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## Smokejumper Magazine, July 2013

National Smokejumper Association

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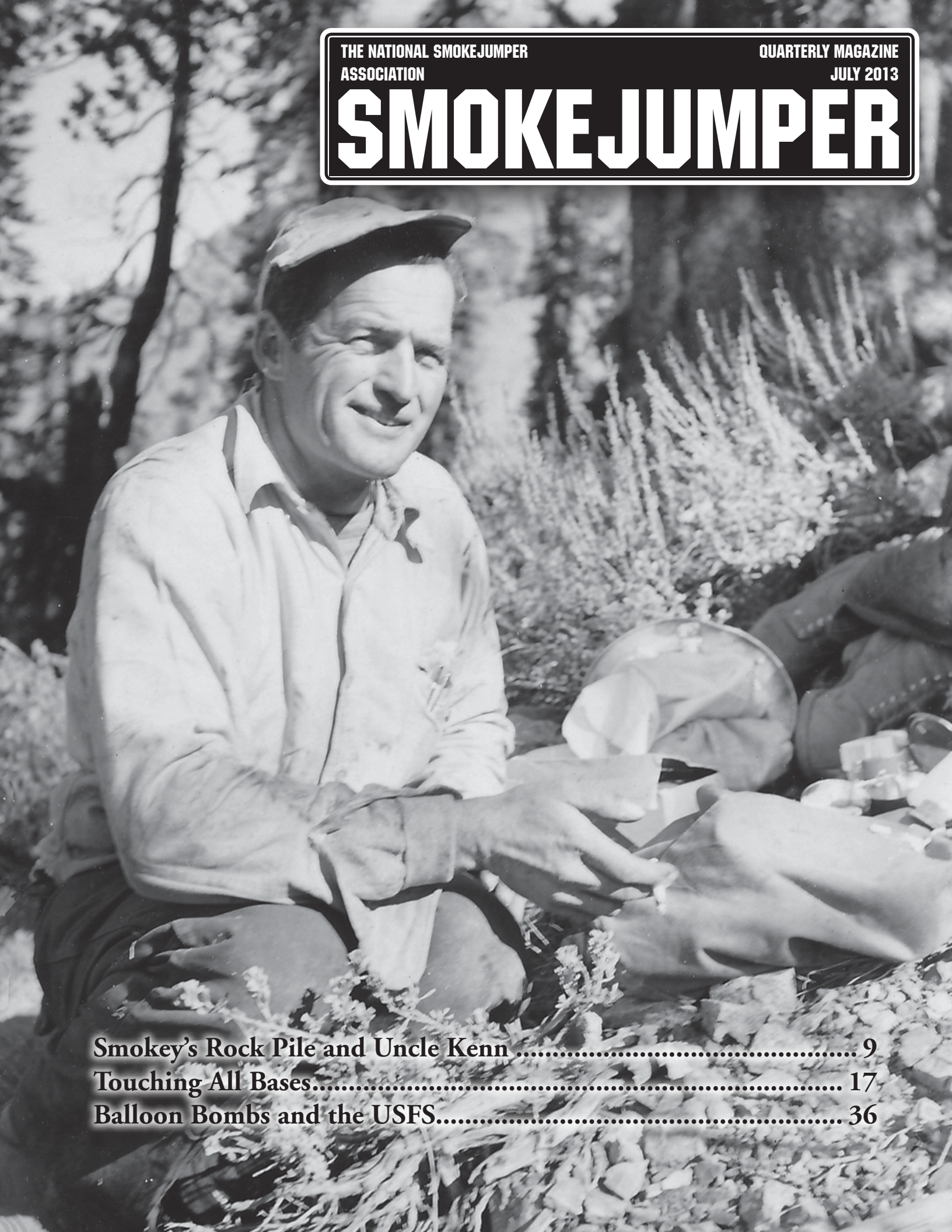
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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
JULY 2013

# SMOKEJUMPER



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## Message from the President



by **Jim Cherry**  
(Missoula '57)  
PRESIDENT

I WANT TO thank all of you who have contributed to the NSA's Good Samaritan Fund over the past couple of years.

At the time of this writing, the GSF has been able to bring some relief to members of our "band of brothers" who have experienced a variety of different types of personal loss. You will be able to read some of the accounts of lives changed through personal tragedy at other places in this issue of the magazine.

Once again, I encourage you to use the GSF as a way to honor or memorialize a person or an event that has touched your life in a meaningful way. A gift to the GSF will not end up gathering dust on a shelf. Rather, it will be a living gift that improves the life of someone else in a moment of need.

Three members of our Board of Directors are stepping down after years of service to the NSA: **Charlie Brown** (IDC-56), **John Helmer** (RDD-59) and **Larry Longley** (NCSB-72). Their contributions to the board have

been extraordinary, helping the NSA to make great strides in financial soundness of operation and in gathering and preserving historical materials and recorded interviews with jumpers from throughout our nearly 75 years of operation.

On behalf of the entire NSA Board of Directors, I extend a heartfelt "thanks" to these men for their selfless contributions of time and talent. Theirs has been a service of love for the mission of the NSA.

Board members appointed to serve new three-year terms include **Gary Baker** (MSO-67), **John McDaniel** (CJ-57) and **Jim Cherry**. **Guy Hurlbutt** (IDC-62) will serve for one year.

Progress can be reported regarding the NSA website. We all know that it has been a couple of years since our website was hacked. It was necessary to take down parts of it in order to save it and provide enhanced security measures.

By the time you are reading this information, you will begin to see some changes in the appearance and functionality of the website. It isn't all going to be taking place at once, but it will be phased in as each segment is completed and ready for "roll out" to the public.

Part of this entire complicated process has included the splitting off of the NSA trails program. Many of you have already discovered the resources available at [www.nsatrails.com](http://www.nsatrails.com). Thanks go to **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) for piloting this project so successfully. 🙏

With your continued patience we will soon have a first-class NSA website once again. In the meantime, continue checking us out at [www.smokejumpers.com](http://www.smokejumpers.com).

Speaking of the trails program, congratulations need to go out to the leadership crew that has put together another varied and challenging opportunity for so many of us to enjoy shared work and fellowship, while participating in projects that

bring good to our forests and parklands.

There are 13 drive-to projects, 10 pack-in projects ranging from New York City (imagine that), West Virginia, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, California and Wyoming. That's no small feat to organize.

McCall and Missoula are both holding base reunions this summer. McCall's is taking place June

7-9 in McCall. The Missoula reunion is set for July 12-13 in Missoula, so it will dovetail with the beginning of many of the Montana/Idaho trail projects.

Plans are also forming for an all-base reunion in 2015 that will mark the 75th anniversary of the first fire jumps and the birth of smokejumping. Dates are not yet set, but don't let that keep you from marking your calendar for early summer 2015. 🦋

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### *Smokejumper* base abbreviations:

Anchorage.....ANC	Grangeville .....GAC	Redding.....RDD
Boise.....NIFC	Idaho City.....IDC	Redmond.....RAC
Cave Junction.....CJ	La Grande.....LGD	West Yellowstone WYS
Fairbanks.....FBX	McCall.....MYC	Whitehorse Yukon YXY
Fort St. John.....YXJ	Missoula.....MSO	Winthrop.....NCSB

## Are You Going to Be “Temporarily Away”?

As more of our membership moves with the weather, we are getting an ever-increasing number of *Smokejumper* magazines returned by the post office marked “Temporarily Away.” Since we mail the magazine via bulk mail, it is not forwarded, and we are charged first class postage for its return.

If you are leaving your mailing address during the months of March, June, September and/or December, please let Chuck Sheley know. He can hold your magazine and mail it upon your return OR mail it to your seasonal address. Please help us save this *triple mailing expense*. Chuck's contact information is in the information box on this page.

Another option is *join our electronic mailing list*. 🦋

# My Last “Jump”

by Gary M. Watts (McCall '64)

**M**y last parachute jump, like my first, was not as a smokejumper; it wasn't really a jump, either. My second and final summer as a jumper was '65 where I had four practice jumps and six fire jumps to make a total of nine fire and 11 practice jumps for my Forest Service career.

Fall quarter of 1965 was the beginning of my fifth and, hopefully, final year at the University of Utah. Five years because a major in chemical engineering took that long, even with a full load, schedule-wise, unless you went to summer school, which, financially, for me was out of the question.

Early into that fifth year of college, I was brutally made aware of the small print concerning Selective Service student deferments: I received a letter from the draft board informing me that my 1-S (student) status was good for only four years and had been changed to 1-A (immediately eligible for draft). The letter directed me to report for a pre-induction physical. Bummer!

I can say, without reservation, that from the time I was old enough to remember my name I wanted to be a pilot; so when a couple of days later I saw the Navy recruiter on campus, a plan of action formed in my mind. After maxing out the exams for the Navy's Aviation Officer Candidate program, the recruiter assured me if I joined the Navy, they'd keep the Army draft off my back and guarantee me a chance to graduate.

I reported for my draft physical as scheduled and flunked it for the same high-frequency hearing loss that the Air Force Academy had turned me down for five years earlier. The Army, however, considered it a temporary handicap and told me I had to come back in three months for another try. And, they implied, I'd have to be retested every three months until I passed.

That Sword of Damocles hanging over my head severely limited my career-planning options, so I decided to see what the Navy had to offer.

The Navy bought me a ticket on commercial air from Salt Lake City to San Francisco, met me there with an official vehicle, and drove me to Naval Air Station, Alameda, where they put me up in a large (at least 40-bed) barracks, where I was the only occupant. The next day I passed most of the physical but failed the hearing test on the first try.

They gave me a second shot and told me that although I had a high-frequency hearing loss (no surprise there), the Navy didn't consider it a disqualifying factor.

In the battery of interviews that followed, I asked the interviewing officers about the hearing problem and they all said not to worry, so I didn't. I signed the enlistment papers that allowed me to graduate from college in June and obligated me to enter Naval Aviation Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, Fla., in July.

Skip forward now three years to June 23, 1969. There are a lot of stories and events in those three years: I lost my dad, a best friend, my beloved dog, and crashed an airplane (went off the end of the runway in an F-9 Cougar at Kingsville, Texas – no damage), all within a week.

On the other side of the coin, I got married, received the gold wings of a naval aviator and began my career flying fighters, specifically, the F-8 Crusader. It was a single-seat, single-engine, afterburning, carrier-based fighter, armed with Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and four 20-mm cannons.

It was a typical summer morning for VC-2 – Navy fixed-wing Composite Squadron Two, at Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia Beach, Va.: hot, hazy and humid. I was flying on a four-plane “Clinch” hop. “Clinch” was the call sign of the VACAPES (Virginia Capes, Radar Controller Training School).

We were helping to train radar controllers to perform air-to-air intercepts, called GCIs – ground-controlled intercepts. We'd split up and fly vectors supplied by the trainees, then evaluate the effectiveness of their intercepts. Back and forth we went, boring holes in the sky, turning jet fuel into noise.

To fight boredom on these flights, I would, occasionally, unhook my oxygen mask and watch my fingernails turn blue. The trick here was to go back on oxygen before passing out.

After about an hour of training and reaching a pre-briefed fuel state, we headed back to NAS Oceana.

Leading the flight was Lt. Cmdr. Mike Burke, a highly experienced pilot, qualified in many types of aircraft, whose claim to fame was, in an emergency, landing a huge, four-engine Martin P-5 Marlin seaplane in the lake at a golf course in El Paso, Texas. Mike recently died of brain cancer.

Number two was Lt. (J.G.) Jerry Lewson, who had recently received his wings and was brand new to the F-8 and to the squadron.

I was number three in the formation, a relative veteran with about a year in the squadron, 261.5 hours in the F-8 and 565.3 total hours.





*The Crusader's fuselage was buried up to the tail in the swamp. The wing was torn off as it crashed through the trees. (Courtesy U. S. Navy)*

Bringing up the rear as number four was Lt. (J.G.) George Westfall. George was about a month junior to me, and his flight hour numbers and experience level was similar to mine. He, like Garry Weigand and I would do, went on after VC-2, to fly F-4 Phantoms out of NAS Miramar, San Diego, and flew in Vietnam in 1972-73. George left the Navy after that and went into the aviation insurance business.

The flight was flown pretty much as briefed. When the training session was over, we switched to our squadron tactical radio frequency for join up and RTB (return to base). We joined in trail formation and engaged in mild but rollicking fun aerobatic maneuvers in what was called a tail chase.

As we approached Stumpy, a lake in the Dismal Swamp littered with dead tree stumps, the initial point for VFR (visual flight rules) entry into NAS Oceana, we knocked off the tail chase and moved into a loose echelon (in line) formation.

At Stumpy, Lt. Cmdr. Burke called Oceana tower and announced he had a flight of four F-8s at Stumpy for landing.

Oceana tower responded with clearance to enter the break (note 1), reported the visibility at a scant two miles in haze and traffic: two F-4s entering the pattern downwind, "high and wide," and one F-4 doing touch-and-goes. Quite a gaggle, I thought, especially with such crappy visibility.

We closed up into a tight right echelon and proceeded

to enter the break, determined to look s— hot: tight, precise formation; high speed, oil cooler door open to provide an extra howl to the awesome roar of the engines; a quick, sharp roll to 90 degrees angle of bank and a hard, 6G pull; equal spacing on the downwind leg – and never forget, it's better to die than to look bad.

A three-second break interval, which looked sharp and provided a good downwind-leg separation, had been thoroughly briefed.

Our formation approached the numbers (the upwind end of the runway) in tight, four-plane echelon at about 400 knots and 1,000 feet altitude. Mike looked to his left into the thick haze to clear the airspace we would be breaking into. He gave Jerry a kiss-off signal, then snap-rolled left and pulled hard, away from the formation.

Vapor exploded off his wings as the G-load suddenly increased. Jerry counted three potatoes and gave me the kiss-off, then broke. I counted to three, blew George a kiss, snap-rolled port and yanked on about six Gs.

As I watched Jerry to judge interval, I pulled the power back to idle and thumbed out the speed brakes, beginning a rapid deceleration. My scan went from the interval between Jerry and me to the airspeed indicator, which seemed to be inching too slowly toward the maximum landing gear extension speed of 250 knots. I was slowly gaining on Jerry.

I slammed the gear handle down when the airspeed hit 250 and put my left hand on the wing handle, ready to raise the wing (note 2) when the airspeed reached 220. After 180 degrees of turn, I was about one mile behind Jerry and began to roll out of my turn.

As I was rolling toward wings level, I suddenly saw an F-4, same heading, same airspeed, almost the same altitude, and it was obvious we were going to occupy the same airspace in about two seconds.

This is where, for the second time in my life, time went into the slow-motion mode.

I'm slightly above him. No time to go low. If I roll left, I'll lose sight. Must roll right!

I did roll right. My F-8 passed above the F-4, inverted, with about 50 feet of vertical clearance. I kept forward pressure on the stick to maintain the clearance and looked through the top of my canopy down into the cockpits of the Phantom below me; both the pilot and RIO were looking up at me, I assumed, with startled expressions behind their oxygen masks and dark visors.

The F-4s had obviously entered the pattern closer and lower, because of the poor visibility, than the high-and-wide pattern (1,500 feet, one mile) that they had been cleared for.

You f—ing jerks!

It seemed to take forever to float away from my inverted position directly above the interloper, but just as I was

clearing him, my airplane decided not to fly any longer.

My first clue that I was in a ballistic vehicle was that there was no response to the stick: it felt like a wet noodle in my hands. The plane, uncommanded, snap-rolled to the right and the nose pointed itself toward the ground.

Holy crap! I'm in a departure 1,000 feet above the ground! My engine is at idle, the gear is down, the wing is down, I'm rolling inverted and at a 60-degree nose-low attitude! This is unrecoverable!

*I'm screwed!*

*I'm out of here!*

I reached for the face curtain (note 3) with both hands and yanked it with all my strength. An explosive charge, roughly equivalent to a 5-inch Howitzer shell, went off about two feet below my ass and propelled the seat up its rails with a force of about 22 Gs (note 4).

