires.

With some pre-monsoonal flow starting to come into New Mexico and a need for jumpers in their home regions the Albuquerque base was closed on July 8.

## Grangeville

by **Chuck Sheaffer** (Missoula ’00)

Late spring project commitments for Nez Perce smokejumpers this year included fuel reduction work on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, prescribed fire assignments on the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests, and tree-climbing work in Chicago and New York in support of the Asian longhorned-beetle project.

Like jumpers elsewhere, Grangeville personnel experienced a busy early suppression season. GAC jumpers detailed to Silver City and Albuquerque beginning in May, and **Robin Embry** accompanied a contingent of GAC jumpers to Miles City, where she served as foreman and special consultant to the mayor.

Back at home, Nez Perce jumpers began participating in initial attack operations on the Clearwater, Nez Perce, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests in mid-June. Unfortunately, rookies **Matt Taylor**, **Sarah Berns**, **Jay Stalnacker**, and **Gabe Cortez** failed to field a team for the wild horse race at the annual Border Days celebration. As a result, the 2002 class will have to work extra hard to earn credibility.

Other noteworthy developments at GAC include the following: **Kevin Thompson** and **Ted McClanahan** are serving squad leader details and performing as spotters.

Squad leader **Willie Kelly** has completed a detail on the Gila National Forest and is beginning a new detail as AFMO on the Moose Creek District of the Nez Perce National Forest. Several Nez Perce jumpers served as instructors for basic and advanced firefighter training courses earlier this spring and second-year jumper **Dan Vanderpool** recently completed a brief assignment as special liaison for local helicopter operations.

## **Missoula**

by **Tory Kendrick** (Missoula '00)

The 2002 fire season is off and running! The Missoula base has/is supporting jump operations in Alaska, Cedar City, Canyon City, Grand Junction, Albuquerque, Silver City and Ogden. Several people are currently on overhead assignments throughout the country.

Through the spring Missoula jumpers supported prescribe fire efforts in Idaho, Montana and North Dakota as well as the yearly pilgrimage to Mississippi. Despite western Montana having a wet early summer, out in the eastern part of the state the first fire jump for Region 1 was June 28<sup>th</sup> near Broadus.

Twenty-one rookie candidates started training and 16 were left at last check. Of those, Missoula will host 9, all of them being detailers. More on their progress later.

Missoula is again hosting the Great Northern Type II crew. Providing leadership for the crew are **Bill Miller**, **Dave Bihl**, and **Lori Messenger**. **Wayne Williams** is currently detailed as the forest assistant operations fire management officer for the Gila but will be back on the list in Missoula after the Southwest is extinguished.

**Keith Wolferman's** Engineering Reserve Unit has been proudly supporting our country's efforts in Uzbekistan.

## **North Cascades**

by **Steve Dickenson** (LaGrande '78)

Fire season arrived here at North Cascades on June 26th as we jumped our first fire of the season at Spur Peak on the Okanogan with two planeloads of jumpers. Rookie training was successfully completed in mid-June with six new trainees added to the Pacific Northwest smokejumper forces, two NCSB and four from Redmond. Total base numbers this season are 24 jumpers, up two from last season. To date we have been fairly busy, sending 13 jumpers to the Southwest, 14 to the Great Basin, four to Alaska and we have currently jumped nine fires at NCSB for a total of 38 jumps.

## **Redmond**

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

Four rookies made it through training that was done at NCSB this season. We again have two Sherpas as our jump aircraft but they have been in action from Alaska to New Mexico this year. Plenty of early season action in the Great Basin and Southwest as one might guess by the volume of news coverage. As of mid-July several lightning storm through Oregon have Redmond at just over 100 fire jumps.

## **Redding Base Report**

by **Adam Lauber** (Redding '99)

The 2002 California smokejumper season started early with boosts and details for everyone. **Jerry Spence** (RDD '94), **Dave Johnson** (RDD '00) and **Rick Rataj** (RDD '00) filled the Silver City, New Mexico, detail and saw plenty of action in the southwest. Redding was also able to fill back-to-back early season orders to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to fill out a 20-person and a 10-person standby crew to assist in the severity drought situation.

Six smokejumpers also traveled north to Alaska during an unusual early season boost request, and visits were made to the Great Basin over a seven-week period. Seven Alaska smokejumpers experienced the extreme temperature change from 67 degrees in Fairbanks to a sweltering 121 degrees in Redding.

Thirteen rookies completed training and went on the list in early June. They are as follows: **Paul Chamberlain**, **Dan Coats**, **Caleb Edwards**, **Tye Erwin**, **Scott Hall**, **Kevin Maier**, **Ashley Markley**, **Ed McGavern**, **Dominic Patella**, **David Smith**, **Kevin Thomas** and **Frank Vargas**. All rookies have at least one fire jump at press time.

In other base news, **Scott Brockman** (RDD '83) hung up his jump suit and headed south to the Mendocino National Forest as a GS-11 fire management officer on the Grindstone District. Everyone at the base wishes him the best. **Chris Gunter** (RDD '01) is the newest GS-6 13/13 at the base, and welfare fund is tracking him down for his fines. **Mike Blinn** (RDD '01) finished his career as a full-time student by receiving a B.A. (English) from Montana State University.

Congratulations are in order for the families of **Mitch** (Kammi) **Hokanson** (RDD '00) and **Rico** (Chris) **Gonzales** (RDD '99) as they are expecting new additions to their families. With news changing every day, I'm sure the next base report ought to quite interesting.

## **Region 1 Rookie Report**

by **Larry Edwards** (Missoula '02)

The 2002 Region 1 Rookie Class began in the first week of June with rookies coming from all areas of the United States and bringing with them a variety of skills and experiences. The challenge of earning their place as a

smokejumper awaited them. Early on during the line dig, it was obvious that only by working together was anyone going to accomplish their goal. As training continued — packouts, crosscuts, tree climbing, and “the units” — the rookies realized that in supporting, pushing, and helping each other they could accomplish the day’s objectives. They were also beginning to see that this was a damn fun way to earn a paycheck

Trust and respect continued to grow and on day 13 all sixteen remaining rookies stepped thru the door and into their first jump. Daily jumps interspersed with other training occupied the days until graduation. The vision of the 2002 Region 1 Smokejumper Rookie Class is a testimony to the smokejumper organization, the trainers and to all of those who jumped before them.

#### 2002 Region 1 Rookie Vision Statement

“Our vision is to build cohesive relationships with the resources we work for and with. We will lead by example and share our experiences and knowledge to help promote the smokejumper program nationally. Each day we will strive to have fun while working hard with an uncompromising commitment to safety.”

### Silver City

Wayne Williams (Missoula '77)

Winter never came to the Southwest (Region 3) in 2002 causing one of the driest fire seasons since the 1950s. The Gila National Forest was no exception with virtually any snow pack.

As in past years the crew was made of jumpers from Regions 1, 4, 5 and 6, with Missoula being the host for operations. The crew had an above average season with 103 fire jumps, 16 jump fires, 10 walk-in fires, and 12 overhead assignments. Silver City had two booster crews, 20 jumpers in late April and 10 jumpers in mid-June. Project work was

### Smokejumper History (Yearbook) Status:

The Turner Publishing Company promises to send the history books to those who have ordered them between September and December of 2002. Thus far, 200 have been ordered. If you haven't ordered but would like one, you may send a check or money order to the Turner Publishing Company, P.O. Box 3101, Paducah, KY 42002-3101. Prices are as follows:

- Deluxe bonded leather edition, \$79
- Deluxe edition, \$44.95
- Embossing, \$6 per book
- Protective plastic book cover, \$2.75
- *Kentucky residents add 6% sales tax*
- Postage & handling: \$6.50 for first book, \$4 for each additional book.

varied from sewing to prescribed fire for a total of over 1180 hours.

The monsoon season as of July 8, 2002, has still not arrived. With some limited rains the fire season hangs on with 31 jumpers still in Silver City.

### West Yellowstone

by Andreas Luderer (McCall '00)

The summer of 2002 is well on its way and our base has been spread to the wind since the spring. We have had jumpers in Silver City, NM; Cedar City, UT; Albuquerque, NM; Grand Junction, Co; Zion National Park, UT, and Miles City, MT.

Let's start with the transfers ... **Chris Young** (Grangeville '92) is our new loft foreman and is turning out to be a great asset to our program — thanks for all the great ideas Chris!!! Other transfers include **John Parker** (McCall '98) and **Ernie Walker** (Redding '01). I have had the chance to work with them all and they are fitting in and seem to be really good people. Welcome aboard bro's!! I would like to extend a welcome back to **Billy Bennett** (WYS '98) who is returning from a two-year absence from jumping. Our new load master is **Marty Mitzkus** (Missoula '99) and **Carlos “Cheech” Trevino** (WYS '92) is our new temporary GS-7 for the summer. **Derek Hartman** (Redding '98), poor guy, went to the “Darkside” — Alaska and is still a rookie as far as Chris Young is concerned. **Leslie Williams** (WYS '00) is taking a season off, and **Mike Hill** (WYS '95) has taken a detail to Colorado. **Mark Belitz** will be taking place of **Ashley Sites** (WYS '98) position as Parkie smokejumper. Ashley Sites will be engine foreman at the Mammoth Guard Station. He has already ordered us a couple of times for some fire jumps and support for building helispots on the Broad fire. **Tyler Robinson** (Fairbanks '88) is our new assistant tanker base manager and reserve law enforcement officer.

The retardant operations started 20 days earlier than last year with 105,550 gallons of mud on the ground. Thanks to all the tanker pilots who risk their lives to support us ground troops.

Our new rookies are **Tommy Roche** from New York, **Casey Dunning** from Missoula, and **Justin Walsh** from Klamath, Ca. **Kirsten Wardman** (Grangeville '99) is moving to Bermuda. Good luck out there Kirsten! **Randy Leypold**, our beloved pilot, got hitched this year and is happily married to Amy ... congratulations !!!

So far, this fire season seems to be off to an explosive start. We have received several boosters thus far while the fires continue to persist. We will be accommodating detailers from the BLM as well as **Deak Dollard** (Missoula '98) and **Mike Patten** — “The General” (Missoula '86) from Missoula.

As for the future we are hoping to keep busy with the 2002 fire season, and injury free. Hooya McCall class 2000!