I didn't feel the kick in my butt, but I was peeking around the face curtain and watched the canopy rail slowly disappear below me as I went up and out of the airplane.

The seat, with me attached, left the airplane and began to rotate backwards. I let go of the face curtain and watched the canopy tumble slowly away, above and behind me. As the seat rotated further, I caught sight of my airplane below me, extremely nose-low, heading into some trees. The plane disappeared and I saw a large, orange fireball erupt from the trees.

*Wham! Opening shock!*

Time suddenly returned to its normal flow.

I realized I was hanging under a parachute and since I'd had 20 jumps as a smokejumper and one misbegotten sky dive, I felt in a comfort zone –sort of. At least I was still alive. The parachute above was fully deployed, absent any damage, but also absent the slots that, as a smokejumper, had provided guidance capability.

I looked down to get my bearings; the crash/fireball/airplane was nowhere in sight. In fact, I was pretty close to the ground, coming down rapidly into what appeared to be a wheat field.

As the ground rushed up, I automatically went back to my smokejumper training: I clicked my flight boots together several times and held them there; knees bent, hands on risers, ready to roll.

*KAPOWIE!*

I hit the ground like a ton of meadow muffins. It was the hardest parachute landing I ever had! It happened so fast that an Allen roll was out of the question. As I lay on my back and struggled to breathe, points of light flashed on and off in front of my eyes.

My ability to breathe soon returned and the blinking lights in front of my eyes began to go away. I attempted to assess the damage: my body hurt all over but didn't seem to have any major malfunctions. I stood, shucked

off my harness, sat on my seat pan and lit up a cigarette.

In a daze of pain and disbelief, I went over in my mind what had happened: It was pretty obvious I'd come within a frog's eye lash of smashing into that Phantom, and I gave that crew a few choice expletives under my breath.

As I ran the details of the mishap over in my mind, I heard the *whop-whop* of a helicopter and before I could finish my cigarette, the NAS Oceana SAR helo was landing a few yards away; I gathered up my gear and the parachute and climbed aboard.

Waiting for the helicopter, on the airport tarmac, was an ambulance – lights flashing, my commanding officer, Cmdr. "Chick" Whelchel, and my best friend, Lt. Weigand (note 5), who was the squadron duty officer that day.

The skipper and my buddy gave me a boilerplate speech about how good a job I did avoiding a midair collision. "Everything will be okay," they said. "Don't worry about anything. We'll let your wife know you're okay. We're glad you're still alive."

I nodded dutifully as the Navy corpsmen hustled me into the ambulance, then threw another set of expletives over my shoulder, mainly about what I'd like to do to the pilot of the F-4 that was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Then the ambulance, lights flashing, siren wailing, ran me over to the dispensary, which was about 100 yards away.

The NAS Oceana Dispensary, at the time, was a small wood-frame building with one doctor on duty. A cursory examination revealed no obvious injuries, but a blood test showed a high protein level, indicating trauma of some kind, and the flight surgeon wanted to send me to Portsmouth Naval Hospital for X-rays.

It seemed the Oceana dispensary was not X-ray equipped. They were not very well-equipped for transportation, either; they asked, because I had my own car, if I'd mind driving myself to Portsmouth. I wasn't really in the mood, but after calling my wife, who was nine months pregnant, I decided to pick her up on the way and we'd do the two-birds, one-stone thing.

At Portsmouth I got thumped, prodded, bent over and X-rayed. The X-rays showed two partially crushed lumbar vertebrae, but since I felt no pain the Navy orthopedic specialist thought it was possibly an old injury. I never have been able to figure out when an "old injury" might have occurred.

So, I was back flying the next day, only to be grounded the day after that for a couple of weeks when the squadron flight surgeon reviewed the evidence and decided to further investigate my back problems. I was also grounded until the accident investigation board sorted out the mishap's cause factors.

As mishap investigations are wont to do, this one listed a stack of contributing cause factors that named virtually everyone involved, and also blamed the weather, which was kind of illogical because even though the weather was less than ideal, it was how several humans involved failed to respect and adjust to the prevailing conditions that led to the chain of events that culminated in the mishap.

I was blamed for losing control of my airplane and commended for preventing a mid-air collision and probably three fatalities.

Exactly one week after my mishap, Lt. Lewson was killed in a gunnery accident, strafing a ground target on the Albemarle Sound Navy target range.

Conforming to the theory that bad things happen in groups of three, about two weeks after Jerry's accident our sister squadron, VC-4, experienced another fatal mishap.

The pilot, another friend of mine, Lt. (J.G.) Dave Wadsworth, was returning to Oceana with engine problems when, on final approach, his Crusader's engine seized. Dave delayed his ejection to turn away from a residential area. His turn allowed the plane to miss the houses but, unfortunately, caused the ejection altitude to be so low he was into the trees before his chute opened.

Dave survived the impact but died that evening in Portsmouth Naval Hospital. This, for me, was the final straw: the third accident in three weeks, mine and two fatalities. For the first time, and not the last, since I was a kid in short pants, I broke down and cried – real tears.

Two weeks after my last jump, my daughter was born – a beautiful, healthy, strawberry blonde we named Heather.

Two weeks after that my wife, Barbara, and I, with Heather on the sofa between us, watched on live television as Neil Armstrong made the first human footprint on the moon.

## NOTES

1. The *break* (the Air Force calls it *the overhead pattern*) is the Navy's term for a multi-plane maneuver where a formation enters the landing pattern, at high speed, over the duty runway, heading in the direction of landing, then breaks apart and gains separation between aircraft as they slow and configure for landing. When performed correctly, the break is a very exciting and impressive maneuver. A squadron that consistently looks good in the break is usually judged by aviators at the base to be "squared away." Conversely, a squadron that consistently looks sloppy or imprecise in the break is held in low esteem by other squadron's pilots.

2. Raising the F-8s wing caused the aircraft's fuselage to lower (while airborne), increasing visibility over the nose, and causing the flaps to extend to reduce landing airspeed to make carrier landings easier and safer.

3. The *face curtain* is one of two initiation devices for the Martin-Baker ejection seat. It is located on the forward top edge of the seat's headrest. To initiate ejection the pilot pulls vigorously down on the handles, two yellow and black cord-like loops, to release a protective cloth shield that deploys to cover and shield the pilot's face. About one half-second after the face curtain is pulled, the ejection sequence is initiated.

4. Rocket-powered ejection seats, at the time of my last jump, were in relative infancy but available. They provided a longer, softer acceleration and greatly reduced the possibility of back injury. Rocket seats were not available on the older model airplanes, such as the F-8A I was flying.

5. Flying a VF-111 F-4B Phantom off the carrier Coral Sea March 6, 1972, Lt. Weigand shot down a MiG-17 over Quang Lang airfield in North Vietnam and was awarded the Silver Star. 🇺🇸



F-8 Crusader (Courtesy LTV)



# Putting ‘Bear-Proof’ To The Test At Big Bill Cabin

by Doug Wamsley (Missoula '65)

As July 2012 was in full swing, a crew of four Missoula jumpers and our Ph.D.-wrangler-packer-chef moved into Beaver Creek Campground, just nine miles down the road from the Spotted Bear Ranger Station in the Flathead National Forest.

Our objective was to replace the wood siding on Big Bill Cabin, which isn't really a cabin but a small, sturdy shed. But that was okay, because as far as we could determine it was never owned by anyone named "Big Bill," either.

The cabin is about one mile from our campsite and serves as a feed-storage facility for a Forest Service corral complex. It is heavily used by packers venturing into the nearby Bob Marshall Wilderness.

The objective of the project was not historical restoration or routine maintenance, but rather repair of damage apparently caused by local bears over the winter. The bears, being smarter than they look, figured out that a feed storage facility might well contain something edible.

Testing their theory proved somewhat difficult since the windows and doors were enclosed in steel "bear proof" frames. Thus, the obvious solution was to tear off the walls (2-inch-by-6-inch lap strake siding with plywood underneath) instead – which they did.

Our answer was to repair the plywood and put up new siding of 2-by-6 tongue-in-groove siding. The theory is that the bears will have a much tougher time getting their claws into this siding. Winter 2012-13 will be the test of the theory.

The crew was composed of our senior statesman **Spud DeJarnette** (MSO-49); **Bill Kolar** (MSO-59); **Chuck Fricke** (MSO-62); me; and our menu planner, campground manager, chef and after-dinner speaker **Chuck Corrigan** (Associate). Our sponsor was Spotted Bear District Ranger Deb Mucklow, who is well-known to trail project regulars by having sponsored many prior Bob Marshall projects.

The project got off to a flying start, due in no small part to the planning and preparation done by Rich Sievers, our straw boss and the facilities wizard for the Spotted Bear District. Not only did we have all of the materials on site, but also a complete supply of tools, from a generator for the chop saw, down to spare ham-

mers. As many of you know, that doesn't happen on every project.

Chuck Fricke immediately became the master carpenter when we learned he could read a tape measure, as well as add and subtract. Had anyone else done the sawing, no doubt we would have needed a lot more wood.

The work routine developed so well that we actually finished the project ahead of schedule. We spent the last half-day staining the cabin. There was some danger that we would run short of stain since Bill Kolar was getting more on his clothes than on the building. But, we made it.

Our evenings were the sort that you always hope trail projects will produce: wonderful food and great social events. Our neighbors in the campground were congenial, but one can only wonder what they thought of the stories we told them.

Deb Mucklow and Rich joined us for a final night dinner. It was a project much like that great golf shot you hit in a round; it's what brings you back. 🍄



L-R: Doug Wamsley and Chuck Corrigan (Courtesy Bill Kolar)

# Smokey's Rock Pile And Uncle Kenn

by Guy Hurlbutt (Idaho City '62)

There was a time when “smokejumping” was a foreign term to me. My introduction came through *Tall Timber Pilots*, a book about the Johnson Flying Service whose aviators flew smokejumpers for many years. The book, published in 1953, eventually found its way into the library of the high school I attended in South Carolina.

Already considering forestry as a career, the title caught my eye and the contents changed my life. Jumping out of airplanes, fighting fire in the wilderness and back-country flying appealed to me. I graduated from high school on a Friday in June 1960 and the following Monday began my first of seven summers with the U.S. Forest Service. Five of them were with the smokejumpers.

In the early '60s the minimum requirement for the smokejumper program was two summers on a ground crew. I applied as soon as I met the minimum and in March 1962 received a letter signed by **Del Catlin** (MYC-47), the foreman at the base in McCall, Idaho, informing me that I had been accepted. I was 20 years old.

Some college classmates gave me a ride to Boise, but I had to hitchhike the remaining 110 miles to McCall. My last ride dropped me off at the base, and I entered a different world.

To my surprise, most of the 15 trainees (known as “Neds” in McCall) for the 1962 class were stronger and in better shape than I was. But I was strong enough with some aces in the hole. One was a work ethic instilled in me from childhood; the other was determination.

These qualities were not lost on my instructors. They saw me as a “keeper,” and I was not among those who “washed out” of the program. One of those instructors was **Kenneth R. Smith** (IDC-55).

Even as a very young man, Kenn was charismatic and gregarious. He was raised in Caldwell, Idaho, and attended the local high school. He was not exceptionally tall, but he was well-built with broad shoulders, muscular body, black hair, rugged cowboy-kind of face, and a deep, booming voice that clearly commanded respect. He exuded athleticism, and it is odd that his prowess on the football field was not as one of the players. Instead, he was a cheerleader, whipping the fans into a frenzy for dear old Caldwell High.

Kenn's formal education ended with his high school diploma. Following a common path for Western ranch and farm boys who developed their bodies through hard work in the fields, he hired on as a firefighter for the For-

est Service and became a smokejumper in 1955.

By the time I arrived in 1962, Kenn was a seasoned veteran, an assistant foreman at the base in Idaho City, and an instructor at the Smokejumper Training Center in McCall. His outgoing personality, work ethic, love of practical jokes, generosity, wit and creative spirit endeared him to colleagues and subordinates alike. He was held in awe by the trainees, and he became somewhat of a piper within the smokejumper organization.

When encountering smokejumpers from other bases within the Western system, his name usually came up when Idaho was mentioned. “Do you know Kenn Smith in Idaho City? What a character! How's he doin'? Tell him I said hello.” As time went on, his reputation grew.

The first time I met him he was wearing jeans, a white T-shirt, and a baseball cap sporting a large, black feather pointed toward the sky. He was, for us trainees, a figure larger than life and enveloped by an aura as big as all outdoors. He gave most of us nicknames, and his was “Uncle Kenn.”

After assessing my Southern heritage, he announced one day that my name would be “Reb,” a name that has followed me down to the present day and is still used by those who knew me as a firefighter.

Two other instructors stood out during training. One was **Ken “Moose” Salyer** (MYC-54), a former college wrestler and prime physical specimen. No one doubted his qualities as a leader in the smokejumpers.

He was my project leader the first week of training and taught the five of us assigned to him how to do the “Allen roll.” Sadly, he was killed in a plane crash three years later while dropping jumpers on a fire. (See Watts, “Norton Creek Disaster,” *Smokejumper* magazine, July 2012).

In addition to Kenn and Moose, there was **James B. “Smokey” Stover** (MYC-46), foreman at Idaho City. He had reached what was then the maximum age of 40 and could no longer jump out of airplanes. Smokey was not as active on the training field as some of the others, but he was respected for his experience and many years of service. Small, wiry, in his early 40s, and prematurely wrinkled from cigarettes and a life outdoors, people were sometimes surprised by his stamina and strength.

When a “Ned” originally bound for Idaho City washed out of the program, we were informed that a volunteer was needed. Even though I was assigned to McCall, I felt comfortable with Smokey and Kenn and

wanted to work for them. I alone stepped forward. Walking into the office of the administrative clerk, I said: "Hi. I'm here to volunteer for that slot in Idaho City." It seemed like a logical step.

The clerk looked at me with surprise. "IDAHO CITY?" he exclaimed. "You ever been to Idaho City?"

"No, sir," I responded, a little taken aback.

"Well – hell, boy, that's an old mining town in the middle of nowhere. Whole place dredged out during the gold rush days. Nothing there now but a pile of rocks, is all." I learned later that this was partially true. In fact, when our National Reunion was held in Boise in 2007, someone prepared T-shirts for ex-Idaho City jumpers emblazoned with the words "I JUMPED SMOKEY'S ROCK PILE."

Like smokejumpers themselves, their bases are unique. Each one possesses an appeal, a culture, its own slice of history, and fond memories for the jumpers who were lucky enough to work there. Mine, of course, was Idaho City, and I hope to convey a little of the culture of the town, its characters, and why it is a special place for all of us who served there between its opening in 1949 until its closing 20 years later. A lot of it has to do with Kenneth R. Smith.

The McCall clerk may have been partially correct about the rocks, but he had no way of knowing that my main reason for volunteering was to work with the legendary Smokey and Kenn. Nor could he appreciate the characters who were there, the town's unique culture, or the history brought to life through its 19th-century buildings.

And finally, he had no way of knowing the extent to which a 20-man crew of smokejumpers in an isolated mining town would bond as brothers. One of the seasoned jumpers when I arrived, **Dick Estes** (IDC-59) put it this way: "When you're together most of the time, working, playing, laughing and crying together, seven days a week, you end up being family. That's what we were in Idaho City."

So I arrived in town and joined a cast of characters, including Uncle Kenn, who boisterously set the standard. There was always something afoot. We had, for example, our own awards program. At the end of each season, a plaque was presented. It was a statue consisting of the rear half of a donkey, presented to the jumper who had the summer's biggest foul-up. It was appropriately known as the "Dumb-Ass Award." The plaque remained with the recipient until the end of the following season, when it would be passed along to the next deserving person.

Not as formal but equally meaningful was a jar of elk droppings, known as "Dumb-Ass Pills" and handed out as appropriate to a deserving individual. Unlike the plaque, the "pills" could be apportioned out whenever



*Guy Hurlbutt 1962 (Courtesy G. Hurlbutt)*

they were needed. The threat of receiving such recognition kept us on our toes.