# Taylor Ranch Fire

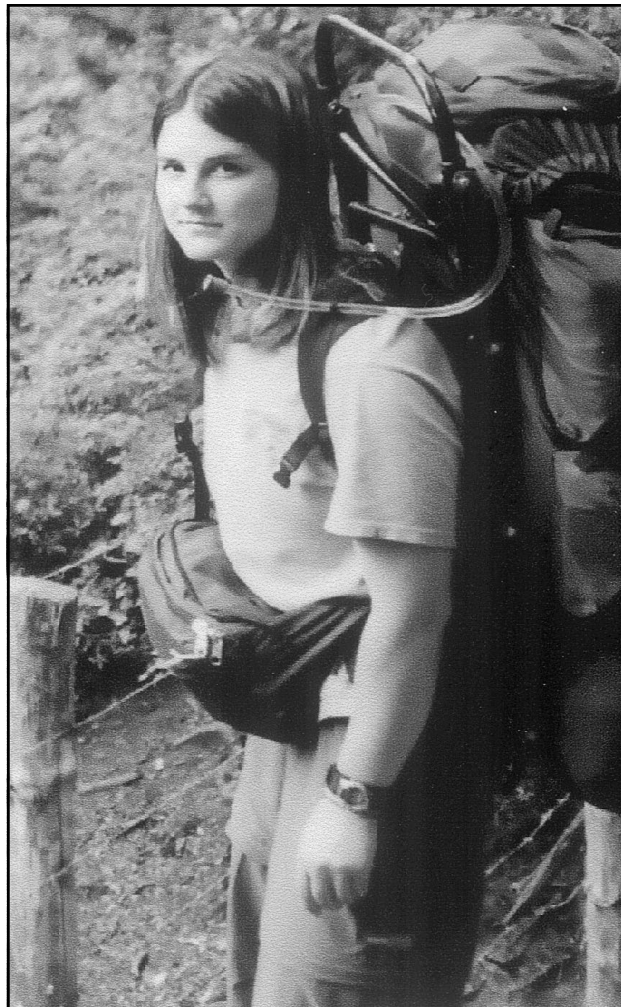
by Karin Kaaen (McCall '99)

The summer of 2000 was a big fire season for everyone. Even the president of the United States, Bill Clinton, flew into the McCall airport, only to immediately fly off to the highly publicized Burgdorf fire.

On August 13th, six of us were scheduled to go to the Taylor Ranch, a remote ranch in the Salmon River country, owned by the University of Idaho for wildlife study. The people living there had been evacuated because of the impending danger. There was a huge fire heading straight towards it, supposedly a week away. We were to go in and lay down hose and a sprinkler system and burn off around the area to secure it. The day before, we had all gathered around the map to lay out a plan for what we were going to do when we got there.

We arrived at the base early the next morning prepared to head out. However, we were told there was a smoke inversion over the area and there was no visibility. Around 11:00 A.M. we were told that the inversion was lifting so we loaded up in the plane. One and a half hours later, after circling for some time, we were informed that the winds were too erratic for a jump. We would head back to the base and try to helicopter in. The visibility was still pretty bad, but by this time we could see that the fire, which was supposed to be a week away, was just across the river from the ranch. We got back to the base as quickly as possible and hurriedly loaded our gear onto the waiting helicopter. Another hour later, as we approached the site, we could see that the fire had jumped the river and three of the

fourteen structures were engulfed in flames. The buildings were arranged in a big circle with the oldest being down by the river and the main house up on a hill across from it all. The three buildings down by the river had been made with shaker shingle roofs. These were the ones on fire.



Karin Kaaen (Courtesy of Karin Kaaen)

Before the rotors had even powered down, I'll never forget **Rob Berney**, grabbing the box with the pump in it and dragging it out of the helicopter and straight towards the river about 50 yards away. After that it seemed that everyone fell into place. Our I.C., Dennis Geving, quickly ordered another six jumpers to be flown in. We had already had our briefing, and everyone found something that needed to be done and did it. The hoses and fittings flew out of the boxes and we were literally running to hook everything up. After an initial problem getting the pump to work (typical), everyone had a hose end and was spraying at flames. I had the section nearest the pump, where a woodpile was burning only a few feet from an open barn full of loose hay. Only a few minutes later I heard a noise that, until that time, I had only heard in training

videos. It was the unmistakable high-pitched whistle of a propane tank venting. It was very near one of the burning structures. I remember looking up just as it exploded in a huge mushroom cloud of burning gas. What a sight! Luckily, everyone had gotten clear of the area when the whistle went off, so no one was hurt.

After a few hours of spraying down the structures,

I had somehow gotten stuck with the job of keeping the pump going as I was nearest to it. While everyone else put up the sprinkler system the sky grew dark. I was told to keep the pump running as several guys started lighting off the area surrounding the ranch. A few of us kept spraying down the burnt buildings. The sky was soon a bright orange as the entire area surrounding the buildings was lit up in flames.

As I stood near the pump by myself, I noticed something amazing. There, in the very center of the green meadow, surrounded by buildings and flames, was the silhouette of a doe and her two tiny fawns. The twin fawns couldn't have been more than a couple of weeks old, if that. They were looking around in fear and I prayed that they wouldn't move. I hoped that the noise of the pump and the sight of the flames would keep them paralyzed there in the center of that safety zone. I hoped that they wouldn't run, because there was nowhere to run. Three hundred and sixty degrees of bright orange flames surrounded them and

me and everyone lighting. After a while they calmed a bit and despite the mother's nervousness, they lay down in the middle of that grass to watch what was going on. It was one of the many euphoric moments I've had since I started fire fighting where I just thought, "Man, I have the best job on earth."

They sat there most of the night and I was eventually called off to help with the burning. The next morning the fawns and mom were seen resting in the cool ashes where we had sprayed the area cold the night before. They weren't tame, but weren't in a hurry to leave either. The following day they were gone, hopefully to safety, and I didn't see them again. However it is a great memory I will never forget. 🦋

*Karin is in her third season at McCall. She enjoys backpacking and traveling in the off-season and has just returned from a two-month excursion to Patagonia, in Chile and Argentina. Karin can be reached at: kkaaen@hotmail.com*

## Ambience

by LeRoy Cook (Cave Jct. '64)

The four Arctic grayling sizzled as they lay in the gentle bend of the shovel being held over the campfire. The coffee was hot. Everyone had smiles all around. The fire was out and tomorrow we would leave, but tonight was cast for a fine evening. The grayling had come easy to my soft hackle, two fish per jumper on this "four man'er." Why weren't more like this one?

It was a longing, or a feeling if you will, to experience the grandeur of the outdoors and the far-away wilderness of the woods. This as much as anything drew me to that crazy summer job of smokejumping, why, why? The rest of my family though I was crazy.

I have always enjoyed the out-of-doors and at times was frustrated with the need for jump partners to hurry up and get back to the base. "We gotta get back and beat the other guys back on the jump list!" The message was always the same. I hated it. Why I liked being out in the tall uncut, after all that's why I got started fighting forest fires. Didn't we all? Remember those *Outdoor Life* magazine ads? I read them over and over as a teenager "Sleep out under the stars, wake up and catch your breakfast from a trout stream in the mountains."

Well the job did beat sitting on that old orange

Case tractor, day after day looking down between those double shovels as the corn stalks went by. You see I was from the Mid-west. The fishing was different though, shit the water moved out here in the West and I had no control of my hook in the water let alone staying an extra day in the woods with these guys.

A stark land, perhaps I could enjoy the job more in Alaska. Maybe even fish more. The black spruce sure looked smaller than the Doug fir of the Umpqua. More ambience you might say. That's why I went! Not for the money like the others. As with other visitors that went north, I carried a sundry of items fit for working in the territory. Supplements to those drab fire packs. Things like a pistol, goodies to eat and drink, whatnots if you will, and essentials like Tabasco.

Of course I always carried a fishing rod. It was my first item in the leg pockets. A gold colored breakdown Eagle Claw fly/spin combo — I loved it. Some where along life's crooked road it got lost. I wish I still had it!

Rivers, bound to the Artic,  
Journey many a day.  
A shoreline girt with eddies,  
Where purple grayling play. 🦋





# Items from the Fire Pack



## A .22 Can't Kill a Bear

Claude and Sam Greiner (Missoula '54) were visiting a friend near Liby one weekend in 1955. They were wandering around the woods plinking at whatever with a .22 pump rifle when confronted by a bear who trees all three of them. The bear came up and tore the heel off the boot of the friend. The bear then climbs nearer Claude who shoots it twice forcing it to climb down. All three carefully climbed down looking for the bear to appear at any time. However, they find the bear dead nearby felled by Claude's .22 rifle.

Clayton Berg  
(Missoula '52)

## First Fire jump

On July 12, 1940, Merle

Lundrigan (Missoula '41) asked me to go on a fire at the head of Martin Creek. Dick Johnson arrived at 3:05 P.M. with the plane. The fire looked to be about 2 1/2 acres in green fairly open timber. I bailed out at 3:57 P.M. and landed in a small tree hanging up with my feet about two feet off the ground. Lundrigan reported that Earl Cooley had landed northwest of me in a tree. Lundrigan dropped the fire packs near Cooley. We started a fire line at 4:45 P.M. and worked until 7:00 P.M. I sent Cooley back to find the other fire pack. He met a four-man maintenance crew near his chute. They said they would come back early the next morning and help us. We worked all night. The four-man crew took over at 10:00 A.M. the next day.

Rufus Robinson  
(Missoula '40)

## Didn't Weigh Enough

When I first volunteered for the smokejumpers, I was not accepted because I did not weigh enough. The next year I gained some weight and

was accepted. The group was a great bunch of men. I especially remember Ad Carlson, Lee Miller, Ivan Moore and Levi Tschetter. Jonas Hershberger and I were nicknamed Mutt & Jeff as he was tall and I was short. We were placed at the Schaffer Ranger Station maintaining trails and telephone line. Some days we walked 13 miles to work and then 13 miles back. I still remember splicing phone line while working up a tree when someone decided to make a call and would crank that handle. Boy, did that ring your bell!

Ralph Belzer  
(Missoula '45)

## One Guy Has Had Twenty Years of Education!

When the Selective Service Act went into effect in 1940, I registered as a conscientious objector indicating that I would be willing to do medical corps work for the Army. My older brother who was a Lutheran minister and automatically exempted from the draft, refused to register and spent a year and a quarter in federal prison. I was doing research on my Ph.D. in 1941 and was drafted into the CPS in 1942. I joined the smokejumpers in 1945 and made eight practice and three fire jumps. One day in our barracks in Twisp a guy was reading a statistical report on the educational background of the CPS smokejumpers and incredulously exclaimed: "One guy has had twenty years of education!" I concluded I was that guy. After the war, I taught at Princeton and then at Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., until my retirement at age sixty-five.

Bill Bristol  
(North Cascades '45)

### Upcoming Reunions

McCall	June '03
NSA	June '04, Missoula

## Got Our Meals on Skid Row

The Depression had taken its toll on the family and my brother and I were ready to strike out on our own. My parents took us to town one evening. We waved good-bye and caught a freight headed west. We worked jobs in Montana, Washington, Oregon and California and sometimes made 25 cents per hour. Got our meals on skid row and stayed in hobo jungles. When the war came, I registered as a C.O. Two of my uncles considered me a disgrace to the family. On the train to Cascade Locks, Oregon, I met four others who were on the way to that camp. They stated that they were Conscientious Objectors. I did question whether stating to all who could hear on the train that they were C.O.'s was advisable in view of the conditions at that time.

Wilmer "Bill" Carlsen  
(Missoula '43)

## It Was July 24, 1940

After locating a likely jump spot, I tossed out a burlap. It landed in the spot, which was about a mile from the fire. I bailed out and cracked the chute soon after leaving the plane and lit over 125 feet up in a green spruce tree. I unintentionally dropped the longer rope so I got out of the suit and harness and slid down the tree. Jim Alexander (Missoula '40) yelled that he was all right. We arrived on the fire at 5:55 P.M. and there was one man on it and five others arrived just as we did. They had been searching for the fire since the night before but could not find it. They saw us bail out and came to find the fire that way.

Jim Waite  
(Missoula '40)

## Bleeding Like a Stuck Hog

We did about 60 experimental jumps. About my fourth jump the

chute opened up along side my head. I was bleeding like a stuck hog when I got to the ground. We landed in most all of it. Snags were the worst — I didn't like those dudes. The little trees were like a pillow, nothing to it. The high trees were a problem coming down out of them. The first tree I landed in was about a 100-foot fir. I stayed up there about two hours trying to get up nerve enough to come down.

**Virgil Derry**  
(North Cascades '40)

### Lufkin Was Retrieving Those Guys

We didn't go through much training. They was afraid to give you too much knowledge all at once, afraid that you'd forget the important part of it. Frank, Virgil, Chet (Derry) and Glenn Smith were the main trainers. They were professional jumpers before they came here and took the contract. They jumped into timber to see if it could be done. That's where Lufkin got into it. He was a telephone man and knew how to climb those trees and was retrieving them guys.

**George Honey**  
(North Cascades '40)

### It Pays To Be Nice to the Cook

Brownie was the bull-cook at Nine Mile and his wife as the cook. She was strict but we had a way to get around her. If you got to work a little early and was nice to her and bring in some kindling for the stove, she's let you sit down for a cup of coffee. First thing you know, she'd put a pie or something like that in front of you.

**Chuck Pickard**  
(Missoula '48)

### First Women at Missoula

I rookied in 1982. There were seven women who tried out and three of us made it. We were the first women at Missoula. I knew some of the people didn't have much fire experience. They were the ones who washed-out. I had heard that there had been one woman smokejumper but didn't know she was in McCall. **Wendy Kamm** and **Marty Billingsly** were the other woman jumpers.

**Kim Maynard**  
(Missoula '82)

### Don't Mess With the Rotation!

During the summer of 1944 the Forest Service had decided to keep a crew of jumpers in Missoula at the Priess Hotel in order to shorten response time. The on-call crew had asked permission to attend the Western Montana Fair and had been given permission because the fairgrounds and bleachers were right next to Hale Field. It all seemed perfectly logical and reasonable. **Eddie Nafziger** (Missoula '43) and I had just returned from a fire, cleaned up and were lounging around our hotel room enjoying the hot water when we got a two-man fire call. We wondered at the time what was going on but were picked up and taken to a waiting Travelair where we suited up and were in the air in under a half-hour. The boys in the bleachers watched us take off and wondered what was going on. Needless to say there was a major eruption in the ranks and all parties concerned arrived at a new understanding. Don't mess with the rotation!

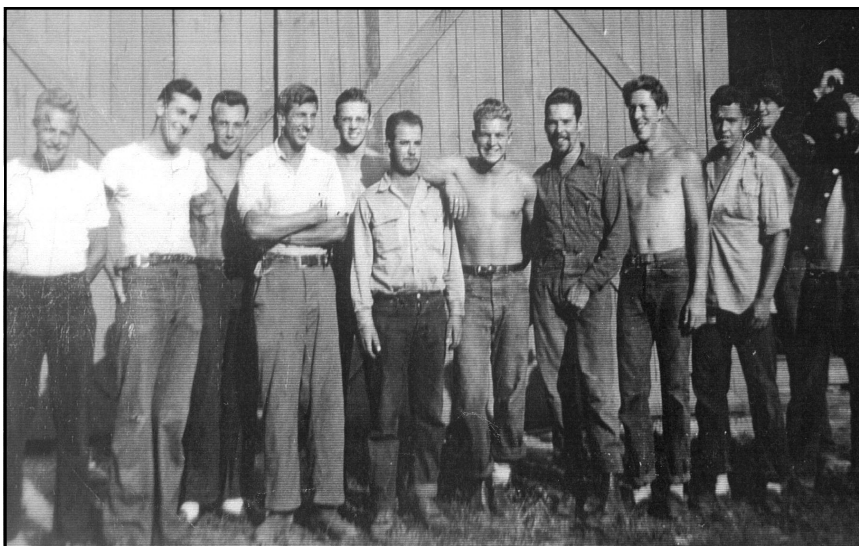
**Phil Stanley**  
(Missoula '43)

## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

### JERRY LINTON (MISSOULA '48)

JERRY IS THE NSA LIFE Member #12 having made that commitment early in the program. His work experience with Blister Rust Control during his high school years from 1943 through 1946 gave him the experience to apply for smokejumpers. Jerry rookied at Nine Mile in 1948 and also jumped the 1949 season.

He is currently retired after working for Sears & Roebuck for 30 years as an appliance service technician. Jerry attended Montana State University for two years while jumping at Missoula. He relates that while at the university he boxed for the "M" Club. His first fight was against **Norm Allen** (Missoula '46) who was an ex-paratrooper from WWII who had 40 previous fights. Jerry relates that Norm "beat the stuffing out of me." He is currently living in Spokane, WA. 🐿



*Phil McVey took this picture during the summer of 1948 at a work project at the Castle Creek R. S. We can't identify all but here's what we have: L-R: Ed Eggen, Walt Johnson, unknown, Bob Manchester, Jim Murphy, George King, Jerry Linton, Fred Koons, Jerry McGabey, unknown, Art Jensen and Jack Mathews. (Courtesy of Jerry Linton)*

# Interview with John Maclean

by Steve Smith

*In the following interview with John Maclean, NSA historian, Steve Smith talked with Maclean about the October 28, 2002, History Channel special, which is not to be missed.*

**J**ohn Maclean's five-year project to research and write the book *Fire on the Mountain: The True Story of the South Canyon Fire*, is now the subject of a new television documentary. The History Channel program, *Fire on the Mountain* will be broadcast on October 28<sup>th</sup>. This two-hour television special follows Maclean's journey to understand how and why fourteen fire fighters were trapped and killed when the South Canyon fire blew up on July 6, 1994.

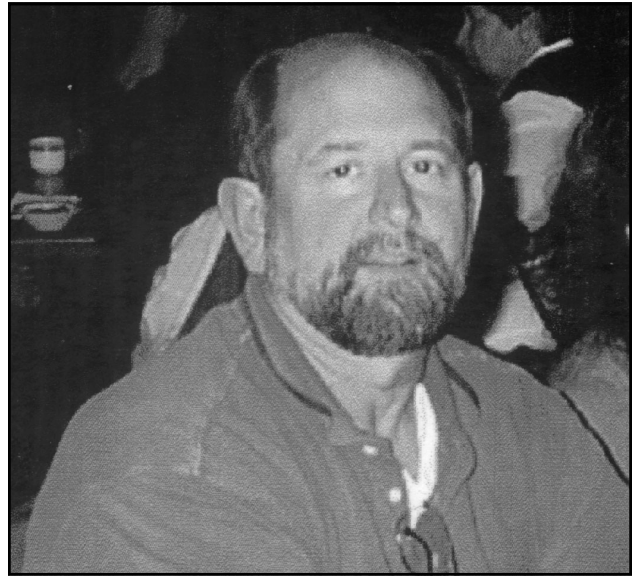
The Maclean family name is familiar to most smokejumpers. The 59 year-old author's father, Norman Maclean, wrote, *A River Runs Through It* and *Young Men and Fire*. *Young Men and Fire* was published a year after his death and was a powerfully written examination of why twelve smokejumpers and a fireguard were trapped and killed when a 1949 wildfire blew up at Mann Gulch.

John Maclean's critically acclaimed book, *Fire on the Mountain*, was published in 1999 and is highly regarded in the fire fighting community as a clear and honest look at the events surrounding the South Canyon fire. The fire (incorrectly named) took place high on the slopes of Storm King Mountain near Glenwood Springs, Colorado. The fire, believed started by lightening, burned for three days as a small ground fire. Then on July 6, 1994, the fire blew up, trapping and killing fourteen fire fighters.

John Maclean was working as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* at the time of the South Canyon fire. He resigned the next year and began a challenging and emotional five-year exploration of how this tragedy could happen again with all that's been learned about fire safety since the Mann Gulch fire.

Now Maclean's book has been produced as a powerful new television documentary, *Fire on the Mountain*, by Lone Wolf Pictures for the History Channel. Plans are in the works for a premier screening on October 11<sup>th</sup> at the Wilma Theater in Missoula, Montana. The program producers plan to attend and the show narrator, Scott Glenn, hopes to attend.

*Fire on the Mountain* was produced, directed and written by Lisa Quijano Wolfinger and co-produced and



Steve Smith

edited by Tony Bacon. Actor Scott Glenn was the program narrator.

John was interviewed on June 17, 2002. Smokejumper names are in **bold**.

**John tell me about your five-year journey working on, *Fire on the Mountain: The True Story of the South Canyon Fire*.**

When you do something like that you spend a lot of time alone. The highs are very high and the lows are very low. On one trip — and there were many — I spent six weeks in Colorado where I intended to spend two weeks. Each time I figured I'd get out of there a plane would come in and **Sarah Doehring** or **Dale Longanecker** or someone else would pop up. That went on for weeks.

The first time I went to Storm King Mountain, the Mackeys (Bob and Nadine Mackey, parents of **Don Mackey**) were up on the hill and people were coming up to see them. I'd sit out of the way as smokejumpers and fire fighters were telling the Mackeys what they knew about the fire. Afterwards I'd go up and say, "I'd like to interview you separately" and I sorta had 'em.

I couldn't go home (to Washington, D.C.) because the house was undergoing renovation, so I lived in the cabin in Montana. At the time I didn't know whether this book project would be a success or not. I didn't know if I could carry it off, whether I could make a living at it, so I lived

in very primitive conditions. I hunted and fished for most of my food. I'm a grouse hunter and I have a dog, so I hunted when it got too cold to fish. I didn't have any running water and damn near froze to death.

Staying the winter in the cabin was something I dreamed about all my life, but I was glad to get out of there. I discovered my limits. But in some ways this quixotic journey was the best part of my life.

#### **How do you feel about the results?**

I feel I did it. I put everything in my life at risk, I put my family at risk, I put my money at risk, I put my career at risk, I put my relationship with my dead father at risk. It scared the hell out of me at times. It's hard to live like that, but you have to get up each day and go out and just do it and trust that you're capable.

About half way through I could feel the story start to really churn. It was a wonderful feeling. When I came back from the West I couldn't wait to get to a computer and start to put it together.

It has been everything I wanted it to be. It has not sold a million copies, but it won the respect of the professional community and continues to do that. I wanted the reader to see these people, the firefighters, for what they were and to sympathize with them deeply and to walk with them on that mountain and to remember what happened there for the rest of their lives.

Is your book and the new documentary to a certain extent, an alternative to the "South Canyon Fire Investigation" report that came out forty-five days after the fire?

Absolutely. The report made me mad. It made me mad as hell. Some of what I did was fueled by that anger. I'm not mad at the authors of the report, but I think the "South Canyon Fire Investigation," the written report, was mistaken when it attacked the "can do" attitude. I think today that it would be said a lot better.

#### **Who should be doing forest fire death investigations?**

There was an effort in Congress, it failed, to have OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health and Administration) play a more prominent role in fire investigations. I don't know if that's the answer. But the Forest Service should certainly expand the membership of the boards of investigation.

I've gone back and read a lot of old Board of Review reports recently and they are all the same. They are technically proficient. They pretty well describe what happened on the fire, but they are totally deficient in judgment about such basic matters as negligence. Totally deficient! I've never found a good one where they set up a judicial body and dispensed justice. These are good men,

they don't lie. I haven't caught 'em in a lie yet and believe me, I've looked for one. But they are incapable of taking that next hard objective step to come to judgment. So that part of the job is most often left hanging.