We had our special games, as all smokejumpers do. There was "heads out," played by flipping quarters for whatever was at stake. After each flip, all whose quarters came down "heads" were out. The last in was the loser. We played every afternoon at break time to see who would pay for pops.

"Heads out" was also used in the marvelous game of "Nook." Perhaps unique to a handful of smokejumpers, the loser of each round received a thump on the forehead from all other players. This continued until someone had a lump on his head sufficient in size to declare a winner – or loser. If nothing else, this game supports my premise that smokejumpers occasionally march to a different drum.

Thanks to Uncle Kenn, even our project work in Idaho City was from time to time unorthodox. Our 1962 crew included **Horace Cordova** (IDC-61), an artistic individual from Silver City, N.M. Seeing his creativity, Uncle Kenn set him to work on a special project. When not on a fire and otherwise in camp, Horace studiously applied himself to his one-of-a-kind assignment. Kenn's



brainchild was to develop roadside “Prevent Forest Fires” signs using a theme other than Smokey Bear.

Horace completed his first masterpiece. As requested, it had nothing to do with Smokey Bear but sent a similar message. Painted on a canvas approximately 4 feet by 6 feet were two people – maybe smoking cigarettes; I don’t recall – standing in the woods, carrying little pails. The message was in large letters and clearly made its point:

“HUCKLEBERRY PICKERS – DROWN YOUR BUTTS!”

I helped build the log frame that would display the masterpiece. It was loaded in a truck and taken to a highway. It lasted less than a day.

Foreman Smokey emerged from his office puffing on his cigarette even faster than usual. He had received a call from the supervisor’s office. The sign would come down immediately. The double meaning of “butts” and departing from the revered bear were not appreciated by management.

Kenn was irate. “Ah, hell,” he complained. “That was a great sign and a great message. Folks like something different. Those head-shed people in Boise don’t seem to know that. No sense of humor at all.”

I’m more seasoned now and know that “sense of humor” had nothing to do with it. The Smokey Bear symbol is carefully guarded by the Forest Service. But we were more innocent then. I felt sorry for Horace, who later became a nationally recognized artist. His creation fell prey to a bear in a pointed hat.

I worked for Smokey Stover five fire seasons and four for Uncle Kenn, who broke his back in a helicopter crash while being ferried from a fire in 1969, just a few months before the Forest Service closed the base in Idaho City, moving it to the Boise airport. The accident ended his Forest Service career and began a life of pain. My last year was 1970, but I remained his friend.

They say no one is perfect, and this included Kenn. A handful of jumpers claimed he had a mean streak that caused him to “get even” if he thought someone had crossed him. He drank too much, especially in later years. To his credit, though, it never affected his work. He expected this for himself and for the rest of us as well.

“Drink if you want,” he would say, “but stay out of the bars if you can’t handle alcohol. Tyin’ one on’s no excuse for coming late to work or messing around when you get there. No excuses. You get called out on a fire, you got men depending on you. Don’t let ‘em down. You copy?”

To that point, the local bars did receive our faithful support. Aside from hangovers, though, only one serious alcohol-related incident occurred while I was there.

A jumper who had celebrated too much at the bars one Friday night headed out on the treacherous road to

Boise. He was back about midnight sporting torn clothes and carrying only his golf clubs slung across his back. He had wrecked his car about five miles from town. We loaded him in another car and returned to the scene, arriving about the same time as the highway patrol.

Our friend was cited for driving while intoxicated. The following week he pleaded guilty in front of tough Judge Ariel Crowley and received a week in the Boise County Jail. He did not return the following season.

As sad as this was, it did have a lighter side. Due in part to the strong and positive relationship between the jumpers and citizens of the town as fostered by Uncle Kenn, our friend received lenience from the Boise County sheriff, albeit in an unusual form. It occurred as follows.

Our annual season-termination event (known as the T-Party) was scheduled right in the middle of our friend’s jail term. His date for the party was the sheriff’s daughter. Learning of this conflict, and trusting the integrity of all Idaho City smokejumpers, the sheriff made a decision.

“I’m letting you out that night so you can take her to the party,” he announced. “But no drinking. And be back in your cell by midnight. I don’t want to come to work next morning and find out you’re not here.” I suspect Judge Crowley would have disapproved of this, and it would have been hard on the sheriff if something had gone awry. But all went smoothly, and everything was fine.

So even though Kenn drank too much and probably had other faults, he was respected in the town and was a legendary smokejumper. I remember his stamina, willingness to work, generosity and general love of nature.

“You know, Reb,” he told me one day, “firefighting is a great profession. When we are flyin’ over the Forest, I look down and see miles and miles of green. It wouldn’t be that way if it were not for us.”

I also remember his humor and love of practical jokes. He could give them and he could take them. Once, on his birthday, he received a nicely wrapped package. He tore off the wrapper to reveal a box of assorted chocolates. “Well, look-a-here,” he exclaimed. “Something sweet for someone sweet.” He removed the cover of the box to sample one of its contents. We drew near, hoping he would share.

Suddenly, he shoved the box across the parachute packing table. “What the – well, I’ll be go to hell!” he shouted. As the box skidded to a stop on the table, we saw that each compartment contained, not an assorted chocolate, but assorted pieces of horse manure, delicately displayed. We waited for a tantrum. Instead, he opened his mouth about as wide as a baseball, as only he could do, and came forth with an “AH! AH! AH!” – the standard Smith laugh.

He never ceased thinking about something new to try. With the seasonal nature of firefighting, he considered it a shame that we would not be together during Christmas, his favorite holiday. Not to worry, though. Kenn announced that for us, Christmas would be celebrated each year on July 25. We exchanged presents, had a party, and sang Christmas carols. One year, he talked a local pilot into setting up a loudspeaker system in his Cessna 170 airplane. Late "Christmas" night, when many were asleep, the pilot circled low over Idaho City, playing Christmas music. Some in town did not receive this well, stating that, in their opinion, we had "by God, crossed the line."

One citizen, we discovered, was especially incensed. About a week later, we awakened to a tremendous noise in our barracks. Someone had a chain saw revved at full throttle. Over the piercing noise, I was barely able to hear him shout: "So how do you like that for noise, you sons-a-bitches?" And then he was out the door. The nearest jumpers boiled out in hot pursuit. But it was too late. He had a getaway car and driver and was speeding toward town. All we saw were dust and tail lights.

Despite our best efforts, the chain-saw intruder remained anonymous. About 25 years later, I finally found out who it was. I was a little surprised in view of his stature in the community. But not too surprised. He was, after all, a logger. And apparently a man who went to bed early – even on "Christmas" night.

Uncle Kenn made his permanent home in Idaho City, where he was known as an active community leader and tireless volunteer. Through him, most of our jumper crew came to know the townsfolk. Despite our propensity to stay late in the bars and make too much noise on July 25, we had a great relationship with most of the local residents.

In addition to the sheriff, whose friendship paid dividends for at least one of our crew, there was Mayor John Brogan, whose home was open to smokejumpers at any time. Physically challenged by polio in childhood, it never affected his spirit, and he was regarded by most of us as an honorary smokejumper. John was one of my closest friends until he was killed in a car accident a few months following his retirement from the state Department of Lands in 1991.

Even the harsh Judge Ariel Crowley was friendly as long as we followed the law. He once invited **Steve Carlson** (IDC-62) and me to his home to check out his observatory and discuss the various constellations and other stars of interest. Because of him, I still know how to find Arcturus, the fourth-brightest star in the sky. The judge was an erudite man.

Few, if any, of these relationships would have been possible had it not been for Uncle Kenn. Using his pow-

ers of persuasion, he was able to enlist most of us at one time or another to volunteer for various community projects during our off hours. We cleaned and maintained the local cemetery, built a city tennis court and laid out a baseball field, among other projects. And we shot pool with the locals regularly at Lonn's Place.

Even today, Kenn's presence is readily apparent in the town. He was active in the historical association for many years and lived in a house filled with antiques and hundreds of 19th-century bottles that he collected from abandoned mining sites. The house remains today as one of the town's attractions. Some of this popularity transferred to the rest of us. A room in the town's museum is dedicated to the Idaho City Smokejumpers, where memorabilia are displayed.

Uncle Kenn was eccentric. That's what made him interesting. He drove an antique car and had a crow for a pet. There was Geraldine and, when she died, Geraldine II.

I was in Lonn's Place after work one day when Kenn came in with Geraldine in tow. He set her on the bar, where she proceeded to waddle along, sipping from available glasses. When Kenn left, she was on his shoulder, but took off once outside. She rose about 10 feet, lost control, almost stalled, and made an emergency landing near the center of the street. She was clearly intoxicated. Kenn wasn't fazed. "AH! AH! AH!" I heard through the open door.

Kenn's name still comes up frequently in smokejumper and Idaho City circles. Last year I attended a monthly coffee meeting for former jumpers. Someone mentioned that he had heard that the legendary Smith had once lost his cool.

"That's true," I said. "I was there."

We left Idaho City one hot afternoon in a two-engine Beechcraft carrying four smokejumpers. The target was an Air Force fighter jet that had crashed in nearby foothills, starting a small fire.

As our "spotter" (jumpmaster in the Army), Kenn was responsible for safely dropping the jumpers. We soon reached the fire, now burning in sagebrush with considerable smoke. We circled while Kenn tested the winds. We would jump one at a time. The first in the door was **John Hall** (IDC-66), nicknamed "Smerd."

The pilot lined up to cross the landing site in an upwind direction. Kenn kneeled near the door as the plane slowed down.

All of a sudden, there was a commotion. Kenn had not given the "GO" command, but the jumper was gone. His static line was waving in the prop wash. Kenn looked flabbergasted. It was obvious what happened. Smerd, who was in a sitting position with his legs dangling outside the open door, got too close to the edge and simply



*Kenn Smith (Courtesy G. Hurlbutt)*

fell out. He disappeared in smoke, headed toward the fire. No one spoke. The only sounds were the roaring engines and wind whooshing past the open door. Time stood still on the threshold of eternity.

I glanced at Kenn. He was on the verge of tears and was shaking uncontrollably. He reached for a cigarette but couldn't light it. Suddenly, we saw Smerd. He had landed safely outside of the fire and was not hurt. I thought the jump would continue. I was wrong.

"We aren't doin' this again," Kenn let us know. "Get the hell out of here!" he shouted to the pilot, Haynes

Burrus.

"Did you hear me, Haynes? I said get the hell out of here. We're goin' home."

That left Smerd on the fire alone, with no tools. I'm not sure what happened next. He either joined the ground crew when it eventually arrived or, as a fellow jumper told me not long ago, hitched a ride back to base on a helicopter that was in the area.

Even our pilot was a little bit excited. When we returned to the airport, he stepped down to the tarmac, looked at us, and exclaimed: "Holy Joe! When I saw that kid go out over the fire, I thought he was a goner. He was lucky, that's for sure. Holy Joe." That's about as excited as Haynes ever became.

No one mentioned Kenn's momentary loss of control. The managers assumed he made a reasoned decision to abandon the mission due to high winds. But those of us aboard knew the weather was fine.

I learned from this that all of us are fallible. Even the toughest have a point where they are stretched too far. It may be physical; it may be mental, but somewhere it is there, waiting in the dark. As far as I know, Kenn only went there once. For the rest of his career, he was calmly in control.

I received a phone call 14 years ago from a former smokejumper buddy, **Bob Montoya** (IDC-62). "Hey, Reb. This is Bobby. Got some bad news. Kenn died this morning. They found him on the ground in his backyard, near his coffee cup, out by the goddamned crow's cage."

I was silent for a moment, unable to respond. Idaho had lost one of its true characters. I was intensely sad. The "Rock Pile" jumpers, Kenn's sense of humor, fighting fire under the stars at 3 o'clock in the morning, the good times, all the hard work, my Idaho City friends, and even Geraldine came tumbling down through memory. For me, it ended an era. 🕊

## A Wonderful Way To Spend The Summer

by Jesse L. "Jess" Nelson (Missoula '55)

**W**hile I was in college in 1953, I spent one summer working blister rust control at Priest River, Idaho – only a few miles from the Canadian border – as a Forest Service employee. There were about 30 of us, and we were charged with walking a grid in the forest and pulling up blister rust when we saw it.

We would pull it up by the roots, apply poison to

the roots, and then set them upside down on the forest floor for it to die. The blister rust would pollinate with the white pine and was killing it.

We worked six days a week and had Sundays to do laundry, swim in the lake and go hiking. Some used their day to write letters home. When you're on a project, such as blister rust, you can be called up to help fight fires. I was on two project fires while in the Idaho Panhandle.



## Lightning Creek Fire

About late August we got a phone call and were told we would be going on a forest fire. They took us by bus to Riggins, Idaho. From there we hiked up a very steep and long trail to a fire called the "Lightning Creek Fire." We worked on this fire for several days; then our fire boss told us that we were to hike back to Riggins and would be bussed to another fire south of Riggins.

Upon arriving at the new fire, I told the new fire boss that since I had worked and hiked several days without a bath or changing clothes, I had developed a rash in my crotch, which made walking quite uncomfortable. The fire boss told me to stay in camp and help the cook.

Some of the cooking was done on a thin metal stove that had been dropped in with the food. The rest of the cooking was done in double boilers. These worked really well for coffee and stews and the like. The meat was dropped in rather large pieces, so a lot of time was spent cutting it in preparation for cooking.

There were roughly 60 men on the fire. Fortunately, all those working took a sack lunch which they put together. This meant we only had to cook two meals a day. Unfortunately, the first meal had to be ready quite early since the fire boss wanted everyone ready to be on the fire line shortly after daylight.

About 4 o'clock the second morning, the fire boss woke me up to tell me that the cook had gotten upset about something during the night. He had packed his few things and, as we talked, was hiking back to town.

The fire boss told me that since I had helped the cook the day before and knew how everything worked, I was now the new cook. He was generous enough that he promised me two flunkies to help.

The worst thing that happened was that one of the flunkies put the hot seasoning in the stew without telling anyone. Unfortunately, the other flunky also decided to add the hot seasoning. The stew was somewhat hot that night, but everyone was so hungry that there were only a few comments.

For three 18-year-olds who had never been away from home before, I thought we were doing pretty well.

After we had been doing this for about three or four days, it started to rain and then turned to snow. The fire boss told everyone to be prepared to pack out the next morning. He planned to leave a skeleton crew to watch the fire for a few days. The cooking crew was told to bury all the food except some for the skeleton crew. A pack string would come in for the non-perishables in a few days.

In my mind I just figured that some of the locals would probably come back for all the food in cans plus anything that hadn't spoiled. It would have made a nice hunting camp a few weeks later.

## Bungalow Ranger Station

I worked at the St. Regis Ranger Station in 1954 and was the only one there out of 30 guys who had any fire experience. I did well in fire school and so I got to be the station foreman. That meant working a crew close to a radio and in case of a fire in our district, I would take the crew, find the fire and put it out.

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### *President Eisenhower came to Missoula that fall to dedicate the new smokejumper base.*

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President Eisenhower came to Missoula that fall to dedicate the new smokejumper base. That made jumping seem pretty exciting and so I decided to apply to do that. **T.J. Thompson** (MSO-55), **Chuck Evans** (MSO-56) and I applied. With a good recommendation from Bert Woldron, T.J. and I were accepted for the Class of 1955; Chuck was accepted in 1956.

Smokejumpers were routinely sent out to ranger stations for work projects when there was little or no fire activity. I was sent to Bungalow Ranger Station, Idaho, where we were doing trail improvements and checking and repairing telephone lines to the lookout towers.

Some of us were in the bunkhouse playing cards one Sunday afternoon. The ranger came in and wanted to talk to me. He had heard that I had done some cooking. Where he'd heard that, I don't know.

He said the cook had put a roast in the oven for supper before getting upset about something. The cook had packed his belongings and left. The Bungalow R.S. was 60 miles from the nearest town – Superior, Mont. – on a dirt road. The ranger, **Bob Gorsuch** (MSO-47), wanted me to cook for 30-35 men until he could go to town and find a replacement. I agreed.