On the Thirty Mile fire you had a multi-step process where the Board of Review issued its report, then revised its report, then another body much later decided to discipline eleven people who had worked the fire. Not exactly a great moment in the history of cleaning up after yourself.

The institution of the Board of Review is a hunk of lead hanging around the whole fire fighting community. The basic facts are as far as they want to go. Now if they put a couple of firefighters on the board so you have the technical side covered and a couple of academics and maybe a retired guy or two and some real outsiders that would be much preferable. Then take your time, do it right and come to judgment.

#### **What do you mean when you say academics?**

There are people in fire science that can do this; there are people in criminal science investigation that could handle this. But to pack it with a bunch of state fire management officers just guarantees that the investigation will not get off the ground. The National Transportation Safety Board in an example of what's needed. Maybe NTSB shouldn't be doing it, but they are an example of how it should be done.

The argument of the Forest Service and the BLM is that they don't have enough of these events to justify a special board. But they just have to do a better job. Otherwise we have the fox looking after the chicken coop.

#### **Do you see a need for any new training to deal with blow-ups like South Canyon and Thirty Mile?**

Unfortunately South Canyon has faded into something that happened on somebody else's watch. Too many young firefighters don't know anything about it. So I support the idea of teaching the Ten Standard Orders and the Eighteen Watch Out Situations and citing examples to make the lessons immediate. Go back to the basics.

#### **Any other changes?**

The new fire shelter is being developed. That's an important change that needed to be done before Thirty Mile — pity it wasn't. I think we are now looking at the Century of Accountability. The Forest Service belatedly has done something about Thirty Mile, but in a way that is guaranteed to offend everyone. The families are unhappy because they didn't name the eleven, and it came late. The eleven are unhappy because their careers are screwed up. The press is frustrated because they don't have the names of the eleven and what happened to them

so there can be accountability. I think the whole fire community is struggling with this and doesn't have a clear idea of how to handle these things.

In the History Channel show, *Fire on the Mountain*, there is a quote from a rescue team leader who said, "the system ground to a halt." Is that what we are seeing?

I think that is absolutely right. At South Canyon, when you lose fourteen people in a situation that is not combat, where you are not expecting to have losses, the system did not respond as it should have. At a minimum you can say that.

In your book and the documentary you take a tough look at the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. How are you finding doors there, open or closed?

Open, very open. I have no axe to grind with the BLM, rumors to the contrary. Reports of a hate affair between the BLM and me are wrong on both counts. The BLM in California gave a mounted fire badge and commendation for service to the fire community. I think Bruce Babbitt (former secretary of the interior) should have done something about accountability after Storm King other than to say, "we're all to blame." Sounds a bit mushy to me. I think he should have stepped in and done something, but that's his call and he's gone.

The interview (in the show) with Jack Ward Thomas (former chief of the U.S. Forest Service) was remarkable.

He is a remarkable man. He just opened up the Forest Service to me, without knowing who I was. He was



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**(Missoula '71)**

**(Redding '59)**

very open and he was courageous. He's got a heart as big as his chest, a wonderful man.

**In the show there was a firefighter who said, "nobody made it happen," talking about the failure to provide resources to the firefighters on the ground ...**

The Grand Junction District of the BLM was in over its head. Those folks were badly distracted and they never caught up with the curve. On July 6<sup>th</sup> the fire was over 100 acres. There should have been a Type Two incident command in there at 10 A.M. But it isn't a matter of nobody making it happen. It's that nobody said, "this isn't an initial attack fire, we need more overhead now." They were just trying to get away with it, hoping the smokejumpers would take care of it. It was not an initial attack fire, it was too big, it had lasted too long and there were too many people in there.

**What do you want the viewer to take away from the documentary?**

I want the mistakes from the South Canyon fire to be indelible in the memory of every firefighter on the line and every member of the fire community. It won't happen, but you asked what I want. You get killed fighting fire if you don't do it right. Your sons and daughters die when it isn't done right. What happened on Storm King was not an act of nature; it was a human fuck up, at many levels. Get mad, get alert and never let it happen again.

**I've heard it sounds like you've gotten close to the families (of those who died).**

That's a terrific compliment; I hope you're right. I'm close to the Mackeys. I talk to them a couple of times a year and see them at least once a year. I saw **Ralph Holtby** and **Jeanie Holtby** this last fall. That was one of the most wonderful things about doing this documentary. I got to go back and see everybody again. It was a little scary because I wondered whether they would tell the same story on TV that they told me — and they did. To catch up with people like the Holtbys, they are really marvelous people and they have weathered this as well as anyone can.

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**What would you like to say about the show?**

It turned out differently than I thought it would. I thought it would be just about South Canyon, but the people at Lone Wolf got interested in the story and they expanded it to include my dad and Mann Gulch. I deliberately tried to stay away from that in the book, because I didn't want the Maclean story detracting from what happened on Storm King.

I think the producers of the documentary did a good job. I'm just glad it wasn't me who did it.

**What's next for you?**

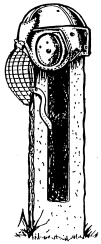
I'm finishing a book of stories about fires around the theme of the history of wildland fire. It will start with a short history of wildland fire. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Big Blowup of 1910, the grandpappy of all wildland fires. With it came a commitment to put out all future fires. Then in the middle of the century the war with fire was killing too many fire fighters. Now at the end of the century we forgot the safety lessons taught decades before and experienced South Canyon.

There are two long stories in the book; one is about the Rattlesnake fire in 1953 in Northern California, which killed fifteen firefighters — a Forest Service ranger and a fourteen-member crew from a missionary camp. An arsonist started it. The guy was the son of a Forest Service engineer, a very well regarded man. I located the arsonist after almost fifty years and interviewed him several times. He was captured, confessed and did time in prison.

The second story is about the Sadler fire in 1999 near Elko, Nevada, which fortunately killed no one. It was an echo of Storm King. Six people were burned over on a division where Tom Shepard, who was superintendent of the Prineville Hotshots on Storm King, was the division superintendent. The burn-over led to the only time I've been able to find that a Type One team was disbanded for the way they handled the fire. This was a landmark.

It was a landmark in other ways too because the fire, a grass fire, was just about to kill six people. It had me on the ground and was burning two of them and suddenly there was a change in the wind and either it died, or it shifted or it paused. But the flames stood up and the people who were on the ground about to be incinerated were able to walk out of it. So what you have are personal accounts from inside the flames of people who were seconds from death.

I look forward to reading the book, you did a masterful job on *Fire on the Mountain*, and I highly recommend the new documentary. Thank you, John. 🙏



## 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 the editor (see contact information on page three of the magazine). Include the name, address and phone number of the subject's next of kin. We'll take it from there.

### **Paul M. Bryce** (Cave Junction '51)

Paul died in Seattle on February 10, 2002, after a long illness. He trained in CJ in 1951 and jumped there in '51, '52, '53, '56, and '58. He jumped in Redding in 1957. Paul made up for his small size with a lot of determination and grit. He always carried his load on fires and packouts. All of us who jumped in those years knew him as "Pittsburg," which was always assumed to be his hometown. He enjoyed the camaraderie of smokejumpers and kept in touch with many of the jumpers until his recent illness. He always considered smokejumping to be the best years of his life. He made his last jump, a recreational jump, in 1995 in Kalispell during the 1995 smokejumper reunion.

Paul earned a B.A. in history from the University of Montana and worked for Boeing until his retirement several years ago. He had made his home in Seattle near the SeaTac airport since 1965. (Courtesy of Jimmie Dollard/NSA Web site)

### **Beryl Clark** (Idaho City '57)

Beryl, 65 died of acute respiratory problems May 30, 2002, at Mercy Medical Center in Nampa, Idaho. He jumped from Idaho City in 1957, 1958 and 1960 and from McCall in 1959. Beryl graduated from Boise High School in 1954, Boise Junior College in 1956, and Idaho State University in 1961. His major studies were business and accounting. His 37-year career as a budget analyst took him to Utah, Idaho, Nevada, California, Puerto Rico, and finally to Washington, D.C., before he retired in 1995. He had many varying and challenging experiences during his USFS career, but the times he reminisced about the most were the summers he spent as a smokejumper during which he made 37 jumps. Condolences may be sent to his widow Dolly in care of Teresa Mitchell, 23435 Can-Ada Rd., Star, ID 83669.

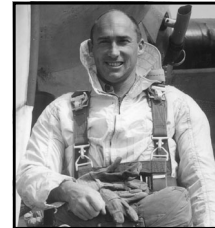
### **Bob Clark** (Pilot)

Bob Clark died June 27, 2002, after a short illness of lung cancer, and he never smoked a day in his life. He was a pilot for the U.S. Forest Service and started flying at Johnson Flying field in 1946. He flew for a total of 50 years with out an accident. He flew for Johnson Flying Service, U.S. Forest Service, Sun Valley Airline, and the state of Idaho. Since his retirement he has lived in Anacortes, WA. He was much loved by his extended family, friends and community. He leaves his wife Ruth of 60 years; two sons, Jim of Fort Worth, TX, and Carl of Spokane, WA, and two daughters, Bobbie of Green Valley, AZ, and Annelle of Anacortes, WA. Condolences and remembrances can be mailed to his wife Ruth Clark, 4424 Bryce Dr. Anacortes, WA 98221. (Courtesy of Bob Dusenbury/NSA Web site)

### **Delos M. Dutton** (Missoula '51)

"Dee" died May 11, 2002, in Gresham, Ore., at the age of 75. A career smokejumper, he was based at Missoula through 1965 and from Cave Junction 1966 through 1972 and in 1974 and 1975. During that period, he served a two-year active duty tour in the Air Force. He transferred to the Air Force Reserve from which he retired

as a major after 30 years. Dee was born in Alberta, Canada, moved with his family to Montana at age four and grew up on a backcountry farm. He graduated from the University of Montana with an accounting degree and a ROTC commission. His smokejumping career included working his way up to foreman in charge of jump training and the parachute loft in Missoula, project air officer for Cave Junction, and founding the Forest Service's Southern Region smokejump base in 1971. In 1965, he appeared as a jumper on the television program *To Tell the Truth*. Following his jumper years, he was the equipment specialist in the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Region where he was in charge of standardizing fire fighting equipment, a job he later undertook on a national basis as part of a national task force. A life member of the National Smokejumper Association, the family requests that donations may be made in his memory to that association or to the American Stroke Association. The address of the former is NSA, P.O. Box 4081, Missoula, MT 59806. Stroke Association donations may be sent in care of Young's Funeral Home, 11831 SW Pacific Highway, Tigard, OR 97223. His wife, Marlene, three daughters, and two grandsons survive Dee. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Delos Dutton, 12085 SW 116<sup>th</sup> Ave., Tigard, OR 97223.



*Delos M. Dutton*

### **James L. Lawson** (Redmond '68)

Jim Lawson died in Cottage Grove, Oregon, on May 13, 2002, of cancer at the age of 55. He graduated from high school in Oklahoma and served three tours of duty in Vietnam. Jim graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1974. He worked for the Forest Service at the Umpqua Ranger District for 26 years before retiring in 2001.