To cook meant getting up early and putting the food out for the men to make their own sack lunches, then preparing breakfast in order for the men to be at work by 8 a.m. The good part was that there was plenty of free time during the day since I only had to have supper ready by 6 p.m.

The North Fork of the Clear Water River was within walking distance from the mess hall. The fishing was usually pretty good.

Ranger Gorsuch went to town at least once a week to find a cook, but was having no luck. He tried to

convince me I should quit jumping and be the permanent cook.

Cooks worked seven days a week and received time and a half on Saturday and Sunday. Smokejumpers only got straight time for overtime. Money-wise, I probably would have been better off as a cook, but I really liked smokejumping and declined.

After three weeks, the ranger finally found a real cook. It was just in time, as the fire season started to pick up.

### **Smokejumping and Packing Out**

I was accepted as a rookie jumper in 1955 where I got a raise of five cents per hour, over the \$1.60 I had been making. That was compared to the 50 cents an hour I was making with my part-time job in the winter while going to college.

The summers of 1955-57 were spent smokejumping, and then I had to go into the Army in 1958. I was back to smokejumping in 1959, the same year I got married.

After I got married and had children, I was wintering in Oklahoma as a public school principal and still needed summer employment. Smokejumping made a perfect fit.

One of the least-talked-about aspects of smokejumping can be both challenging and rewarding: packing out.

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*In the 1950s you knew if they weren't sending in a pack string, you were going to pack it out. Packing out meant you carried 80-90 pounds of camp gear on your back out of the forest.*

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In the 1950s you knew if they weren't sending in a pack string, you were going to pack it out. Packing out meant you carried 80-90 pounds of camp gear on your back out of the forest. Then came helicopters and fewer packouts. But the government rules changed and they quit using helicopters in the wilderness areas, except in emergencies; so there were more packouts.

In the four summers I went to Alaska, I never had a packout, though, since there were no roads to which to pack.

Some years ago I lost all my log books, so I don't have fire names, dates and jump partners' names.

I remember jumping a two-man fire in the Idaho

Panhandle where the terrain was extremely steep. The district personnel had looked for this fire for two days without finding it, so they wanted us on the fire before dark. Our spotter dropped our fire pack, which hung up in a tree 40-50 feet above the ground.

In order for us to get on the fire that night, our spotter dropped another complete set of fire packs along with a set of spurs (to put on our boots and climb the tree). That way we could get on the fire immediately and then retrieve the first fire pack the next day.

The fire was an easy one, but we were to pack out twice as much cargo up a very steep mountainside. From the jump spot to the fire we had seen several piles of fresh bear sign. The most level spot we could find for sleeping was a game trail, which we widened out enough to lay on without rolling downhill.

During the night I awoke to something moving around on my stomach. My first thought was a bear had come down the trail and found me occupying his space. After coming out of my bag with a start, I was relieved to discover two squirrels having a track meet.

It was discouraging to think of carrying two complete fire packs each up that mountain when we could see a road down the mountain from us. However, there was a river on our side of the road that was impossible to cross. We decided the only way to get all the gear up the mountain was to carry one pack each at a time and go up the mountain about 100 yards and then go back for the others. This way, we could relay them up until we could reach the trail we were to take down to the road for pickup.

The frustrating part of the packout was that the district pickup man was on the trail waiting for us. We did have a radio on a two-man fire and the pickup man would call about every 30 minutes with "Smokejumpers! Smokejumpers! Where are you? I'm on the trail waiting for you." This got old after a while.

As it got dark, we came to an area with a lot of downfall. I did not want to carry those packs through that downfall in the dark and so decided to spend the night, and he could just come back the next day. He agreed.

At daylight the next morning we buried everything we could justify to cut down on weight. I was embarrassed when we started hiking out. We had camped only 30 or 40 yards from the trail leading to the road.

The pickup man apologized over and over saying he had no idea we had so much gear to packout. Otherwise he would not have pushed so hard for us to get out the night before. I just let him think that we always had that much gear to pack out and that you had to be a good man to be a smokejumper. Fortunately, I

never worked another packout that hard.

The longest packout I ever had was also in the Idaho Panhandle. The fire was a two-manner and was reported by a lookout on the west side of the Snake River in Oregon. The fire was on the east side of the Snake River in Idaho, so the exact location of the fire was difficult.

It was not hard to find from the air, but when we started hiking out it took several hours to find the trail where we were supposed to come out.

We hiked until nearly dark when we came to some shepherd's or cattleman's cabin where we decided to spend the night.

The next day we started up and around the northern most peak of the Seven Devils. It was late in the afternoon when we reached the road where we were to be picked up; the pickup man was there on schedule.

That was the only time I ever spent the better part of two days packing out. I was so happy we didn't have a double set of cargo to carry out as with the previous fire.

Another long packout was a four-manner, and we jumped on the south side of the River of No Return. We were scheduled to come by a Forest Service guard station on the north side of the river. We crossed the bridge and found the guard station a little after dark, and we thought we would spend the night there.

As luck would have it, my Forest Service key would not fit the lock, so if we were to spend the night we would have to sleep on the porch. Everyone had heard about rattlesnakes on the north side of the river, so no one really wanted to sleep on the porch that close to the river. It was decided that everyone would feel safer hiking on to Moose Creek Ranger Station.

It was an interesting hike with a few breaks here and there. When we arrived at Moose Creek, they were just getting ready to serve breakfast. Everyone's spirits picked up immediately.

One other packout I remember well was a two-man fire where we were supposed to hike out to a lookout tower that didn't look to be terribly far when looking at the map. We were there to drop a burning snag that was spewing sparks and threatening to spread the fire if the wind picked up at all.

The ranger district sent in its crew to mop up, and we could leave as soon as the snag was under control. We felt safe to leave late in the afternoon and believed we could reach the lookout by dark. What we had not counted on was the steep terrain and all the undergrowth we would have to go through. Part of the time we were on our hands and knees in order to keep moving.

We kept going in the direction of the light in the

lookout after dark. Sure enough, the lights finally went out. We were not sure we would always be going in the right direction and we decided to bed down for the night.

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*What we had not counted on was the steep terrain and all the undergrowth we would have to go through. Part of the time we were on our hands and knees in order to keep moving.*

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Just at the break of daylight a noise woke us up. It was a pickup on a road to the lookout tower. The road was not more than 30 or 40 yards from where we had bedded down.

Sometimes you just don't know when to stop.

### **Lasting Impressions**

Because the whole family would go to Montana in the summers, we would have to rent a house. Several summers we rented a fraternity house in Missoula. The fraternities, seeking to prevent vandalism, offered the houses at reasonable rates. My family enjoyed the big houses, the campus activities, the hikes, and the neighborhood where they still visit childhood friends.

While my five children loved living in Montana three months of each year, enjoying the hiking, fishing, and park programs, my wife was also able to attend the university and work toward her degree. The escape from the Oklahoma heat was also a plus.

We made a number of lasting friendships during the 11 summers of smokejumping. We have visited Missoula many times since my forced retirement from smokejumping at age 40. I qualified for a Forest Service retirement since I was hired on the Career Conditional Appointment Plan and always paid into the retirement system.

Several times I've traveled back to Montana to hunt elk, especially in the Bitterroot region. The difference is that I spent my savings to go to places where I used to get paid to go.

One of my daughters liked Missoula so much that she has moved there and is a physician in the pain management clinic at St. Patrick's Hospital.

My smokejumping experience was great and made a wonderful vacation experience for my family. 🍄

*Jess spent 36 years as a teacher, principal and elementary coordinator in Guymon, Oklahoma.*





# Touching All Bases



## McCall Base Report

by **Adam Dealaman**  
(McCall '10)

ANOTHER WINTER HAS passed here in McCall. The birds are starting to migrate up from the south, the elk and moose are calving, the snow melted away, and then it snowed again, and now, I think, it might be melting for real. What better time to reflect on last fire season as we start the mental and physical preparations for the next.

The 2012 fire season saw a slow start at the McCall Smokejumper Base. Due to restrictions from a travel cap, the tried-and-true Region 8 detail turned into a bust and no modules were sent to the Southeast. This left many a bro broke and stranded, pining for Arkansas. The most noteworthy winter work was a fuels and Rx opportunity for two in Gunnison, Colo.

A testament to a slow 2011 fire season and little winter work, the base welcomed seven smokejumper babies in summer 2012. **Derek Hoban** (MYC-02), **Matt Summerfield** (MYC-01), **Adam Dealaman** (MYC-10), **Bennett Childs** (MYC-07), **Matt Carroll** (MYC-03), **Brent Sawyer** (MYC-98), and **Luis "Ned" Moraga** (MYC-12) all became proud fathers, some for a second time.

Early 2012 also saw quite a bit of movement in the Base's organizational chart. **Joe Brinkley** (MYC-98) became the newly minted, smokejumper base manager after **Frankie Romero** (MYC-89) headed for greener pastures at the McCall Supervisor's Office in January 2012.

**Jarrold "Shaq" Sayer** (MYC-95) moved into Joe's spot and took over as loadmaster and paracargo guru. **"Lunchless" Todd Haynes** (MYC-02) accepted the Assistant Training Foreman position, while **Keith Sumenick** (MYC-07), **Phil Reid** (MYC-09) and **JT Belton** (MYC-04) all accepted squadleader positions. A whopping nine bros accepted GS-6 13/13 appointments, adding a few more ballast stones to the hull.

After several seasons of pretty slow initial attack



activity, Big Ernie blessed the "Champagne of Bases" with more action than you can find at Forester's on Karaoke Thursday. Single-resource orders started in early June due to extreme fire conditions in Utah and Colorado. IA activity revved up in early July and fired on all cylinders until mid-October.

The first fire jump of the season came July 9 and the last was Oct. 17, both occurring on the beautiful and bountiful Payette National Forest. The McCall Smokejumpers jumped 91 fires in 2012 for a total of 418 fire jumps. The McCall base was "jumped out" a total of 10 times this season, and due

to the high commitment of jumpers nationally, all booster orders went UTF (unable to fill).

As with any busy season, 2012 kept the loadmasters in fighting shape as a grand total of 47 tons of cargo moved out of the base this year. In total, 19 PC Missions and 70 fire missions gave folks on the ground something to wrap their jaws around.

The 12 rookies who successfully completed "Ned" training proved that sometimes it's best to think outside of the Spam can. With recipes like Spam and goat cheese, Mom's meatloaf, Spam kabobs, Spam pizza, and biscuits and gravy, they're invited back to the campfire in 2013. But, they've got a long way to go before they can match the "Chopped"-level talent of our very own "Best Camp Chef" winner **Lane Lamoreaux** (MYC-09). Watch and learn, Neds. Watch and learn.

In jump record news, **Mike "Coop" Cooper** (MYC-86) was still hoggin' jumps, breaking the 600 mark with 284 total fire jumps. **Dennis "Real" McCoy** (MYC-83) broke the 500 mark and all he got was a pie in the face courtesy of **Todd Franzen** (MYC-98) and **Dan Booth** (MYC-07). This made for a tasty and delicious crew photo.

As for "Jump King" – or should I say "Queen" – of 2012, **Laura Brown** (RAC-10) elbowed her way to the front of every Otter load last year, resulting in a grand total of 13 fire jumps. As for single resource records, Ops Foremen **Chris Nicolli** (MYC-95) and **Matt Galyardt** (MYC-02) spent most of the season dispatching heavy equipment. **"Dirty" Kurt Ryan** (MYC-08) could

usually be found leading “Big Iron” down a ridge top somewhere in the Western U.S.

Sadly, 2012 also brought the end of an era to McCall. Our J-42, also known as the “Doug,” was officially taken off the books. Doug’s retirement left our fleet with two agency-owned Twin Otters (J-41 and J-43). Still in mourning, but determined to press on, all of our pilots made a comeback this year, with Bill Mank, Alan Baum, Matt Disch, and Paul “Buster” Delmonte holding down the pilot’s shed.

The 2013 season is upon us, and there are yet a few more changes to McCall’s organizational structure. March saw the retirement of McCoy, who has decided to turn in the jumpsuit for a wet suit, and with his easy smile, great jump stories, and the occasional pair of pigtails will be sorely missed. Also moving on down the road, **Forrest Behm** (MYC-00) is taking over as the Krassel District AFMO. A hearty “slow-clap” send-off for Dennis and Forrest.

**Andre “Roni” Mascheroni** (MYC-01) is filling the gaping hole left by Sayer and has slid into the assistant loadmaster position. Three spotter positions were filled by **Matt Summerfield** (MYC-01), **Jake Class** (MYC-04) and Alaska’s **Eric Duning** (NIFC-01). Carroll, Belton and **Jon Patton** (MYC-05) all took 13/13 spotter gigs.

The McCall base welcomes back **Jeremy Cowie** (MYC-06) as squadleader. Jeremy left us for Utah, but has since followed his heart and good sense back to McCall. Also accepting squadleader positions are Booth and **Sam Cox** (MSO-08). With **Gabe Wishart** (MYC-07) taking a job at the Wolf Creek Job Center and backfilling behind Cox and Booth, 2012 “Neds” **Ashley Taylor** (MYC-12), **Toby Orient** (MYC-12) and **Ahjah Boise** (MYC-12) all took permanent GS-6 positions.

And last but not least, the McCall Smokejumper base is offering up seven dirty “NEDs” for Big Ernie’s pleasure this year. With trainers like **Matt Huber** (MYC-02), Carroll, Booth and **Eric Messenger** (GAC-00), you’d better keep them “Neds” in your prayers.

And one final note, in January of 2013, our dear friend and fellow jumper Lane Lamoreaux was seriously injured in a paragliding accident in Arizona. If you haven’t already, please visit the website his family have established to raise money for his treatment and rehabilitation: [fundrazr.com/campaigns/bQbQe](http://fundrazr.com/campaigns/bQbQe). Anything you can give is greatly appreciated.

Looking for old smokejumper friends, tall tales and a river of beer and spirits? The R-4, 70th Smokejumper Reunion is slated to take place in McCall, June 7-9, 2013. We’d love to see you! McCall smokejumpers – come on up and visit us in 2013!

# Great Basin Report

by **Todd Jinkins**  
(NIFC '98)

2012 HAS COME and gone and once again the Great Basin Smokejumpers experienced a busy year. We kicked nearly 950 jumpers out the door in our operations to staff fires in seven Western states. This does not include the states in which we sent ground pounders out to assist in suppression operations, many of those being in the Southeastern U.S.

Our aircraft fleet consisted of three Twin Otters and one shared Dornier 228 with the Alaska base. They flew for a total of 833 hours in the basin – 175 hours more than our 10-year average. So, as you can see, we had a busy year. Although it does not hold a candle to our all-time record year of 2006, it was well above the 10-year average.

Although I have learned over the years not to prognosticate, we hope to have another busy fire season in 2013. We will have the same complement of smokejumper aircraft in our operation and about the same number of personnel.

The target number of smokejumpers in the Boise operation is 81, but due to budget cuts and sequestration over the past few years we usually end up with around 75 jumpers being hired.

In the past year we have seen a lot of coming and going among the Boise ranks. **Mike Haydon** (RAC-97) moved on to become fire management officer for Las Vegas BLM and **Jared Hohn** (NIFC-01) assistant district fire management officer in the Black Hills N.F.; **Dray Thompson** (NIFC-05) and **Bjorn Skovlin** (RAC-05) joined the Boise City Fire Department; **Jenny (Camp) Bumgardner** (NIFC-06) and **Adam Bumgardner** (NIFC-08) relocated to Northern California to start a family; **Jake Class** (MYC-04) returned to McCall as a new spotter; **Tony Solomon** (NIFC-08) moved to the Alpine IHC; **Scott Cook** (NIFC-07), **Zack Walters** (NIFC-07) and **Connor Horrigan** (NIFC-08) left federal firefighting; and **Evan Adsit** (NIFC-09) transferred to the Alaska Smokejumpers.

As for new employees, we have hired eight rookie candidates who will have finished their training by the time this issue goes to print. I will let you know in the next issue how many make it through the training, but if history is any indicator, we will probably end the training with 5-6 rookies for the Class of '13.