### **Daniel C. Peterson** (Fairbanks '80)

Dan died July 15, 2002, by his own hand at his home in Grand Junction, CO. He was 53 years old. Dan was born in Denver, CO, and graduated from the University in Boulder in 1972. He started work with the Forest Service in 1970 on the Dillon, Colorado District and was on a Helitack crew in Naches, WA, in 1976. Dan spent a year on Helitack in Alaska before his rookie year at Fairbanks in 1980. He always said that smokejumping was "the highest calling of mankind." Dan was supervisor for the Mesa County Probation Department at the time of his death.

Condolences can be sent to Dan's former wife Cindi Jackson, 865 Hall Ave., Grand Junction, CO 81501. (Courtesy of Gary McMurtrey)

### **Donald E. Weter** (Redding '66)

Don died May 29, 2002, in Anchorage, AK, at the age of 63. He jumped in Redding from 1966-69 before moving to Anchorage where he jumped the 1970-72 seasons. Throughout his life, Don worked in construction, operated heavy equipment, worked as a hunting guide, farmed and boated. He was preceded in death by his wife "Frenchie." 🌹



# NSA Guest Book



*Our Web site [www.smokejumpers.com](http://www.smokejumpers.com) gets about 700 hits per day. One of the many features of our Web site is the "Guest book" where individuals log on with their comments. Here is a recent sampling over the past months:*

Hello again. Well I just wanted to leave a quick message. I just received my smokejumping video today and just finished it. It is the best fire related video there is out there. I am very impressed. Thank you and it was worth every cent.

**justin**

<jlb2400@hotmail.com>

Actually, the NSA's mission is to provide a common link for jumpers past and present - and not 'wannabes' who whine at the first site of adversity. Did you try the links page? With your attitude, you might want to set your sights a little lower. And yes John, I'd like fries with my happy meal. **Twisted**

So - I want to find out more about becoming a smokejumper. I come to the NSA web site. I find out that to get any real information I've got to pay \$25 to 'join'. The NSA's first priority is obviously to make money and disseminate information about the smoke jumping profession second. It's a good web site though.

**John Jackson**

<johnj@external.umass.edu>

I am the granddaughter of Elmer Neufeld. I spent a lot of time listening to my grandfather talk about his time as a smoke jumper. And about what he did after he retired from smoke jumping. And I just wanted to say thank you for writing a wonderful article about him. If you have any questions about Elmer Neufeld just let me know and I would be happy to give more information that I remember. Grandpa was a strong man in smokejumping but he was even a stronger man out of jumping. He was the best man I have ever known and will ever know.

**Caron Ritchie**

<chevyt355@aol.com>

Hello all smokejumpers past present my name is Melvin Walunga. I rookied in Fairbanks in 1969. At this time, I am disabled, my right side doesn't work due to a stroke but I'm fine otherwise. I still don't have an e-mail yet but will soon. Best of luck this summer during the fire season. many jumps, lots of oats God bless...

**Melvin Walunga**

Anchorage, AK USA

Hello fellow Jumpers! I just wanted to say hello and say, "Drop me an E-mail". I haven't heard from anyone in a long time. My e-mail address is:

twomatts@earthlink.net

**Duane O. Matt**

Rookie 1992 MSO

Hi Jumpers, This will be the 2nd time I have written in on this web site. I love it!

Anyway, my father is the late Tom Crane. He was a Fairbanks, AK jumper in the mid '60s - early '70s. I have always felt this pull to go back to Alaska. So, anyone out there (up there) know of summer employment. I would love to work with the jumpers - office work or whatever. Unfortunately, (please don't hold this against me) but, the majority of my employment has been spent at law firms (UGH) in Boise, ID. NO, I am not an attorney - but someone has to work for them eh! Anyway, I would like to drive up to AK and work for the summer. Something involving fire. Any leads would be GREATLY appreciated!! Thanks,

**Vicky**

<vzc@moffatt.com>

I recently met a man who lives in Austin, TX. He was on a smokejumping team in the 1950's. He also fought the, "Gates of the mountain fire". He requested that I look for the Helena paper dated that same time with that headline. If anyone knows where I can BUY a copy for this guy, please let me know. Thanks

**Bruce B. Keller**

<drtfarmr@Selway.umt.edu>

Hi All, I'm reading Jumping Fire right now and what a trip down memory lane! I was the personnel Staffing Specialist in the State Office who did the recruitment and personnel actions for you fire guys. Murray's book is bringing back faces and incidents and some very fond memories. I left BLM for the Immigration Service in 1987 and changed my name from Schmidt. My 1977 Special Achievement Certificate (overprinted on the wildfire) hangs on my office vanity wall with the Alaska Smokejumper plastic coffee mug Steve Nemore gave me.

**Stephanie H. Bissland**

sbisslan@alaska.net

Love to have a reunion in the East for us old jumpers living here. Also, it would be good PR to have it in DC.

**Denis Symes**

<d.symes@worldnet.att.net> 🍷



# The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**  
(Associate)

THIS SPRING, MANY Native Americans in Region One declined to go through refresher training. The BIA blamed it on mandatory drug testing. The firefighters blamed it on delays in getting paid last year. With unemployment on Indian reservations running between 40 and 70 percent and fire fighting being one of the few job opportunities in Indian country, it remains to be seen how this will all pan out as the fire season gets underway.

In June the United States House of Representatives passed a bill by Washington Representative Richard "Doc" Hastings (R) that would require the Department of Agriculture's inspector general to investigate firefighter line of duty deaths independently of the Forest Service. Washington Senator Maria Cantwell (D) has a similar bill in the Senate. It's been a long time coming.

The Forest Service technology has developed a new fire shelter and development center in

Missoula will give firefighters trapped in the searing heat of a wildfire a better chance of surviving. The Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council announced the selection of the new design early this summer. According to project leader **Leslie Anderson** (Missoula '84), "Criteria considered for the redesigned shelter include resistance to radiant and convective heat, toxicity, time to deploy,

half, about half of those prevented serious injury, and the other half saved life. By June 2003, 50,000 of the new shelters should be available to fire fighting agencies, according to the NIFC. According to their Web site, Jim Roth's Storm King Mountain Technologies is still conducting tests on their fire shelter.

The Sula Lookout on the Bitterroot National Forest was

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. . . The House Appropriations Committee approved an additional 700 million dollars in spending on wildland fire fighting this year by voice vote. The Bush administration opposes the extra money. . . .

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size, bulk, weight, strength and cost. The new design is similar in size and only slightly heavier — 4 pounds compared with 3.4 pounds — than the shelter now in use by the various firefighting agencies in the Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council, but showed a 22 percent reduction in temperature rise in radiant heat, an 81 percent reduction in temperature rise in a direct, or convective, heat test, and an increased resistance to punctures and tearing." There have been about 1,100-recorded deployments of the current shelter, Anderson said. Of those, about half were deployed as a precaution, rather than in a life-threatening situation. Of the remaining

destroyed by fire on August 6, 2000. A new lookout was built on the same site and on June 8 in a steady downpour the new lookout was dedicated to the memory of Sula District firefighter Dave Rendek who was killed by a snag while fighting a fire at Lost Trail Pass last September.

The airplane that dropped smokejumpers on Mann Gulch in 1949 now has a new home with the opening of a new hangar on June 15; the Museum of Mountain Flying dedicated the R. Preston Nash Jr. Hangar on the east end of the Missoula International Airport. The 18,500 square foot hangar will house the historic Johnson DC-3

that carried smokejumpers to Mann Gulch on August 5, 1949, along with other aviation and smokejumper artifacts.

The House Appropriations Committee approved an additional 700 million dollars in spending on wildland fire fighting this year by voice vote. The Bush administration opposes the extra money. The White House believes federal agencies have all the resources they need. The full House, meanwhile, passed by voice vote a measure that extends legal protections to foreign firefighters enlisted in the battle in one of the worst wildfire seasons in history. The legislation — not yet taken up by the Senate — would make foreign firefighters employees of the federal government for the limited purpose of shielding them and the countries that send them from lawsuits. Rep. Scott McInnis, (R) Colorado, sponsored the bill, saying Australia and New Zealand have personnel ready to help fight the wildfires, but they are reluctant to do so because of fear of getting embroiled in lawsuits. He said there was a pressing need for another 100 firefighters with mid-level supervisory skills, people who are available in those two countries. Something is seriously wrong in the federal agencies responsible for protecting natural resources when they have to employ expatriates from half way around the world to serve as middle managers on fires. Maybe we need to get rid of some the managers and hire some leaders at the top of the resource agencies or make positions in middle management more appealing to those with the most experience. 🧑

Send comments and news items to:  
[ward\\_lafrance@hotmail.com](mailto:ward_lafrance@hotmail.com)

# Green Eggs and Purple Ham

by Steve McDonald

My wife bought a book for my boys  
Called "Green Eggs and Purple Ham."  
They liked the story and the  
Non-sensical words of Dr. Seuss.

But I knew about the real  
Green eggs and purple ham.  
I had eaten it  
And wondered at the color.

It came in five gallon metal tins  
Air-dropped or hauled to fire camps  
After it had been cooked  
In some jerk-water town's grubby restaurant.

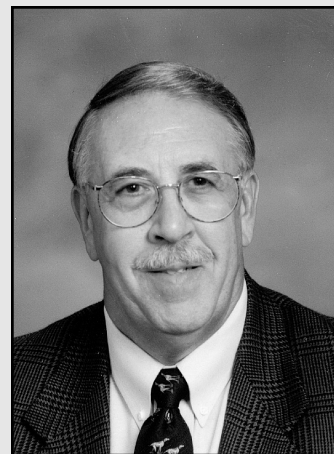
It must have been the metal  
Reacting with the food.  
Green eggs.  
Purple ham.

Most ate it.  
It was hot and it tasted OK.  
A few had bread and butter only.  
And coffee.

I never saw anyone get sick on  
Green eggs and purple ham.  
They don't serve it now.  
Contractors cook on site - fresh.

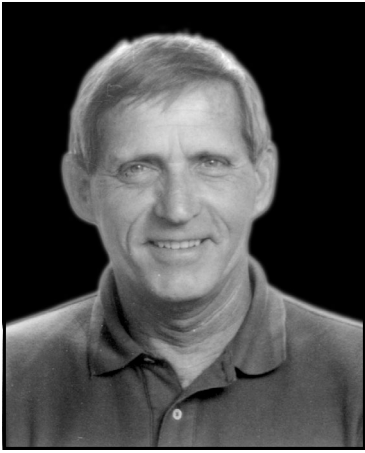
I have wondered many times  
About the weird chemistry  
Of those old fire camp breakfasts.  
What made those wild colors?

It's a question unanswered.  
I finally concluded  
I'm just part green eggs  
And purple ham. I am!



*Steve McDonald*

*Dr. Steve McDonald retired in 1996 after 36 years with the U.S. Forest Service. He is the author of the novels Baker 30 and Bitterroot and poems with forestry themes. Steve can be contacted at:  
[SEM42540@cs.com](mailto:SEM42540@cs.com)*



# Jump List



by Ted Burgon (Idaho City '52)

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. On several of the submissions below I have tried to contact the person via e-mail only to find out the e-mail address is not current. If you change your e-mail address please update Smokejumper magazine. Be sure to include in your submission where you are currently living and what you are doing. I can be reached at [t\\_burgon@fmi.com](mailto:t_burgon@fmi.com)

## Alaska

Todd Stark '98 writes that he is working as a full-time firefighter for the city of Everett, Washington. Todd spent three seasons with the jumpers in Alaska in addition to four seasons on the Los Padres as a hotshot. He spent another 5.5 years as a volunteer firefighter in the L.A. County Fire Department.

Dan Thompson '86 jumped for 4 years out of FBX. He is now working as a city fireman in Kent, Washington. In his spare time he rides his Harley and continues to enjoy hunting, fishing and camping. His brother, Guy, (MSO '77), jumped out of Missoula and West Yellowstone from 1977 to 1983. Both Dan and Guy grew up in Missoula.

Greg West '64 has been a circuit court judge in Salem, Oregon, for the past 16 years and plans to retire this current year. He and his wife, Susan, have been married 32 years and have two children, Jocelyn, 23 and Mark, 19. Greg's leisure time is spent playing duplicate bridge and he is a Silver Life Master with American Contract Bridge League. He and Susan plan to move to Saddlebrooke, a retirement community in Tucson, Arizona, when he retires. [Burgon: Enjoy the area, Greg. I have a friend in that area who says he can play bridge 24/7/365.]

## Boise

Phil Brollier '71 is currently the president of VJB Insurance Agency in Boise. *HOWEVER*, Phil, who jumped from 1971 to 1973, began jumping again in 1991 to 1999 ... and jumped again in 2001, after taking a year off. During his quiet time he became the father of four and the grandfather to three. One of the great things is Phil jumped with his two sons, Justin (?) and Jacob (RDD '95). He writes that they are "fine lads." If you want to know what his hobby is you had better ask him.



William "Bill" Cramer '90 jumped out of Boise for three years and then went to Alaska, where he worked as a loft tech from '94 to '97. He has been training supervisor ever since. He and wife, Sharon, have two daughters, Bethany and Cara. Bill enjoys hunting, fishing and hockey. He is from a line of "bright" Cramers as his dad, John, was in McCall, MYC '63 through '80 and jumped out of McCall, Idaho City, Boise and Missoula. He has two brothers, Tom, the "smart one" RAC '97 and Jeff, the "tough one" FBX '02. [Burgon: More on the colorful Cramers in a later issue. Dad, John, is in the McCall section further down.]

## Cave Junction

Doug Bucklew '67 writes that he has spent his life in the air. He began as a smokejumper, from there into crop dusting, then as a helitack pilot, six years in Indonesia and next 13 years as an EMS pilot. He is currently aviation manager for Life Flight out of Portland, Oregon. He has two sons, ages 17 and 19. Doug enjoys the Oregon outdoor lifestyle; camping, rafting, climbing, tennis and running. He qualified for the Boston Marathon and ran it in April 2002 with a time of 3 hours and 25 minutes. In the winter he snowboards, snowshoes, and does some skiing. He comments, "Smokejumping was still the best job ever!"

Jim Ferrell '54 retired from Encyclopedia Britannica as a division manager. He jumped for two years. Jim graduated with a B.S. in geological engineering from N.C. State in 1958. He worked for U.S. Soil Conservation Service for four years and then was with EB for the next 30. The Ferrell's have two sons, two daughters and two grandchildren. Jim writes that he "hikes nearly every day." Home is in Green Valley, Arizona. He wrote "It was great to hear about the National Smokejumpers Association. I am looking forward to receiving news about guys I jumped with and other stories." [Burgon: Jim, if you haven't seen *Smokejumpers — Firefighters from the*

*Sky* video, suggest to the family they get you a copy for your birthday. You will really enjoy it.]

**Phillip “Mike” Hodge ’54** lives in Jefferson City, Missouri, and is retired from law enforcement. He worked for the Missouri Highway Patrol, as an investigator with the Public Service Community, as a police specialist and was a marshal for the Missouri Supreme Court. The Hodge’s also owned a lodge, Lake of the Woods, in Ontario, Canada. He and his wife have two children and three grandchildren. Mike enjoys fly-fishing, hunting, taxidermy and wood carving.

**Jon T. Klingel ’65** also jumped out of Redmond in 1967 and moved north to Fairbanks where he jumped in 1971 and 1972 and again in 1974 and 1975. He is currently a quality control engineer involving pipeline and related facilities and travels, intermittently, to Alaska from his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Jon wrote “I’m trying to adjust to the contrast in weather, from 30 degrees below zero with the wind blowing snow to +80 with hot winds and very dry conditions. If this continues it will be a hell of a fire season in the southwest.” [Burgon: I received Jon’s update early in 2002 and unfortunately he was right on the mark in his forecast for the 2002 fire season!]

Over the years Jon worked as a biologist for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish as well as a technical application specialist. Other work in Alaska was as a research biologist, an associate project engineer and as a cadastral surveyor in New Mexico. He operated a computer consulting business as well. His interests include telemark skiing, sailing, kayaking, and traveling in remote country. He and his wife, Marlene, have a daughter Heidi.

**William “Bill” Knight ’60** received his B.A. in business administration from the University of Portland. Bill flew CH/H-46 helicopters for the Navy from 1967 to 1978. He was stationed out of NAS Imperial Beach (California) and operated off the USS *Sacramento*, AOE1 and the USS *Juneau*, LPD10. He also flew the C117Ds, the Navy’s version of the super DC-3, while stationed at NAC Cubi Point in the Philippines. He commented “I loved flying that bird!” From 1979 to 1988 Bill drilled with the Navy Reserve until he retired as a lieutenant commander. From 1979 to 1984 he was in the beer distribution in LaGrande (Oregon). He then began his own helicopter aerial application business using a Bell 47 and a Jet Ranger. Bill currently works for Sunkist Growers’ fruit packing co-op in the Yakima Valley. For leisure he often rides his Gold Wing 1500 and is active in the Gold Wing Road Riders Association. In May he completed a 3800-mile nine-day ride.

On August 10<sup>th</sup> he and Donna will celebrate their 39<sup>th</sup> with their two sons and a daughter and other family members including three grandchildren. [Burgon: Happy anniversary, Bill!] He plans to retire in April 2003.

**Darwin “Darby” Miller ’50** lives in Oroville, California, and is retired. He jumped out of CJ in 1950 and 51.

**Jim F. Page ’60** received a B.S. in forest management at North Carolina State in June of 1963, he married Sarah and

they were off to Alaska, all within two weeks. The first job with USFS was in Steward. On Good Friday the following year the Pages experienced the massive earthquake that shook Alaska and the entire West Coast. Jim writes “it was an awesome experience. The quake was considered the second largest earthquake in the world, since 1900.” The Pages were next sent to Juneau and later to the small fishing village of Yakutat. Jim, as with many Alaskans, became a pilot and then owner of a Super Cub.

His next posting, in 1972, was to the Clearwater in Idaho. Over the next few years the Pages were in North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas. Jim was the director of a 150-member co-ed residential YACC camp. “Now that was a challenge! But we did have a fine fire crew,” he writes. Postings continued in Texas, Kentucky and finally to West Virginia where he retired after 10 years as the forest supervisor on the Monongahela National Forest. Jim spent 34 years with the Forest Service and worked in nine forests. He is now living on the coast in Smyrna, North Carolina, where he and Sarah enjoy camping, boating and going to Elderhostels. They have one son, Jason. Their spare time is spent “dodging hurricanes.”

**Douglas “Doug” P. Stinson ’54** also jumped the 55 season in CJ and that year received his B.S. in forestry from the University of Missouri. He spent three years in the Marines and then worked for the USFS for five years out of Ketchikan (Alaska). Doug began working in the private sector with U.S. Plywood (Champion International) and in many capacities, from 1964 to 1976, when he went to work for Conifer Pacific as a timber manager in Washington and Oregon. In 1990 he became the owner and manager of Conlitz Ridge Tree Farm in Toledo, Washington. He “manages our forestland on a sustainable basis and promotes good stewardship of forestland on the state and federal level.” Doug tries to find time to continue traveling to foreign countries to observe forestry practices.

An outdoor way of life is still important to Doug as he backpacks and goes canoeing. Two of three children, now grown, followed him by becoming foresters, the third is a teacher.

**Hal K. Ward ’62** lives in Anchorage and works as the senior credit administrative officer for Northrim Bank. Hal was with Air America briefly and then in an Army armored recon unit in Germany from 1966 to 1968. Over the years he has worked for the National Bank of Oregon and National Bank of Alaska in various positions. For a five-year period, 1978 to 1983, he was self-employed operating a logging and construction business. He is the father of three, Jason, Annie-Laurie and Sara. He and Kathy Christy enjoy the outdoors in Alaska using his 1940 Stinson Reliant (wheels) and his Stinson Voyager (float) planes to get around. Other interests are fishing, photography, canoeing and rafting as well as woodworking and aircraft restoration. He is looking at retiring in the next three to five years as he has a 1971 Porsche 911S in pieces awaiting restoration. The Wards would then follow the seasons between Alaska and the lower 48.

## Idaho City

**Patric "Pat" Burtch '62** is a retired Navy pilot living in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Pat was with the Navy from 1964 to 1988 and retired as a commander. For the next nine years he was in the landscaping business, then switching to Burriss Logistics, in the human resources department. He is currently involved with his church as the facilities administrator. Pat and Patty have two children, Mike and Juli and three grandchildren.

Pat writes "I enjoy the (Smokejumper) Web site and have contacted jump buddies from 38 years ago. Also saw my picture on the *Jumper* video, well done! I remember Smokey Stover, Bobby Montoya, Gene Hobbs, Ken Smith and Dick Graham."

**Herman "Jack" Heikkenen '51** earned his B.S.F. in 1953 from the University of Michigan. He went on to receive a M.F. in 1957 and his Ph.D. in 1963. The Heikkenens have a daughter, Jacquelyn. Jack writes "In 1951 there were no term for new jumpers, also nothing in T-shirts, baseball caps, belts and so on. ... and no 'first jump' pin. Most all of us were forestry school students, on my first plane trip I jumped. The next summer I was at Fort Benning and from there to Korea. I donated my movie film of the summer of '51 (color, 16mm) to the Jumper Museum in McCall." [*Burgon*: Jack I recall that in 1952 in Idaho City we stenciled the backs of our blue Penny's work shirts with a parachute with wings on it and the words Smokejumper. Wonder if anyone can recall that or has a shirt? It would make a good item for one of the displays NSA sponsors.]

## LaGrande

**Kirk Hale '79** writes that he is the assistant fire chief in charge of operations for Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue out of West Linn (Oregon). TVFR is recognized nationally as a leader in the industry and serves nine cities in three counties. Kirk wrote he is fortunate to have such a challenging job after smokejumping. Like many jumpers he feels that "many of the principles that I preach and practice are what I learned as a rookie smokejumper in LaGrande: training, teamwork and tenacity! Thank you Denny Lewis." His outside interests include sea kayaking and traveling. This fall he heads for Mongolia for a few weeks on an Earthwatch expedition, his third in the past five years. As time permits he is fixing up a 1922 bungalow.