We also hired two Forest Service jumpers from Redding to become BLM jumpers – **Jed Smith** (RDD-02) and **Gabe Harry** (RDD-12). **Scott Salisbury** (RDD-94), who had left jumping from the Boise base

10 years ago to pursue other firefighting opportunities, is returning to us after that long hiatus. **Todd Jinkins** (NIFC-98), who had left the Boise program for a year to work for the USFS Region 4 office, couldn't handle the real world and returned to the fantasy life of the Great Basin Smokejumpers as their training manager.

March 2, 2013, was a sad day for the smokejumper community as a whole. On that glorious, sun-filled day in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, we lost one of our best to a back country avalanche. **Joseph Kitchen Philpott** (NIFC-09) had only been with us a few years but had touched our hearts and spirits with his joy, enthusiasm and fun-loving spirit.

We miss you, Joe!

## Fairbanks Base Report

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by **Bill Cramer**  
(NIFC '90)

THE ALASKA BASE will be entering the 2013 season with a headcount of 64 and four jumpships.

Our lean budget wasn't helped by sequestration, but we were able to prioritize and accomplish a couple special projects worth noting.

We collaborated with Sandy Reid of Rigging Innovations to develop a custom course for our loft personnel. The course was a valuable tool for keeping our loft personnel abreast of developments and techniques the parachute industry utilizes. A prototype harness was developed as part of the class with drop tests planned for this summer.

Paracargo continued its research into GPS-guided cargo with a recon trip to the Southwest. Currently available products aren't quite at the price or simplicity that we're looking for, but the technology continues to evolve.

Our attrition rate returned to our historical norm of 10-15 percent with some good folks getting external promotions, or moving on to other pursuits: **Branden Petersen** (FBX-01) was promoted into the AFS Military Zone AFMO position; **Ian Dooley** (FBX-08) will be focusing on law school and won't be able to return; **Brett Fairchild** (RAC-05) was promoted into a GS-7 dispatcher position with the Upper Yukon/Tanana Zone dispatch center; **Eric Duning** (NIFC-01) was selected for a GS-8 PFT spotter position with the McCall jumpers; **Mike McMillan** (FBX-96) hung up his jump gear in order to focus on his family and plans on working as an AD PIO for IMTs; **Ivan Smith** (MSO-95) was selected for a GS-9 PFT loft specialist position with the Boise jumpers; **Dave Hade** (MYC-77) retired to the good life on Panther Creek after putting on

jump gear every season since 1977. We will miss all of them and thank them for all the good work and good memories.

Experienced jumpers joining the Alaska crew include **Evan Adsit** (NIFC-09) and **Eero Okkonen** (NIFC-10). Both are transferring up from the Boise base, and we're happy to get a couple more top-notch jumpers.

We hired eight rookie candidates for the 2013 season. The rookie candidates average six years of firefighting experience. This will be the second season of combining rookie training with Boise. Alaska hosted the training in 2012; Boise is hosting this year. We'll evaluate the pros and cons following this year's training cycle and see if it makes sense to continue. **Chris Swisher** (FBX-03) will be serving as the Alaska lead rookie trainer.

Internal promotions over the winter included the selection of Swisher and **Brandon Kobayashi** (FBX-05) into loft specialist positions. Other vacancies in training and operations were held up by a sequestration-related hiring freeze and are in the process of being filled.

On a final note, the "Iron Al" Seiler Award is bestowed by the crew to a smokejumper who "... personifies the spirit of the Alaska Smokejumpers through hard work and determination without regard to task or hardship." The crew selected **Heith Hoerdeman** (FBX-08) for the 2012 award.

## Redmond Base Report

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by **Josh Voshall**  
(Redding '03)

TO THE PRESENT and past smokejumper community, welcome to the 2013 fire season.

Here at the Redmond Smokejumper Base, our overhead has already gone through their fire refresher training and are staffing two planes with 13 jumpers available. Mid-April will be the time the PSEs come back on board and in mid-May, the temporary smokejumpers will be back on board for smokejumper and fire refresher training.

The base has also sent numerous jumpers to the Southeast (Region 8) in 2013 for prescribed fire duties, and those down there have also been on several fire assignments.

Some rumors have floated around that the Redmond Smokejumpers will not have a rookie class. Well, this makes it the third year in a row with no class, so I guess we'll see what happens next season.

In some individual traveling news, **Jeannine "J9" Faulkner** (MSO-98) has been in Alaska trapping lynx



and taking awesome pictures to prove it. Nice work, J9! **Mat Mendonca** (RAC-05) traveled to Central America to promote his water filtration and forestry projects. He's been doing a great job in both those aspects. **Matt Britt** (RAC-08) also traveled to Central America to help out in Mat's endeavor.

In parenting news, **Geoff Schultz** (RDD-01) and Anne introduced a new addition to their happy family, Emmet. **Josh Cantrell** (MSO-97) and Kory introduced Cade Olin in March. Congratulations to both families. Looks like our rookie class of 2031 is in place!

Well, I hope everyone has had a good year so far. It's time to get another season underway and continue to live the dream! Have a great season and stay safe.

## Grangeville Base Report

by **Patrick Gocke**  
(Redding '09)

GREETINGS FROM GAC. The prairie is green and the wind is blowing. There are 23 folks on the list with six rookie candidates starting their training May 20.

Over the winter we had Gacsuckers working on various projects for MTDC and SADECK; two went to Region 8 on a module for most of March and they did not get arrested.

The future of the Grangeville High School football program is looking good with **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03), **Joseph Baxter** (GAC-07) and **Matthew Smith** (GAC-01) all having baby boys. Baxter also has 16 chickens, three goats, two rabbits and a pig.

**Joe Forthofer** (RDD-04) has hung it up and taken a job with the State of Montana. Joe was a great asset to Grangeville and we will miss him. **Issac Karuzas** (RDD-01) has transferred to Missoula and is still working on his legacy project, which he plans on sending back to Grangeville. His bubble-wrap dispenser in PC is still functional.

Early refresher for both the Mountain Canopy (round) and Tundra Tamer (square) is complete and **Dan Mooney** (WYS-07) will start new man training April 15. The Blue Fox will be featuring Soylent Green for the next few months, Brodocs got a makeover and the Triangle is airing out following a winter's worth of cigarette smoke. 🦋

# Present Policy In Wildfire Control

by **Chuck Mansfield** (Cave Junction '59)

In my first article on wildfire control, I discussed the history of the Forest Service and the origins of the effort to control fire on lands administrated "... *for the benefit of the people*" by the U.S. Forest Service.

There were many changes in the way in which the U.S. Government interacted with the people in the 1960s. That there were many problems within society at that time is not questionable. However, the approach to change was to *force* people to change their views of the nation rather than *encourage* change in their view.

There is a wide range of management styles that can be followed. On one extreme, power can flow from the bottom to the top of an organization. On the other extreme, power can flow from the top to the bottom of the organization. Both of these extremes present problems in a free society.

The problem is one of achieving balance between the two styles. As others have said before me, "Management decisions are neither good nor bad, but they may have unintended consequences."

What does my rant have to do with the control of

wildfire? To quote Paul Harvey: "That is the rest of the story."

For many years the Forest Service functioned largely as a bottom-up organization. Guidance was provided to the district ranger from the forest, regional and Washington offices, but in many respects, the ranger was assumed to have the best knowledge of the lands under his control and was the logical person to make decisions within the overall guidelines of the Forest Service.

The general guidelines included an estimate of the sustained yields of timber, grazing, minerals, wildlife, watershed, recreation and other forest-resource usage. The Rangers usually held a minimum of a bachelor's degree in Forestry. They were expected to work their way up through the organization so that they had practical experience in the fields of knowledge required to manage a forest for the people.

In addition, and possibly of foremost importance, was learning to deal with the public to balance local demands and the general requirements the organization imposed. For example, the timber industry wanted to have unlimited authority to log while the followers of

Muir and Thoreau desired that there be no logging. Moreover, rangers were encouraged to move from one area to another so that they gained detailed knowledge of as many forest types as possible.

Because of many different laws passed by Congress in response to President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" proposals, and by many other laws passed in the following years, there began a shift of control away from the ranger to higher levels of the organization. The overall organization began to take on the form of a top-down organization.

Many of the old-time officers took advantage of retirement at the earliest opportunity. In turn, people of less experience began to move up through the organization.

How has all of this affected the issue of wildland fire control? There are many factors.

First, we have done a good job in protecting the forests. The cry has gone out from the Thoreauistas that the forests are overgrown because of our efforts; however, when you look at old photos taken 70-100 years ago, there seems to be little difference in forest density.

Forests have a habit of growing if you leave them alone. Some trees die, others drop old limbs, some are starved for sunlight, and insects kill a few. In only a few years a forest assumes an unruly habit of flammable debris.

The cry has gone out to "thin" the forests. But forests grow and in 10-15 years they again assume the look of an aged hippie. In effect this implies that all the forests need to be "thinned" every 10 to 15 years; it's a Herculean and costly task further complicated by the cessation of most logging.

Foresters have long argued that logging was a replacement for fire. In effect, you remove those trees which are at or beyond their prime and replace them with new seedlings. Ah, there is a fly in our soup. It costs money to establish tree farms and replant the trees. This money has been used to hire specialists in all areas. Why? The Thoreauistas have lobbied to hire more specialists.

The photo shows a crew camp on the Klamath NF. The camp was in a clearing in a dense forest.

So how do you manage the forests? You can't log and you can't afford all the specialists. Prescribed burning is a valuable tool for managing a forest, but it is a tool with terrible consequences if not used with great care. The Cerro Grande Fire came within a hair's breadth of destroying one of the nation's premier scientific and defense institutions.

Fast-forward to today. The chief of the Forest Service has declared that small fires in remote locations will be allowed to burn. This appears to have been true in the cases of the Bear Wallow, Bear Springs and other fires in New



*Blister rust crew at Indian Spring Camp on Klamath N. F., 1931. (Courtesy Bob Mansfield)*

Mexico. Rather than commit to the task of planning a prescribed fire, it may have been easier to let a lightning fire burn with the thought in mind of catching it if the fire got out of control.

Computer scientists at Los Alamos National Laboratory have created computer programs which can predict the spread of fire. The programs worked very well in the case of a fire in Bandelier National Monument. However, the fuel distribution (piñon-juniper forest) was well-known, the terrain was nearly level, the winds were expected to be low for an expected period, and the humidity was high.

The problem in this approach is that most forests are very random in the type of fuels, terrain and moisture content of the fuels. In order to accurately predict the behavior of a fire in a general forest, the database must be known on a square-yard-by-square-yard basis. In addition, the location of the ignition point must be known to the same degree of accuracy.

The probability is low that a fire ignited in a random location in a forest will become a conflagration. A forester recently told me that "we catch 95 percent of the fires."

It is the 5 percent that are the problem. The cost of a forest fire as reported to the media only considers the direct cost of suppression. The loss of timber, watershed, grazing, wildlife and recreation – coupled with the loss of life and private property – raises the loss to the national economy by a factor of around 5. The Biscuit Fire's direct-suppression cost was only \$500,000. A later estimation of the loss of resources raised that cost to \$750 million. Fortunately, there were no lives lost and no private homes destroyed by the Biscuit Fire.

Often the decision to attack a fire is made at the regional level. The Biscuit Fire had been placed at No. 17 for resource allocation. The Cave Junction base had been abandoned and the Siskiyou Helitack crew was attacking the Hayman Fire in Colorado. All of the lookout stations

on the Siskiyou National Forest had been abandoned.

The Redmond Jumpers were patrolling the Umpqua National Forest when the Biscuit Fire was discovered. The jumper aircraft refueled at the Medford, Ore., airport (50 miles away) and were told to return to base. The first of the fires in the complex were reported by citizens, who had to drive many miles on dirt roads to get cell phone coverage.

To compound matters, the contract fire patrol aircraft was down for 100-hour maintenance. In essence, the Siskiyou National Forest was undefended.

A similar situation took place during the Bear Springs Fire near Ruidoso, N.M., last summer. The Reserve N.M. Volunteer Fire Department sent its firemen and engines to protect homes in the area. The men sat at the command post for several hours as the fire approached a subdivision.

The chief asked for permission to attack and was told to wait for dispatch. The chief went back to his crews and said, in effect: "Saddle up, boys. We're going to fight us some fire." Despite objections of law enforcement, they saved 40 or 50 homes.

## *What can you do?*

In most parts of the West, we are expecting another summer of extreme drought. The remaining forests are as dense as they ever were. Now there is a decision to let fires in remote locations burn and to decrease the fire crew corps by 500 people.

A cadre of forest retirees and current employees have

worked hard to change policy with respect to wildfire control for the past 20 years. Despite all efforts there has been little progress in effecting change.

As a smokejumper, you have easier access to both the public and Forest Service officials. Each of you can help by contacting your local media and telling your stories. Print, radio and television reporters are always on the lookout for good copy. The public, including reporters, don't know much about wildfires and wildfire control. With your experience you can be an ambassador for policy change.

Write down your thoughts before an interview, but don't miss a chance of a good one-liner like I did a few years ago.

There was a fire in the Monzano Mountains, south-east of Albuquerque, N.M. The Forest Service was slow to respond and I contacted the weatherman on KOB-TV.

A reporter/cameraman came to my home to do an interview. He asked about the grounding of the slurry bombers that summer. I gave a quick response but, as he drove away, I thought of the ultimate response: "Slurry bombers are seldom needed if aggressive initial attack is practiced." 📌

*Chuck rookied at Cave Junction in 1959 and jumped until 1969 while going to college. He received a PhD in Physics from the University of Idaho in 1970. His career included a postdoctoral at the Manned Spacecraft Center and 17 years as a Senior Scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Since the Cerro Grande Fire (2000), he has been very active in the issue of Wildland fire control.*

# On Being One of the "Kids" in 1947

by Terry Fieldhouse (Cave Junction '47)

I look alternately at the photo of the Siskiyou Smokejumpers taken in 1947 and then, again, at the accompanying July letter just received. Scrawled at the bottom is a note: "Terry – I know you have a story in you."

Despite these words of encouragement, I decided, after considerable reflection, that I don't have a story but just a bunch of disconnected bits and pieces – some humorous, some boring, and some gripping. Clearly, a lack of patience blocks any attempt on my part to knit this haphazard collection into a compelling story. But a sideways glance at the 15 faces in the group photo spawns a moment of regret.

On a spring day, early in 1947, getting to the

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in Oregon on the June 1 hire date suddenly began to look like a remote possibility. The Forest Service notice of hire had come from Grants Pass several months earlier, my application readily accepted due to the two previous seasons as a suppression crewmember.

However, on that warm spring afternoon, breezing home from Santa Monica Junior College along the Coast Highway just south of Topanga Canyon, there was that patch of loose gravel on the curve at Castle Rock. The Harley slipped neatly from underneath and dragged me, trying to kick loose, along the shoulder of the road. Helmetless, the top of my head burnished a fair stretch of exposed stones on a rock retaining wall.



Upon seeing me bleeding profusely and crawling to the foundering bike in order to choke the ignition, a sole witness walking on the other side of the highway screamed, threw her arms skyward, and quickly disappeared down the stairs on the other side of the road.

During the following couple of months, I failed to share any of this precious news with the Forest Supervisor's Office in Grants Pass, and by the end of May things looked quite promising: the limp in my right leg had practically disappeared, and the brush on my scalp had grown to camouflage most of the scar. The trip north seemed to be nearing a reality – not on the twisted bike, however.

In the late 1940s, there was still passenger rail service between Los Angeles and Grants Pass. I would have been disappointed upon arriving in Southern Oregon had I known the rain there was only the preview of the unusually wet fire season ahead.

**Lyle Hoffman** (CJ-47) and I, both 18 years old, were the only “kids” on the jumper crew at Cave Junction that year. Most, if not all, of the other jumpers were veterans, having recently returned from the European Far Eastern theaters. Many of them had experienced heavy combat; a number had been in the 101st Airborne.