## McCall

**Douglas "Doug" Bird '57** is an international consultant in wildfire management. He works generally with officials in Asia and South America. He jumped from 1957 to 1960 out of McCall then worked for the Forest Service from 1961 to 1990, retiring as the director of Aviation and Fire for Region Four. Doug writes "when (I) retired in 1990, only one to have jumped all official USFS chutes, Eagle to FS-14. He has been married "for 40 years to the same young girl, Elaine." He and the young lady have three children and four grandkids. His outside interests include bike touring and he is a history buff. The Birds live in Ogden, Utah.

**Mark "Then Came Brodum" Brodum '81** continues to

jump, now into his 21<sup>st</sup> season. In the off-season he works as a commercial/industrial electrician in the Seattle area. He began his USFS career at 17 on the Pike National Forest in Colorado. TCB (Then Came Brodum) writes "I've been a torn boot six times." He is at present working on a "show truck" called the "SMOKEJUMPERS." It is a 1999 Dakota, 5.2 L, 5-speed. "It is well on its way to completion but I'm going to need sponsors to finish. Also trying to get Chrysler Dodge to build a line of trucks called the 'Smokejumper.'" TCB wrote, "to all the firefighters I've known: THANK YOU!" [*Burgon*: More on TCB's project in a later issue. He sent several photos and it is a beauty.]

**John T. Cramer '63** lives in Boise and works at the Idaho State Correctional Institute as an instructor. He jumped through 1980 beginning in McCall, 1963-65, Idaho City, 1966-69, Boise 1970-1979 and Missoula for one season, 1980, with a career total of 134 jumps. John worked for the federal government until 1997 when he retired. Sons Bill, Tom and Jeff, are either past or present jumpers. John and Rosalie are also the parents of a daughter, Janice, a teacher. [*Burgon*: What, not a smokejumper!!!?]

**Karin A. Kaaen '99** works out of McCall. She began working for the Forest Service in 1995 on a thinning crew in the summer and going to college at Eastern in LaGrande during the off-season. After two seasons thinning she got on the LaGrande Hotshots for two seasons. Then it was off to McCall jumping the 1999 and 2000 season. Last year was spent with the Rappellers in John Day. Growing up listening to Dad **Wayne Kaaen** (McCall '68) spin stories about the smokejumpers and taking her backpacking gave the motivation for an active outdoor life. Over the years Karin has visited seven countries. Activities include XC skiing, snowshoeing, dog mushing, winter backpacking and camping and various crafts. "Jumping has definitely been the greatest experience of my life!" As a P.S. she writes, "I thoroughly enjoyed the latest magazine. I read it cover to cover in one sitting and didn't get to sleep until nearly 02:00. Keep up the good work!"

**Jay L. Sevy '59** has been the president of the Deer Creek Ranch outside Hailey, Idaho, for the past 12 years. He worked,

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# LETTERS

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Editor:

Steve Goldammer's remarks on "sense of purpose" ("Checking the Canopy," *Smokejumper*, July 2002) were a refreshing reminder for today when many agencies and individuals seem to have lost any ideas of what or why they're working. The longer the "Mission Statement," the fuzzier the goal seems to become. As an example, I would like someone to give me an intelligible definition of "ecosystem management" or tell me how setting aside vast areas of "old growth" is working towards forest health.

—**Jock Fleming** (Missoula '49)

Taos, New Mexico 🇺🇸

prior to that, for the USFS for 10 years including time in the Jackson Ranger District and the Teton Forest. Jay and his brother, Bob, also operated the Sevy Guide Service out of Stanley (Idaho). He sold his interest in the guide service in 1975 and ran the Busterbark Ranch, near Stanley in the Sawtooths, for six years. He and wife, Laura, have a daughter, Tanya.

Depending on the season, his leisure time is spent hunting upland birds, fly fishing or flying. "I guess I am old enough to become nostalgic. I enjoy immensely *Smokejumper* magazine articles such as, '... Jumping Fire on a 12-Man Stick.' Unfortunately I missed the Redding reunion. I maintain close contact with **Tom Kovalicky** (MSO '60). Thumbs up on the smokejumper video — outstanding piece of work!"

**Harvey H. "Har" Weirich '44** is retired from the pleasure boat industry after years with Starcraft and Chris Craft. Harv and wife Martha have been married 51 years and have three children and four grandchildren. Current interests are gemology, computer, boating, water skiing, motorcycling travel and going to auto racing. Over the years he traveled to Germany, France and Italy for Chris Craft. Perhaps a crowning time was when he toured the U.S. and Canada on his motorcycle — solo. Harv has also worked in South Dakota building homes for the Jimmy Carter Habitat Project on the Cheyenne Indian Reservation.

## Missoula

**Glenn E. Anderson '62** has retired and is living in Anchorage. Early in his career he was in Grangeville for two years and a year as an Alaska booster. Over the years Glenn has worked for the state of Washington Fish and Game, at the Colville

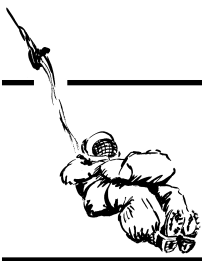
Reservation in Eastern Washington and on the Flathead Reservation. He was BIA, FMO for Alaska from 1980 to 1999. The Andersons have one son and three grandsons. He continues to hunt and fish and does some photography. For the past five years he has been president of FNAWS (Foundation for North American Wild Sheep).

**Clayton V. Berg '52** writes that "as a kid I mowed lawns and weeded but preferred to fish, swim and shoot rabbits and squirrels in South Dakota and ended up piling brush on the Coeur d' Alene in 1949 and 1950." From 1950 to 1957 he jumped "under **Good Deal Brauer (Fred Brauer, MSO '41)** and other truly fine associates, for a measly 32 or 34 jumps due to slow business." Clayton worked for the state of Montana on a survey crew, then at the Rocky Mountain Lab in Hamilton (Montana). This was interesting, he wrote, as he worked with some very competent scientists. For years he was with the Helena City-County Health Department working to rid creeks of sewage primarily through building sewer lagoons. Since 1960, when he bought 8.7 acres of alfalfa, he has planted "seeds and trees and shrubs" to evaluate winter hardiness, adaptability and to pay bills. He continues to work at assembling the widest variety of cold hardy plants in the U.S., even after four bypasses. Clayton writes that he "will try to look into making a cream-puff free-fall on some plowed field one day, but at 70 it might not be advisable." [*Burgon*: Clay, I made a tandem at 69 and 70 and it was as thrilling as my first static!]

**Harry A. Brizee '51** lives in Lanham, Md. Writes, "Sorry I live so far away from NSA activities. Have many fine memories of being an extra in *Red Skies over Montana* and jumping with such great guys. "I graduated from the University of Idaho with a B.S. in forestry in 1954. Then the Army called and I



Murry Taylor with his new dirt-track super-modified car #77. "It's got harness, buckles and a helmet. When I crawl down into the cockpit, it feels like stepping into the door." (Courtesy of Murry Taylor)

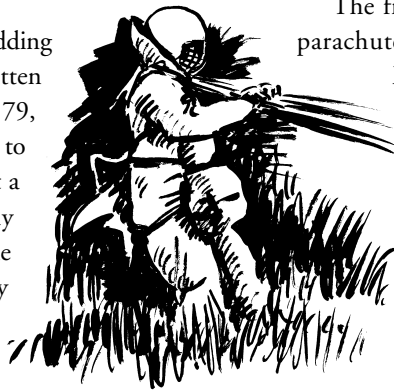


# Blast from the Past

by Dennis Golik (McCall '74)

I've been visiting with local and old-time Redding smokejumpers to get information for the written history of the early-day base. **Bob Kersh** now 79, is still the tough ex-combat Marine and ready to go a few rounds whenever necessary. Bob's got a very good memory of most of Redding's early days and he actually precedes the base, since he worked for the old North Zone and occasionally worked with Cave Junction jumpers and Jim Allen when they ventured into California before RDD Base was established in 1957.

Bob never jumped, but did PT with the boys, was a frequent assistant spotter, and went on ground-pounders with the crew. I took notes about the early Redding base operating from old CCC Fire Warehouse in downtown Redding. To build a parachute tower, Bob cut through and extended a portion of the roof and added rigging and repair tables. Orv Looper and Bob used a 4WD and chain to yank out old-growth manzanita from parts of the present 40-acre complex.



The first years of Redding saw stock GSA "burlap parachute squares" used for cargo chutes. Not until Missoula sent a LARGE shipment of WWII surplus reserves, did RDD switch to round cargo chutes. The early fire pack containers were cardboard boxes from downtown department stores like Wards. Early saws were strictly crosscuts. Not until a few years into base history, did the first two power saws appear.

There was a chance discovery last week of an ancient smokejumper two-slagger fire pack remains in the steep rugged Klamath N.F. country. I heard the remains were: Pulaski head, breakdown shovel head and handle ferrule, snapped crosscut saw blade with unattached handle hardware, a pint metal can of kerosene/stove oil, forester metal headlight case headlamp, remains of banjo canteen, and WWII-style metal canteen cup with first aid kit stuffed inside. Kersh says could be either early Redding-era, or old Cave Junction gear (CJ first jumped KNF fires in mid-1940s). 🦋

spent one tour in Vietnam and five years with an airborne unit making more than 40 jumps, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in the infantry in 1976." Harry then became director of a company doing horticulture and custodial contract work with disabled workers in the Washington, D.C., area, retiring for the second time in 1999. He and his wife, Rebecca, have a daughter at BYU and a son working on his masters at Virginia Tech. Harry's time, at present, is spent visiting Civil War sites, gardening and writing his family's history.

**Kevin P. Brown '66** is now retired from the Forest Service after 31 years in fire management. He began on the Kaniksu National Forest in 1964 then jumped from '66 through '69. Over the next 28 years he was on the Lolo. In 1997 he was the state of Montana fire supervisor, rounding out a long career in the Southwest Montana Coordination Center as a part-time dispatcher. Kevin writes that "every day is now Saturday." He and wife, Joyce, have one son. His "Saturdays" are spent fishing, hunting and riding their horses. One pleasure each spring is "... sitting on my deck with a cold one watching the Turbo DC-3, and Sherpas dropping new jumpers in the hills behind my house. It brings back fond memories!"

**Richard "Dick" Clearman '52** was a Nine Mile rookie. As with many of the fellows in the 1950s he jumped in the summer for money for school in the winter. He spent the next 20 years with the U.S. Army as an artillery officer, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. He commanded a 600-man battalion of

155s in Vietnam. Since then Dick has spent the past 21 years as a New York Life Insurance agent and qualified for the Million Dollar Round Table NINE times. [Burgon: Way to go, Dick!] He and his wife, Galen, have three daughters and seven grandchildren. Interests include hunting and fishing.

**Romie J. Deschamps '61** lives in Palmer, Alaska, and is the pharmacy manager for Wal-Mart in Wasilea. He has been a pharmacist since graduating from the University of Montana's School of Pharmacy in 1966. Early on he worked on the Alaskan Pipeline on a survey crew. During the time he and his wife Pat lived in New Zealand she worked as a nurse and he was "Mr. Mom".

Romie is also a volunteer on the Alaska Disaster Medical Assistance Team (AKDMAT). Pat was a volunteer at Ground Zero from 30 September to 12 October and Romie was there later as a pharmacist. The Deschamps raised six children, two sons and four daughters. They also have a grandson. When time permits they enjoy traveling having visited Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Scandinavia, Bahamas, Costa Rica, and much of North America.