For only 18, I'd had a fair amount of practical forestry experience – lying about my age at 15 in order to get work at the forest tree nursery on the slopes of Mt. Wilson in Southern California in 1944, then fighting fire on the Angeles and Shasta national forests the following two seasons. But still, in 1947, considering the life experiences many of the older jumpers had been through, I pretty much fit the image of one still fairly “wet behind the ears,” measured by both experience and by personal appearance – just a kid.

This became painfully clear during the first few weeks of training, when it became routine following evening meals for the jumpers to head up to the Owl Tavern in Cave Junction for a beer and a game of pool. Lyle, looking older than his age, had little trouble accompanying the others; but as “cool” as I attempted to appear, I invariably was asked to leave the tavern, only to spend the evening at the town's soda fountain.

In the course of the summer, both Lyle and I took a fair amount of teasing from the older jumpers. It seemed always good-natured, though – an effort to embrace us youngsters and to draw us into the group. Whether or not the others sensed my embarrassment at being routinely kicked out of the Owl, I did get a small measure of satisfaction the morning the roster went up for the first practice jump.

I overheard a couple of older jumpers “explaining” to Lyle that the reason he'd been placed after me on

the jump list was that there had been some concern expressed he might “chicken out” on this first jump, unless he knew I'd already jumped!

Even though I knew in the moment that Lyle was being fed a crock by these two kindly mentors – his strong potential as a jumper had already become established during the two weeks of training – hearing the teasing somehow salvaged my self-imposed feeling of misfortune at becoming the crew's “tavern reject.”

If my understanding is correct, Lyle went on to skydive for years after that season in Cave Junction. My sole parachute jump after my final Siskiyou summer of 1950 was in response to a challenge by a Central California crop duster in 1957 to ride up on the wing of his Stearman.

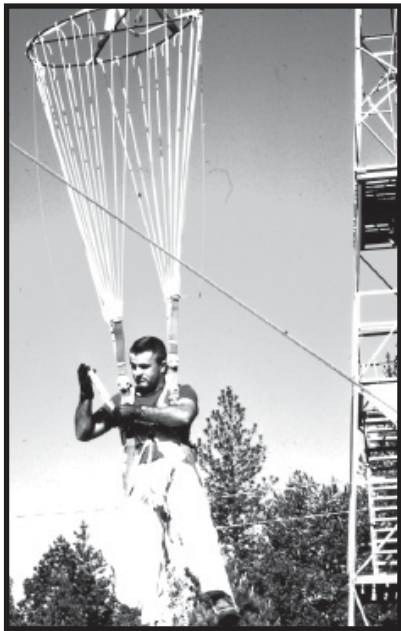
Smokejumping was clearly still in its infancy during those latter years of the 1940s. Although there was a high degree of attention and seriousness attached to rigging and parachute safety, perhaps because so many of the men had experienced a heavy dose of war, there was plenty of space created for horseplay and good-natured fun. Part of what helped set the tone at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base during those years was that many of the jumpers seemed to be in the project just for a lark, not because of an abiding interest in resource conservation.

My son **Paul** (MYC-83) began smokejumping in the early 1980s. He maintained his connection with the base at Missoula for almost 20 years, becoming one of the “elder” jumpers there. It was through my conversations and occasional visits with Paul that I developed an appreciation for the growth of the Forest Service Aerial Project, particularly concerning the professional level of those at the smokejumper base.

So, what led to that earlier momentary sense of regret? I unfold again a photocopy of the Siskiyou Jumpers in 1947. Studying each face, I realize the source of that regret: a lost opportunity of knowing each of those good men individually, in a deeper human sense, that was encouraged by the relatively superficial “jumper culture” of the time.

And I wonder how each one, in retrospect, would portray that summer of 1947 at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in Southern Oregon. 🙏

*Terry died June 5, 2010, at his home in Nevada City, California. He jumped four seasons while attending the University of Washington and earning his degree in forestry. Terry worked in the Dominican Republic and Alaska before shifting to teaching and getting his Masters degree in education from Stanford University. He spent two years in the Peace Corps in Honduras in his mid-fifties.*



*Julio Bilbao (IDC-64)*



*L-R: Bobby Montoya (IDC-62), Guy Hurlbutt, (IDC-62),  
Dyke Nally (IDC-66) & Smokey Stover (MYC-46)*



## Idaho City Smokejumpers

*Photos Courtesy: Guy Hurlbutt (IDC-62), Steve  
Jim Lafferty (IDC-63), Jim Lindell (IDC-63)*



*Idaho City Crew 1966*



*Idaho City*



*L-R: Michael Steppe (IDC-61), Dale Majors (Pilot),  
Harvey Harden (IDC-59) & Steve Wilson (IDC-62)*



*Earl Tuner (IDC-63) & Smokey Stover (MYC-46)*





*Bobby Montoya (IDC-62), Francis Mohr (IDC-63)  
& Jim Lafferty (IDC-63)*



*L-R: Mike Steppe (IDC-61), Benny Ortiz (IDC-61)  
& Pat Wicks (IDC-63)*

## Smokejumpers

*Steve Carlson (IDC-62), Francis Mohr (IDC-63),  
IDC-64 & Michael Steppe (IDC-61)*



*Crew 1964*



*L-R: Francis Mohr, Ben McBride, Jim Lafferty, Pat Wicks,  
Gary Drage & Marion Horton (IDC-63 Rookies)*



*Gary Drage (IDC-63), Benny Ortiz (IDC-61)  
& Pat Burtch (IDC-62)*



*Dick Graham (IDC-58), Smokey Stover (MYC-46)  
& Kenn Smith (IDC-55)*

*Layout Design: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)*



# Doehring First Woman To Lead Smokejumper Base

by David Rauzi

*Idaho County Free Press April 3, 2013.*

It wasn't that big of a leap for Sarah Doehring (MSO-91), who last year assumed command of the USFS Grangeville Smokejumper Base. But it is appropriate that the location, which gave this firefighting profession its start, also hosts another first: the first woman smokejumper program manager in the nation.

"It's been business as usual," Doehring said about the emphasis placed on this milestone from the agency's national level right down to the base ready room. Smokejumpers respect experience and ability, explained Doehring, and having a women in the smokejumper program is not uncommon; many trail blazed before her so that her time in the program has been just part of the norm and not the novelty it might have been a decade or two before.

"And I couldn't do it myself," she said, emphasizing this is a team effort and not a one-man or woman show. "It wouldn't happen as smooth and efficiently."

Doehring came on board last July to oversee the Grangeville Base, one of nine smokejumper facilities in the nation. "Our primary mission is initial attack on wildland fires. Our quick response time enables us to respond to fires that otherwise would take hours to go after by ground crews."

Smokejumping was an unlikely future for Doehring, who grew up in western New York and had



*Sarah Doehring (Courtesy Julie Pendleton)*

never even heard of wildland firefighting. Years later, living in Bozeman, Montana, she was watching a program about smokejumping in the early 80s and came to the conclusion that she would never be a smokejumper after seeing the physical fitness standards they had to meet. "I guess that derailed me for a few years," Doehring said.

Her path to smokejumping started when she was young while on a family vacation where she "fell in love with the West." She moved out to Montana in 1981, worked in private forest restoration before starting as a firefighter with the Forest Service in 1988, and in 1991 began her smokejumper training in Missoula. From there she moved through positions of squadleader, spotter and operations foreman before being selected to lead the Grangeville base last year.

"This job comes down to having experience as a smokejumper," Doehring said, which entails a

"well-rounded" experience in all these positions as well as in administrative duties and fireline qualifications.

Smokejumping was an all-male organization until 1981 when the first female smokejumper started at McCall. "It was a first and it did open doors," she said, though when Doehring started with the USFS, women-on-the-job was more "commonplace, but men still outnumbered women." She noted it has been interesting for this transition to have happened in her lifetime so that when her move into the program manager position came along, it was just another promotion - neither a novelty, nor reached over a rocky road.

"Personally, I have had no problems. I've always been treated fairly by my co-workers," Doehring said. "When I came into this job, I never felt any resistance," but instead she had the support from those in the agency and especially from fellow smokejumpers and also her husband. The main obstacle for women is the physical fitness component of smokejumping, specifically pull-ups, she said. "That's been hard for a lot of women who don't have the upper body strength that men do. "It's definitely something they've gotta work for."

Of the 30 jumpers in Grangeville, four are women, and one of the facility's notable jumpers was **Robin Embry** (GAC-85), a 27-year smokejumper who retired last year. For Doehring, being a woman smokejumper, "It's never been an issue," she said. 🍄

# Staying On Top Of Fire Down Under

by Michael Hill (West Yellowstone '95)

**F**ire in Australia, like in the United States, has evolved differently across its varied landscapes, and its effects are most acutely felt today where flames interact with human habitation.

On the countrywide scale, Australia's southeastern region is considered its potentially most-volatile area where fires interact with man. Southeastern Australia encompasses the states of South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

During my breaks from aviation work in the U.S. and Afghanistan over the last few years, I've spent some of my free time with a specialist firefighting team, based in New South Wales, which has the task of protecting parklands in the rugged terrain surrounding its largest city, Sydney.

In Australia, as here, technological advances in the way bushfires are viewed and managed usually develop as a reaction to tragic fire events. After busy bushfire seasons in New South Wales in the 1980s, the political reaction was to form existing, individual firefighting volunteer brigades into a more-structured statewide organization.

New South Wales experienced another very busy season in 1993-94, this time with deployment of more than 20,000 firefighters onto more than 800 fires burning within its borders.

As a reaction to events that took place across the 1993-94 fire season, a state government inquiry led to the creation of a single, rural fire service in 1997 with a single chain of command. This is the Rural Fire Service (RFS) that exists today.

Yet, bushfires in remote rugged mountainous parklands in 2003 – which had no response until later – came to the public's attention when they transformed into a powerful fire storm that ate its way into the Australian Capital Territory, an enclave within New South Wales. Before it was over, this fire had destroyed 500 homes and killed four people.

Another state coronal inquiry took place following the event, and out of this the idea of the RFS volunteer (RAFT) Remote Area Fire Teams came into being. These are the teams of which I've been part of as an American/Australian firefighter.

What's different about fighting fires in New South Wales? I'd have to say, for sure, it's the animals we encounter, soils and fuels, the strategies used, and when

our teams are used.

As far as for the animals, on Australian fires so far, I've come across kangaroos, wallabies, majestic sea eagles, weather-predicting black cockatoos, scared blue-tongued lizards, ankle-breaking wombat holes – not to mention the deadly snakes and spiders.

The hazards of the landscape here in Australia are pretty much the same – rolling rocks, falling snags, deep and narrow limestone crevices you can fall into, and the fire itself. Fire types are mostly easy-burning gum, tea trees, and regular old remote bushfires. They can build up quickly into a good head of heat, but normally mopup is a cinch, as there isn't the layer of root and mulch like we find normally on fires in some of the American West's fire-dependent ecosystems.

Here in New South Wales, the remote fires are usually started by lightning, accident or arson. Arson is another big difference – in Australia, it's viewed as an illness, and on high bushfire danger days, local police will try to keep tabs on all the known arsonists in their areas.

This is much different than the American policy, which uses the legal system as an official deterrent by going after persons known to start fires in an effort to seek financial damages. From what I've witnessed, the U.S. seems to have the stronger weapon against those who light fires for their own gain.

RAF teams reach fires usually by means of riding in its state-issued, four-wheel-drive trucks before hiking into the remote locations using global-positioning system (GPS) skills, or sometimes catching a lift in a fire truck to take the team closer. However, other times the team is winched in and out of helicopters hovering above where the bushfire may be located.

RAFTs use these helicopter-winch tactics usually when the first team in is needed to cut out a landing zone. Then more teams, consisting of 4-6 more RAFT personnel each, can be shuttled in with supplies. This helicopter-winch insertion role can also be used during a single day's mission to winch teams in and out of rugged locations on large incidents to deal with remote, troublesome smokes.

RFS/RAF teams are rarely expected by their management to spend a night out on a fire, and mostly, they're deployed by the RFS onto fires in their early or late stages where officials believe they will be able to do their most good.



Mike Hill (Courtesy M. Hill)

Cutting line around a fire, as is done in the U.S., is usually not necessary in Australia due to its fuels and soils. Teams are therefore often just tasked on fires to cold trail, and mop up smoldering logs and stump holes, assisted by helicopter bucket drops. The RAF teams can also drop hazard trees and occasionally cut

direct line on initial attack.

Bushman skills, endurance and hard work are what it takes to be a RAF team member. GPS navigation is stressed along with what Australians call “dry firefighting skills,” which, at least in New South Wales, are not a well-known capability. This is because most of their firefighters have come from community-based firefighting systems that long ago became dependent on the tactics specialized around fire trucks.

Teamwork, *esprit de corps*, and matesmanship are also highly stressed in these specialist teams, as they are also valued in everyday Australian life.

On a fire with the New South Wales RFS/RAF Teams, it is about working together toward the important goal of extinguishing a remote fire. It’s a volunteer-based system, where the volunteers involved have chosen to take time out from their everyday lives to drop everything and go on their “big adventures” together. There is no pay for most of them after the “hard work” is finished, in the traditional sense of the term.

It’s really pretty simple. We work hard in the remote bush as volunteer RAF in our small teams for the camaraderie, the sense of belonging and friendship that only being in a small, specialized, hardworking band can bring. This includes going the extra mile, taking calculated, well-timed risks, and doing the right thing to protect ourselves and our neighbors.

We go bush on these fires to stop them spreading into established parklands as well as helping those who can’t or won’t help themselves. We protect the beautiful environments we are lucky enough to live in. On the side, we are together getting some of our own, pretty good adventures as RAF team members. 🌲

## North Cascades Smokejumper Reunion

Mark your calendars now as NCSB is planning a reunion to celebrate 75 years of smokejumping. The dates are:

**September 12-13-14, 2014.**  
More details to follow in future issues.





# SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

I'VE BEEN FORTUNATE enough to get an advance copy of Gayle Morrison's new book, *Hog's Exit*. We ran a full-page release on it in the April issue of *Smokejumper*.

*Hog's Exit*, Jerry Daniels, the Hmong, and the CIA could have also had "Smokejumpers" added to that cover. Currently I'm about half way through the 420-page advance copy. There are so many smokejumpers mentioned as sources of information that I won't list them here.

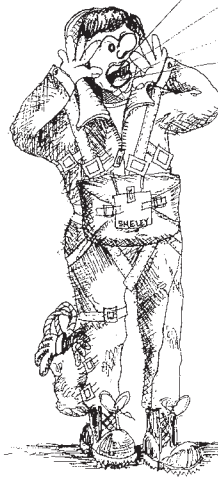
Jerry Daniels (MSO-58) is one of the most interesting people who ever was a smokejumper. We have had numerous articles on Jerry in *Smokejumper* over the years. He started his CIA career as a "kicker" with Air America and moved on to become General Vang Pao's friend and right-hand man in "The Secret War" in Laos. As the advertisement says: "He was a man who was a pivotal agent in the U.S./Hmong history." His death in April 1982 in Bangkok, Thailand added to the legend.

Gayle Morrison has worked with the Hmong since 1977. Her

first book, *Sky Is Falling: An Oral History of the CIA's Evacuation of the Hmong from Laos*, came out in 1999.

The CIA/Smoke-jumper connection is one of the most interesting happenings in smokejumper history. As editor of this magazine, one of my goals is to record our history, and I have published many articles on the involvement of smokejumpers in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. How did this connection ever start? I have a few ideas but nothing other than speculation. In my files are the names of 95 smokejumpers that worked for the CIA in various positions.

I thought I had the initial connection when I wrote "Loren Fessler: The Original Smoke-jumper/CIA Connection?" in the July 2010 issue of *Smokejumper*. It took me a year of research and emailing around the world just



to write a three-page article. Checking details and getting background for a single sentence can take weeks. I have a real feel for those, like Gayle, who write whole books.

Loren Fessler (MSO-46) was very unique: OSS during WWII with special operation jumps in France and China, later, after getting his PhD from Harvard; he was the "China Expert" for

*Time-Life*. Like Jerry Daniels, Loren only returned to the U.S. for short periods of time and lived overseas. My conclusion at the end of the article: "Was Loren Fessler the Original CIA/Smoke-jumper Connection? In my opinion, No. Loren Fessler was just another of the unique individuals that we have seen come through our history trying to get another fire jump before the season ends."

Now, Gar, will I ever get to see your diary? 🗞

## Get Smokejumper A Month Earlier

NSA members are signing up for the electronic version of *Smokejumper* that is delivered via email. It is sent in a PDF file that contains everything that is in the hardcopy issue.

The advantages are: early delivery (a month ahead of USPS), ease of storage, and NSA postal expense savings. If you like the hardcopy, you can download and print it at home.

NSA Director Fred Cooper (NCSB-62) says: "I will opt to have my magazines delivered electronically rather than via USPS to save us direct \$ in printing and mailing, not to mention your hand labor in processing. I think I mentioned in an earlier message that I'm having other magazines/newsletters delivered electronically. It takes less space to store them electronically and if I do want a hard copy, it is easy to print using the *Fast Draft printer option* which allows printing 48 pages in less than two minutes on my printer and uses a lot less ink."

If you want to be added to the electronic mailing, contact Editor **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59): [cnkgsheley@earthlink.net](mailto:cnkgsheley@earthlink.net). 🗞

# Ford Trimotor Updates

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

**F**red Donner (MSO-59) has been working on an article on the Ford Trimotor and smokejumping for three years. From an email of Fred's earlier this year:

"For three years I've been collecting information for an exhaustive article on the Ford Trimotor to be published on the 50th anniversary of the last Ford jump - next July 2013 - I thought - based on an article by Denis Symes (MYC-63) on "The Last Ford Jump?" in the October 2005 issue. I've been in no hurry because I had lots of time, and I was concentrating on my "Operation Bolo" article last year and "B-17" article this year.

"So I made a New Year's Resolution to get the story done this month. Today (Jan. 2013) I pulled out my Ford file folder and found a note from you of March 2011. More careful reading of your information indicates Missoula and Grangeville jumped the Ford through 1967 with Grangeville apparently making the last, a four-jumper drop on September 12, 1967.

"Denis, a McCall jumper on detail at Missoula, had witnessed a refresher jump being loaded on a Ford and took a picture of it 'toward the end of June 1963.' He quoted the pilot, Swede Nelson, as saying, 'This would probably be the Ford's last jumper flight.' July, of course, would have been the nearest issue to a 50th anniversary. Denis also indicates he missed the Ford by one year at McCall, the Ford having apparently been retired there in 1962."

In a recent email (Jan. 2013) from Dan Tomich (MSO-61), he adds some historical updates:

"When I was jumping at Missoula (61-65) and Grangeville (65), the Johnson Flying Service had Ford Trimotor NC7861 as a jump plane and Ford Trimotor NC9845 rigged out as a spray plane. Ford 861 is now in the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Florida, and Ford 845 is now owned by Evergreen Aviation of McMinnville, Oregon.

"Apparently, the Navy used Ford Trimotors back in the 1920s and/or 1930s and the Navy restored Ford 861 to Navy colors. Since I also served three years active in the Navy, it is only

fitting that Ford 861 ended up at Pensacola."

Thanks to Dan for the updates on 861 and 845. We're also looking forward to Fred's article. This information is part of our smokejumper history. The input information that all of you send in is important. Thanks for sending it along. 🙏



*Trimotor 861 at Pensacola Naval Aviation Museum*



*Trimotor 845 at Missoula Reunion*



*Trimotor 861 at Grangeville 1965 (Courtesy Dan Tomich)*

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# HISTORICAL NOTES—THE STARTING OF A SMOKEJUMPER BASE 1943

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*The following comes from a handwritten letter found in the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Archives. It is from Jack Heintzelman (CJ-43), dated August 17, 1943. Jack had the tough job of starting a smokejumper base from scratch and, at the same time, learning to become a smokejumper.*

Here's a sketch of what I remember of the project:

The first I heard of the project was in the spring of 1943. Supervisor Obye called me and asked if I would like to head the Smokejumper Project to be started at Cave Junction. I was the Protective Assistant at the Redwood Ranger Station at the time. (Harold Bowerman was the ranger.) I went over to Medford and got an Army Captain to take me up in a Piper Cub as I had never been in an airplane and thought I should at least go up once to help me make my decision. That went OK and I returned to Cave Junction and paced the floor for hours. Then I accepted the job.

So I had to vacate my \$10.00/mo. P.A. house and rent in town for \$40.00 a month. As the jumper job brought no increase in pay, the net result was a pay loss.

Next I went to the Ranger station at Seeley Lake in Montana for training. At Seeley Lake I was assigned 10 men from the CPS crew there. Those men and I trained principally under **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) and **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40). **Frank Derry** (NCSB-40) was the parachute trainer leader. On alternate days we trained in firefighting and smokejumping. We (three of us) also trained in parachute packing and repair. This crew was of very high quality with a variety of skills. After six weeks we returned to Cave Junction. Both the crew and I trained in Montana all three years I was there. The latter two years we trained at Nine-Mile, which was a Remount Mule farm too.

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*At Cave Junction we had one red dirt airstrip, a crew, a cookhouse, and platform tents. The latter were at the Ranger Station down by the river. We had no airplane, no parachutes, no loft, no training facilities, and no hangar.*

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At Cave Junction we had one red dirt airstrip, a crew, a cookhouse, and platform tents. The latter were at the Ranger Station down by the river. We had no airplane, no parachutes, no loft, no training facilities, and no hangar.

As I've already mentioned, we had a versatile CO crew, and it wasn't long before we cut up a CCC barracks building at Grayback and rebuilt it into a loft with a tower, down behind the Ranger Station. We also built the standard jumper training facilities there. And we built a small hangar at the airport.

Frank Derry flew down from Missoula with a Johnson Flying Service plane, Travelair as I recall, and we had practice jumps. We also eventually got parachutes from Missoula (Eagles), with the hard opening, and Irvins.

Later we contracted with the S&M Flying Service from The Dalles for a plane to be stationed at Cave Junction. I don't remember how long the S&M Flying Service contract was in effect over the three years I had the project, but I do remember that S&M had a young pilot stationed there. On one fire jump, we took off with three or four jumpers. When we were up about 30 feet, the motor quit and we landed OK as there was plenty of strip left. The pilot then tinkered with the fuel attachments and was satisfied that the plane was OK. He asked me if I wanted a test flight and I said yes. He taxied to the south end of the field and took off. He climbed very fast to about 200 feet, stalled out, and crashed and burned. He died instantly. We then filled in with Johnson planes.

Somewhere along the line (I don't remember which of the 3 years I was there, though it was probably 1944 or 1945), we heard we were going to get a Nordyne Norseman. We also heard through our smokejumper rumor circle that these planes were crashing all over France in WWII. At any rate, we got one and Larry Sohler was the pilot. He was great.

We had a lot of practice jumps at Cave Junction. The number of fire jumps was not large. Aside from the Siskiyou, we jumped a few men on the Umpqua. Also, all of us flew up to the head of Lake Chelan and jumped out of a Marine C-47 on a tough fire. (I have no personal records on either practice or fire jumps.)

We fought several ground fires, and the crew could really produce with the progressive method.

We didn't sustain a lot of injuries. As best I can recall, a back injury was the worst.

After three years, I asked to be assigned to other du-



ties, as I was a forester and wished to pursue a forestry career.

In the second or third year, Les Coville showed us a piece of Japanese rice paper which was from one of the Japanese balloons that floated incendiary material to the U.S. This pepped us up with the idea of saving our forests from fires started by these devices. Actually, we never jumped a fire caused by them.

I remember landing on a practice jump once and heading lickety-split for Grants Pass where my wife

was having a baby. Don't remember whether I got there before or after.

Well, this hasn't helped you much, but is about all I can help you with. The old days of getting into jumper gear on the way to the airport in the back of a truck are over. All the physical structures we built are gone. The Redwood Remount Station is gone and replaced by a helicopter. But maybe we had more fun!

Sincerely,

Jack Heintzelman 🐼

# This Is Not A Jumper-Type Fire!

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

*Reprint from January 2004 "Smokejumper."*

I was spending a few days in Sunriver, Ore., near Bend in July and reading about the local fire that was causing concern. About that time I received this chronology that provides some interesting reading. Here is how things went on the Link Fire.

July 5, 2003 – Fire reported by lookout at 4:27 pm. Plotted in steep terrain with extremely heavy dead and down fuels. Fire is near or next to an old road and near the burned area of a fire from 2002. **More than 20 smokejumpers** (Redmond) are available and anxious to respond as the lookout reports that the small fire is intensifying. Additional engines are ordered.

**The first engine finds the road very nearly impassable** but finally arrives at the fire, which is heating up. Additional engines try to access the fire to assist **but are finding it very difficult to get there.**

A smokejumper overhead calls Central Oregon Dispatch to find out if they can use jumpers. **Dispatch replies that "this is not a jumper-type fire."** No idea what they mean by that. Multiple helicopters and retardant loads and crews are ordered. **First crew is several hours out. Jumpers can give them 20 in less than an hour but not ordered.** Through the rest of the afternoon the fire steadily grows.

The local *Bend Bulletin* newspaper headlines read as follows over the next few days, with total burned acreage in brackets:

- July 6, 2003 – Front page: *New Fire at Cache Mt. burns near last years blaze* (200 acres)
- July 7, 2003 – Front page: *Crews Hold Link Fire Steady* (600 acres); *Fatal traffic accident tied*

*to Link Fire – 3 dead*

- July 8, 2003 – Front page: *Firefighters Hold the Line* (636 acres)
- July 9, 2003 – Section C: *Link Fire growing steadily in steep terrain* (900 acres)
- July 10, 2003 – Section C: *Fire Fighters have Link Fire 70% Contained, blaze creeps southwest* (1,100 acres)
- July 11, 2003 – Front page: *Link Fire Doubles in Size* (2,100 acres)
- July 13, 2003 – Front page: *Fire Crews Make Gains on Link Blaze* (3,200 acres)
- July 13, 2003 – Section B: *Cooler Weather Helps Firefighters*
- July 13, 2003 – From web site: *Link fire 100% Contained evening of the 13th* (3,574 acres)
- July 15, 2003 – Front page: *Firefighters Continue to Patrol for Spot Fires from Link* (3,545 acres)
- July 17, 2003 – From web site: *Rehab in Progress on Link Fire, Fire Not Out*

And, from the *Sisters Nugget* (Sisters, Ore.) newspaper: *Black Butte Ranch Estimates \$45,000 in lost revenue due to Link fire*

**As of Saturday, July 12, 2003, the Link Fire costs were at \$7.1 million.**

I have the same question as last season: initial attack system broken? 🐼

# THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE

## THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**  
(Associate)

J-42, THE McCALL “Doug,” left Ogden, Utah, for the last time in early April. The plane was purchased by Kenn Borek Air, Ltd. of Calgary, Alberta. Borek operates a passenger and cargo service in both the Arctic and Antarctic.

While it is lamentable to see the McCall DC-3 go, it just isn't possible to save every aircraft. We are lucky to have the Mann Gulch DC-3 at the Museum of Mountain Flying in Missoula.

Late last fall the Colorado Springs (Colo.) *Independent* newspaper published an extensive investigative report into the Waldo Fire. The report validates what I have been saying about ICS and municipal fire departments in these pages for years.

The Colorado Springs Fire Department was in no way prepared to manage a large wildland-urban interface fire. Colorado Springs firefighters even admit that without the arrival of Forest Service engines and hotshot crews, the fire would have swept east for miles unchecked.

Our colleague Bill Gabbert

at *wildfiretoday.com* thinks this report is Pulitzer Prize material and I agree. The City of Colorado Springs published a final after-action report on its website in April. Draw your own conclusions.

An issue of *Backwoods Home* magazine earlier this year had an article on Sylvan “Buckskin Bill” Hart, whom many smokejumpers met and many more have heard of. Most of the article was pulled from the 1969 Harold Peterson book *Last of the Mountain Men*, and there wasn't much new to glean from the article.

I acquired a copy of *Last of the Mountain Men* at least 35 years ago and was intrigued by Buckskin Bill as anyone. I have read that the book is quite embellished and even Bill himself hated it. A better portrayal is in the book *A River Went Out of Eden* by Chana Cox, who lived near Bill. Thirty-three years after his passing, Buckskin Bill still continues to intrigue us.

A belated tip of the hard hat to **Sarah Doehring** (MSO-91) for being promoted to base manager in Grangeville. News sometimes travels very slowly through the woods.

At deadline, the weather pattern is the same as in 2012. Experts are predicting yet another active fire season. Due to sequestration, there are 500 fewer firefighters working for the Forest Service this season.

The smokejumper community has taken some hard hits this year with the death of **Joe Philpott** (NIFC-09) in an avalanche in Northern Colorado and **Lane Lamoreaux** (MYC-09) and

**Dwight Chambers** (MSO-66) suffering life-changing injuries in recreational accidents.

Lane's continuing recovery has been nothing short of a miracle. The need for funding of the Good Samaritan Fund is ongoing; any amount helps. You can find contribution forms and forms for requesting assistance on the NSA website.

On the night Hurricane Sandy hit New York City, I received updates on the FDNY response on Facebook in as close to real time as current technology allows. Much to the FDNY's credit, multiple incident-action plans were written in advance and much advanced planning took place.

Miraculously, no firefighters or EMS personnel were lost during the hurricane. The number of fires and other incidents were unprecedented in New York history. I know there were tree climbers working for APHIS in New York City when the hurricane hit. Please send in your stories to the magazine.

If you responded to the East Coast for the Sandy recovery, I am sure the readers would also like to hear your stories.

The NSA Facebook page is a work in progress. Please friend us if you have a Facebook account. Post your photos past and present for all to see. Note that the active NSA Facebook page is sanctioned by the National Smokejumper Association.

*There are fires to put out, and others to light ... and those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.*

—Friedrich Nietzsche 🗣️

# Tom Roche Gets Help From NSA Good Sam Fund

by Bob Reid (Missoula '57)

**T**he NSA Board of Directors recently voted to present **Tom Roche** (MSO-02) a check for \$1000 from NSA's Good Samaritan Fund to help defray expenses after his Long Island home was flooded by Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

Because of distances involved, NSA President **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) asked me to present the check to Tom.

As Tom lives in New York and I live in Florida, and we both have jobs that keep us busy, getting together posed a bit of a challenge. But Jim knew that Tom's brother – a Marine Corps A-10 pilot in Georgia – was being sent to Afghanistan and Tom planned to fly down to visit his brother before he departed.

Betsy and I live only a couple hours down the road, so Jim arranged for me to present the check on behalf of the association while Tom was here.

After visiting with his brother, Tom drove his rental car over to our place and I presented the check.

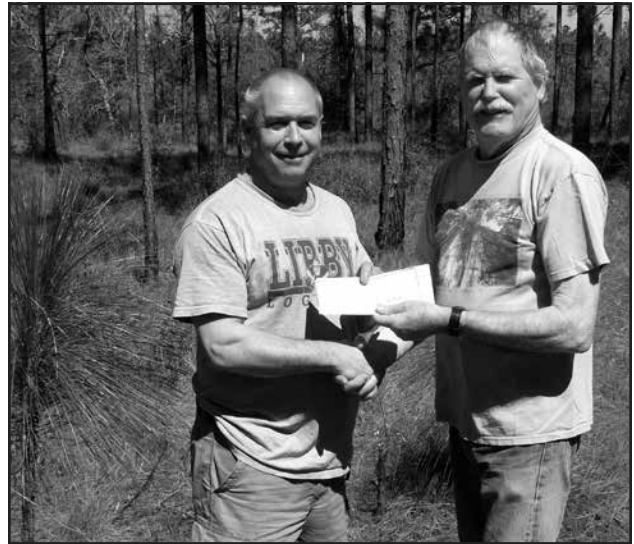
But that's only part of the story. Tom had a couple days to kill before his return flight to New York, so we invited him to bunk in with us at our cabin in the woods to pass the time.