## North Cascades

**Joseph "Joe" Buhaly '47** spent 25 years with Washington State University as an extension forestry specialist. His area was western Washington working out of the Research and Exten-

sion Center at Puyallup, Washington. Joe jumped out of NCSB from 1947 through 1950. The Buhalys raised three sons and currently have four grandchildren. Today he spends his time traveling, swimming, gardening and doing some photography.

**Kenton "Ken" Corum '63** jumped the next year also and then became a member of the Peace Corps in India from 1965 to 1967. In 1967 he was back jumping for the next two seasons. The following two years Ken taught high school. From 1973 to 1976 he worked on a technical assistance project for the University of Wisconsin in Brazil. He joined the staff at Oak Ridge National Laboratories in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, but the Pacific Northwest called and he "came home" to work on the Northwest Power Planning Council in 1982 where he is still working as an economist. Ken and wife, Gwen, have two sons, Jesse and Lee. Hobbies include running, biking and playing his guitar.

**Roger A. Harding '54** became a smokejumper after serving as a rigger in the Air Force for four years prior to starting college. Roger jumped the following year as well and then went to work for the state of Washington after graduation from the University of Washington in 1956. He worked for eight years as an inventory forester then becoming the supervisor. Roger writes, "Over the years I led the department in the development of forest inventory, cartography, photogrammetry and geographical information systems. He married Betty in 1956 and they had two daughters and a son. They also have three grandchildren, including a 13 year old with a very appropriate name, Forrest. Roger retired in 1982 and from 1986 to 1988 the Hardings served with the Peace Corps in Senegal, West Africa. He was honored by the Society of American Foresters by being elected chair of the Washington State SAF in 1996 and a SAF Fellow in 1999.

**Gerry M. Jessup '59** currently lives in Mt. Hood, Oregon, where he is the vice president of marketing for the Diamond Fruit Growers. He has worked in the fruit packing business since 1965 in Oregon and Washington. He writes that he plans to retire in 2005 and return to Wenatchee. Gerry and his wife have two boys and a daughter plus three grandchildren. His hobby is golf and spending time with the family.

**Clarence "Jim" Rabideau '49** has become a Life Member. Jim has been active in the world of law since 1963. He served as the county prosecuting attorney/coroner, an elected position, for 24 years, leaving in 1986. In 1986 he also retired from the Navy Reserve as a captain with JAG, after 42 years of service. There will be a Life Profile on Jim in the near future.

**Edward R. Summerfield '47** is in the retirement mode in Olympia, Washington. Ed writes that after jumping ('47-'50) he worked as a USFS forester in the summer of 1951 then joined the Navy and was a general line officer (serving on ships) from 1951 to 1972. After leaving the Navy he went to work for the state of Washington's Department of Natural Resources. He worked for DNR as a computer systems analyst and mid-level manager from 1973 to 1976. Ed and Elena have five children and four grandchildren. Leisure time is spent reading, gardening and at his church.

[*Burton*: The NSA magazine received a large number of updates from Missoula and will print more in the next two issues. Thanks to all of you.]

## Redding

**David S. Dooley '73** retired in January 2002, from the USFS. He is now working as a firearms instructor at the Artesia, New Mexico, branch of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. His primary assignment is to teach "shooting to the new Air Marshals." This, he writes, is a result of spending five years as a special agent detailed to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center at Glynco, Georgia, as a firearms instructor. "Otherwise I'd still be working for the F.S.!!" [*Burton*: I know we are all glad you chose this direction, Dave!]

From 1968 to 1980 he worked within various fire suppression groups. In 1981 he became a law enforcement officer with the Forest Service, serving in that capacity until he retired as a patrol commander, Southwestern Region, in 2002. Dave and Inez have been married 28 years and have a daughter who is in the U.S. Army. Inez works for the USFS R-3 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Dave's spare time includes competitive shooting and touring with Inez on their motorcycle.

**Kris V. Kristofors '64** was with the 198<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry in Vietnam from 1966 to 1968. He returned to the smokejumpers from 1969 through 1973 and in 1974 became a re-tread. Prior to jumping he worked on the Modoc and Mendocino National Forests. Over the years he worked as a state park ranger, a crew foreman on the Sequoia N.F., with the Hotshots at Tahoe and then training director at the Military Sealift Compound, Pacific, from 1991 to 1996. From 1996 to 2001 he was a classification chief at McClellan Air Force Base and is currently the civilian personnel officer at Travis Air Force Base.

Kris and his wife, Monique, have one daughter. He has continuing interest in moderate aerobics and weight training and works in a little down hill skiing and windsurfing. He writes that his "M.A. thesis at Cal State University, Chico, 1973 was 'The Copper Mining Era in Shasta County, California, 1896-1919. An Environmental Impact Study.'"

**Adam L. Lauber '99** continues to jump out of Redding. Adam, or "Knobby" as he is known, began his fire suppression career on an engine then moved to the Plumas Hot Shots and on to the Prescott Hotshots at Tahoe. Knobby attended Kent State in Ohio. He and his wife, Cynthia, have two children. Outside interests are skiing, flying and family activities. He writes that he is "honored to be a part of a great organization of jumpers. More ought to pay their Life Membership dues." [*Burton*: Good thought, Knobby!]

**Brian Thomas Miller '85** began fire suppression in 1977 as an "engine slug" after three years as a predatory trapper on the Angeles N.F. From 1981 to 1984 he was with Helishots/Hotshots on the Sequoia and Toiyabe N.F.s. He began jumping and that lasted until 1995 with an odd year or two out as a firefighter/EMT or fire captain/paramedic. "Jumbo" entered medical school in 1998, graduating from the Penn State College of Medicine on May 19, 2002. He began his residency in Otolaryngology (head and neck surgery) at the University of Utah in Salt Lake in July.

Under "Family" he writes "1 dog, 'Ceili', an irritable Chesapeake Bay retriever (when she does good, no one remembers,



when she does bad, no one forgets)." Under "Hobbies/Interests": "Flat Earth Society, Phrenology Consortium. [Burgon: Are you in jest, Jumbo?]

**Ray L. Morrow '64** retired from the Forest Service after 32 years. He spent time as the forest aviation specialist on the Los Padres, forest air officer, Sierra, District FMO on the Sierra (Kings River) and District FMO on the Mendocino (Upper Lake). Ray and his wife, Cris, have two sons and a daughter and 12 grandchildren. One of whom has presented them with a great grandchild. He enjoys woodworking and traveling the lower 48 with Cris. He writes, "I never made it to Alaska, was called several times but was away on a helicopter spray project or not in a position to be able to go. I really enjoyed Murry's book *Jumping Fire*. It is probably as close to Alaska as I will ever get, my loss!"

**Murry A. Taylor '65** retired in 2001 as one of the oldest active jumpers around. Murry, in true jumper spirit, has become a Life Member. Currently he is "on the go" for his publisher promoting his book *Jumping Fire* and smoozing with fellow jumpers across the West. He is also working on a new book on smokejumping. NSA Magazine will have a Life Member bio on Murry in the near future. [Burgon: I talked with Murry at the High Desert Museum near Bend (Oregon) in June, where he made a presentation. It was good fun!]

**Gordon M. Woodhead '83** jumped eight seasons out of Redding. He is currently a contractor/builder in Susanville (California). He writes that he is "building and raising my daughter." [Burgon: As a new five-year member, Gordon, I hope you enjoy the magazine and the memories it often invokes.]

## Redmond

**Don Tienhuara '70** retired last June (2001) after 32 years of federal service including four years with the Marines. After his rookie year at Redmond he spent the next eight out of Fairbanks. His BLM career included positions in Salem as fuel manager, training in Cedarville, California, and two tours as FMO, one in Salmon and the last in Winnemucca. Just months after Don retired last year his wife of 25 years passed away. Don's daughter has presented him with two grandchildren ages one and three. His hobbies include fishing and hunting and "being retired!"

**John C. Twiss '67** is currently the forest supervisor on the Black Hills National Forest in Wyoming and South Dakota. John is a man of few words as he summed up his "Job History" with "30+ years of moving with USFS in 9 states and Washington, D.C." For "Hobbies" he wrote, "I wish!". The Twiss family includes a daughter, Jill. [Burgon: John recently became a Life Member and I am hoping to get a tad more out of him for his "bio." All kidding aside, thanks John. It is men like you that keep the forests up and running and support for the NSA is what keeps it going.]

**Stephen W. "Stevareno" Wilkins '65** then spent two years in the Navy returning to Redmond in 1968. He jumped for three years out of Fairbanks in the '70s and included a comment that "I loved cargo kicking and set a record in 1977 while in Fairbanks." Over the years Steve attended flight schools in

Bend (Oregon) and became licensed in single and multi-engined aircraft as well as getting his rating as a commercial pilot. He received a seaplane rating in Florida. One of his more interesting flying jobs was flying a "banner" towing plane in Florida. For the last 12 years he worked for Pozzi Window out of Bend as an 18 wheel driver crossing all of the lower 48 states racking up nearly three million miles. [Burgon: That is about 120 times around the world.] Bonnie married him 32 years ago and over the years they raised four children.

He is now retired, sorta, as he is studying for his ham radio license, interested in ultra-light flying and "getting my weight down for sky-diving." [Burgon: Steve included a story that Fred Cooper added to in a cover letter. NSA will print this later. It is the story of one more very lucky jumper.]

## West Yellowstone

**Robert "Bob" Dunton '88** is now the environmental officer with the Utah National Guard out of Salt Lake City. The Duntons have a new son, Luke. Golf, hiking and biking occupy his free time.

## Pilots

**Dale Major** flew for the USFS, Region 4 for 14 years, 1960 to 1974. He began flying out of Idaho City in 1960 in a C-45 then at Boise after BIFC started up using a C-47. Dale also flew out of McCall and Silver City. At times he flew fire crews and cargo in the venerable C-46, C-47 and C-54s. He also flew lead plane missions using a T-34, T-28 Beech Baron and an Aero Commander.

**Randy Letfoldt '89** as a pilot. Over the years he has flown out of Boise and Redding. He currently has a contract with Big Horn Airways from 2001 to 2005. Randy continues to work for the Buhl (Idaho) Fire Department, from 1983 to the present. He has done almost all that you can do with a plane; charters, freight, executive, crop dusting and commuter traffic as well as flying jumpers. He especially enjoyed one special time, working contracts in the north of Alaska out on the ice. His hobbies include trap shooting, hunting and snowmobiling.

In 1974 he left the USFS and flew for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation until 1984 when he retired from government service. He married his wife Lillie in 1953 and they raised three sons (Scott, John, and Doug) and a daughter (Kathy). His wife passed away in 1994. Dale's interests include flying his plane and he is currently building an experimental aircraft. Home is Clackamas, Oregon.

## Associates

**Suzanna "Sue" Raker** wrote a great letter and it will be printed in the near future. Sue is one of these ladies that seems to follow the old motto "Damn the torpedoes and full speed ahead!" She is now living in Calumet, Michigan, farming and raising bees. Her fire suppression career was in Maine with the Firebirds in Canada.

**Michael "Mike" Wegewka** wrote "I wish you the very best in 2002. Keep up the great work with the *Smokejumper* magazine." [Burgon: Thanks, Mike, and keep us updated. It is always nice to hear from associates.]