Knowing this was the season for prescribed fire in the longleaf forest, Tom had the foresight to bring along his boots on the off chance he'd get to see what fire in the longleaf was like. And we, having already done almost a dozen burns this season, had one more tract of pines that just happened to need burning!

So, next morning we donned boots, grabbed drip torches and put flame to the woods. It was a small and relatively tame fire – around 15 acres – and we had plenty of time for beers on our cabin porch after the fire was out.

During our time together, I got to know quite a bit more about this easy-going but very interesting character. To start with, I wanted to know how a guy from New York City manages to become a smoke-jumper in Montana.

Well, it seems Tom was on a bicycle trip across the U.S. when he happened to pedal through a still-smoking area in Northern California where a wildfire had just been contained. He saw this group of sooty dudes gathered beside the road.



*Bob Reid (MSO-57) presents Good Samaritan Fund check to Tom Roach (WYS-02). (Courtesy Bob Reid)*

It was a Sawtooth hotshot crew, and Tom, whose regular job was with the New York Fire Department (FDNY), was interested in hearing about wildland firefighting.

Long story short, Tom got not only the bug but a job application form, and soon was doing summers on a hotshot crew himself. After working 3-4 seasons on hotshot, he transitioned to helo-rappelling for a couple more, then applied for smokejumpers.

Tom has been a regular at West Yellowstone now since 2002 and has his 100-jump pin.

I was not really sure how this was all going to work out when Jim first contacted me about making the presentation. Not only did everything work out fine, but Betsy and I have made friends with a very interesting and talented individual in the process. (Besides helping with our burn, he used his ironworking talent by spending an hour welding, repairing a seriously damaged bush hog for us!)

It is unfortunate how much Tom Roche and his neighbors lost to Hurricane Sandy, but knowing him and his resilience, he'll help them all get it back together again before long.

And, as for me, I'm very proud to have played a minor role in helping one of the U.S. Forest Service's most deserving workers in a time of need. 🍄



# An Eye For Terrain Serves Perkins Well With Brush In Hand

by Steve Doherty

(Copyright 2013, Plein Air Magazine/[www.outdoorpainter.com](http://www.outdoorpainter.com))

“One key aspect of my approach to plein air painting came out of my 13 summers as a smokejumper,” says Californian Davis Perkins (NCSB-72), who came to our attention after he won an award in the *PleinAir* Salon competition.

“When you parachute in to fight forest fires, you have to be totally aware of all aspects of the terrain and the elements,” is one of the many understatement Davis Perkins offers as he describes his approach to outdoor painting.

“In my landscape paintings, I try to combine this close observation of nature with the pure joy of discovery inherent in the process of painting directly from nature. I love the challenge of trying to capture the movement of fog and cloud, to paint the ever-changing atmosphere.”

Perkins has been a smokejumper, firefighter, paramedic and professional artist. After serving as a paratroop sergeant, first with the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division and later with the 12th Special Forces Group of the Army Reserve, he worked 13 summers as a smokejumper, parachuting into forest fires with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

During the winter he attended art school, and graduated from the University of Oregon with a

degree in fine arts. Now he is a dedicated plein air painter and sometimes volunteer firefighter and paramedic. As this e-newsletter story is being distributed, Davis is back in Haiti for his fourth trip as a volunteer paramedic, helping a medical team set up clinics on the rural western side of the island.

“I drive to a location or hike with equipment in my backpack in which I pack my Open Box M pochade box,” Perkins explains. “When I find myself saying, ‘There it is!’ my viewfinder comes out and I begin thinking about a

black, yellow ochre light, burnt sienna, cadmium yellow light, cadmium red light, ultramarine blue, sap green, and cadmium green.”

Perkins continues, “I have my own technique for painting fog and clouds. Once the painting is started, I observe the fog, or the shapes of cloud formations, take a clean brush and Viva towels, and wipe out the cloud shapes or fog patterns by exposing the original panel surface. Once I have captured what I’m after, I build on the shapes using paint.

“Every studio painting has its

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*Working in nature is full of trials and tribulations, and it’s always a process of discovery.*

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possible painting composition.

“I lay out my tools and paints and tone a RayMar Belgium linen panel with a thin wash of a warm earth color such as yellow ochre, and mix in a dark value. I quickly make a compositional sketch and pay particular attention to where the lightest lights are located.

“As I start to paint, I remind myself to stay loose, keep thinking and observing, and gauge the basic values from dark to light. In the early stages of painting, I don’t hesitate to wipe out some areas and add to others. When I’m happy with the composition, I lay out the full palette of my paints – titanium white, ivory

beginnings in a plein air study. Working in nature is full of trials and tribulations, and it’s always a process of discovery. It’s important for me to be intuitive, spontaneous, and ready to paint what is truly inspiring while closely observing nature’s light and color. Sometimes I do take a few photographs for reference, in case I decide to do a larger painting in the studio.” 🗨️

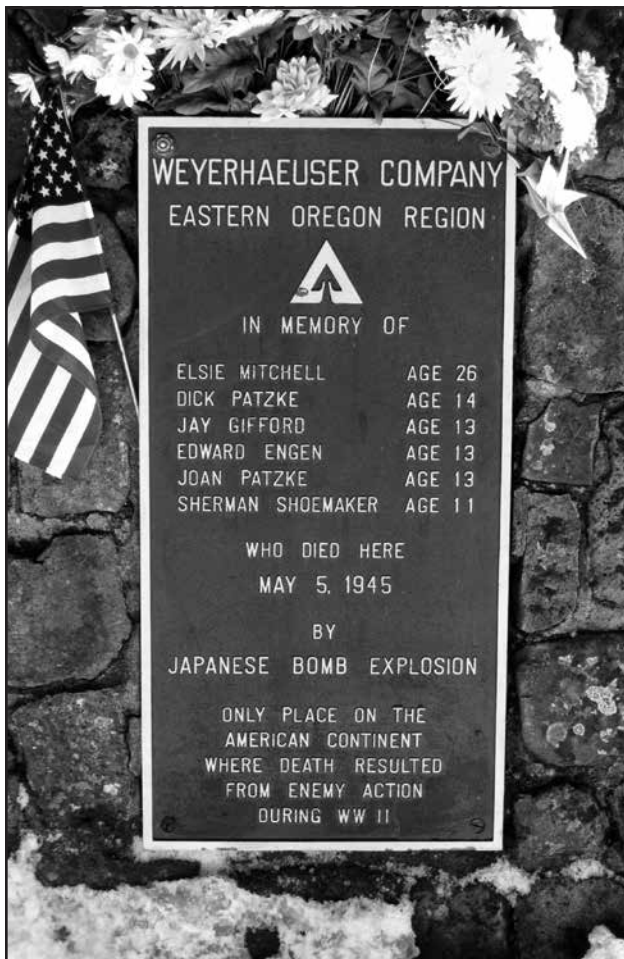
*For more information, visit [www.davisperkins.com](http://www.davisperkins.com).*

*Davis will be doing a special painting with a limited number of prints for the National Smokejumper Reunion in 2015, the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of smokejumping. (Ed.)*

# Truth Trumps Fiction: Balloon Bombs, The U.S. Forest Service And The Vietnam Sequel

by Fred Donner (Missoula '59)

When the already draft-depleted smokejumper program was faced with the Japanese balloon bomb threat in 1945, the all-black 555<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Battalion was deployed to California and Oregon as reinforcements. Carl Gidlund (MSO-58) told the story in the April 2001 issue. He noted that six people were killed by a balloon bomb explosion, the only Americans killed by Japanese weapons in the continental U.S. during World War II. The Mitchell Recreation Area containing the Mitchell Monument on the Fremont-Winema National Forests near Bly, Oregon, marks the site of that explosion and is on the National Register of



Mitchell Monument (Courtesy Mark Corbet)

## MITCHELL MONUMENT MITCHELL RECREATION AREA

Dedicated  
1950

Placed on the

NATIONAL REGISTER  
*of* HISTORIC PLACES

2003

*Site of fatal Japanese balloon bomb  
explosion during World War II.  
The blast on May 5, 1945  
killed six residents of Bly, Oregon.*

FREMONT-WINEMA NATIONAL FORESTS  
FOREST SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mitchell Monument (Courtesy Mark Corbet)

Historic Places. Here is the story – and the sequel.

On May 5, 1945, a Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) pastor in Bly, Oregon, named Rev. Archie Mitchell, took his pregnant wife and five children, not their own, on a picnic outing. It is not clear how it happened, but a near-by Japanese balloon bomb exploded killing Archie's wife and all five children. Later, widower Archie married a sister of two of the children killed.

In 1962 Rev. Mitchell and his wife, Betty, with their children were C&MA missionaries at Ban-MeThuot (BMT) in the tribal highlands of South Vietnam. On May 30, 1962, Archie was captured by the Viet Cong near the C&MA leprosarium at BMT along with a C&MA lady missionary doctor and a Mennonite volunteer man. The three have never been seen since and their fate is still debated by those who

follow the Vietnam POW issue.

In early March 1975 the North Vietnamese overran BMT and captured 13 foreigners - one U.S. government official, two Filipinos, one Australian, one American Fulbright scholar, eight missionaries, including two American couples and the five-year-old daughter of one couple, one Canadian couple, and Betty Mitchell, the lady who had already lost two siblings to the Japanese and a husband to the Viet Cong. Betty's children were away at school or young adults in the U.S.

The BMT 13 were sent to Hanoi arriving in the summer of 1975. At the end of October 1975, they were released through Vientiane and Bangkok. The BMT 13 became the BMT 14 in North Vietnam when they were joined by another captured U.S. government officer.

That officer and his wife were later killed in an attack on the American Embassy in Beirut in April 1983.

Betty talked to their captors in a fearless manner, seeking information on Archie while informing them of their place in eternity should they not find salvation in our Lord Jesus. Betty is in North Carolina today where she continues to minister to Vietnamese tribal people.

Twenty-three Christian missionaries or missionary family members were killed or captured during the Vietnam War, nineteen from BMT alone. 🕯

*Fred Donner and his wife, Beverly, were a business manager and nurse for a missionary group in Vietnam from 1971 to 1975 and personally know some of the people mentioned above.*

## Leading Smokejumpers To Water

by Stan "Clancy" Collins (McCall '67)

**T**he Siskiyou Smoke-jumper Base, the "Gobi," closed in 1981, more than 30 years ago. In the past 10 years there have been three reunions and three volumes of the "Book of Gobi"—books of fact, fiction, and true lies.

The books have all had the underlining effort to explain why our time at the Gobi was so significant and why we still have such strong ties to it after all these years. I would suggest that most other smokejumper units have or have had the "Gobi Spirit," too, but in their own unique bodies; and, that this spirit influenced our youth and is a measure of us now.

Jumper units are similar communities, each with a slightly different approach to its mission of fire suppression. Each is one body with many parts, and those parts have so many qualities, perhaps better thought of as "quirks" – jumpers working through college, jumpers with formal degrees, jumpers with gifts no degrees could provide.



**A Coming to the Gorge. Delos Dutton (MSO-51), Base Manager (right) and Mick Swift (CJ-56) Foreman (left). (Courtesy Doug Beck)**

All are brought together with expectations formed by squad leaders, foremen and base managers.

At the Gobi, no one was completely above reproach. A water ditch wound from Rough and

Ready Creek, across the Gobi, to fill the log pond of the mill across U.S. Highway 199 from the base. Called the "Gobi Gorge," it ceremoniously, and unceremoniously, gathered the faithful to both celebrate events and to



soothe misplaced exuberance.

Status was no exemption. The base managers, hands and feet glass-taped – for their own safety, of course – found contrition in the gorge. But that was part of the spirit; management was not so rigid nor so ancient that it couldn't understand humility.

Those quirks, each a part of the body, provided measures of strength and character. Mick with his masterful people-skills; Hal with his extended wings; David with his kindness; Hoop with his

optimism; Emmet with his humor; Doug with his persistence; Juan with his abandoning nonsense; Ray with his paternal assistance; Delos with his boldness to trust us; Larry with ... Mike with ... Bill with ... Lon with ... LeRoy with ... the many Gar(r)ys with ... Wes with ... Mouse with ... Troop with ...

The Gobi had many parts, but one spirit, many quirks each providing its part to distinguish a body.

It is not here intended to sin-

gle out the Gobi, but to suggest an identity that hopefully other jumpers can recognize in their own units. Smokejumper units are at their best a microcosm for community, for belonging. They may have many rough edges – “A good jumper should be able to express a coherent thought using one four-letter word for all eight parts of speech” – to be sure. Yet, they are composed of wondrous people who may be initially slow on the uptake but are certainly long on the lasting influence. 🧠

## Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Museum

**Gobi Work Week June 17 – 22**

Monday – Saturday



**Progress in the Past Year:** the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Museum is officially up and running and gaining momentum every day. We recently joined the Southern Oregon Visitors Association and through them, advertising will spread throughout the region, greatly increasing our visibility.

### Individual Accomplishments Since Last Year:

- Shingling the bath house and substantial interior plumbing and esthetic improvements.
- Office interior renovation and installed exhibits.
- Split rail fence installed between the road and runway.
- Loft and Ready Room interior renovation including jump gear, parachutes, loft equipment. Secure archives room.
- Gobi store counter and exhibits in the Mess Hall.
- Historical road signs and entrance sign on Hwy 199.
- Handicap Parking.
- Heritage Tree plaque with handicap access.



Betty's Desk and base operations area soon to be restored.



SSB sign on Hwy 199



Tour information and history stations.

### Work Projects for this June 17-22 Include:

- Work inside and outside of the Office
- Shingling the sides of the New Barricks
- Pump House renovation
- Erecting the Shock Tower
- A vast number of small painting, repair, and restoration projects

The old base is coming back to life and it is a fulfilling sight. We hope you will be able to participate and enjoy resurrecting the wonderful memories it left with us, so that others can experience the proud heritage of the base.

Grab a room or bring your tent. Lunch and dinner provided. Give us a day, three days, or a week. Please let us know if you plan to come: Gary Buck: [joebuck47@gmail.com](mailto:joebuck47@gmail.com) See you there.

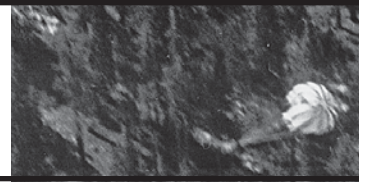
Visit our new Website: [www.siskiyouSmokejumperMuseum.org](http://www.siskiyouSmokejumperMuseum.org)

**Alert! Prepare to prepare...** The Beech will be back. Come see for yourself during Work Week.





# THE JUMP LIST



*The Jump List is intended to bring you up-to-date on your fellow NSA members. Send your information to Chuck Shelley; see his contact information on page 3 of this magazine.*

**JESS NELSON** (Missoula '55)

**Now living in:** Guymon, Okla.

**Jumped:** MSO 55-57, 59-61, 68-73

**Since jumping:** Spent 36 years as a teacher, principal and elementary coordinator in Guymon; during more than 20 years of that span, was involved in the Boy Scouts of America program and received two Silver Beaver Awards; served 14 years as city councilman for Guymon, and 14 more as mayor; as mayor, coordinated a committee which successfully recruited a pork producer to Guymon and the state, processing 18,000 hogs daily and has approximately 5,000 employees statewide; organized an impact committee to prepare for the expected increase in population and businesses, which nearly doubled in 10 years; served two years as president of Oklahoma Conference of Mayors and two years as president of Oklahoma Municipal League; was named 1995 Oklahoma Mayor of the Year and at the same time was recognized as Oklahoma Municipal Official of the Year; inducted to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame for City and Town Officials in 2005; honored with Community Leadership Award established in his name by Guymon Chamber of Commerce in 2001; received Oklahoma Governor's Art Award for Guymon's participation with Foley, Ala., in an art and culture exchange in 2003; received Distinguished Graduate Award from Leadership Oklahoma in 2002.

**Jess says:** "Guymon has a history of outstanding community volunteers and employees. I appreciate being able to work with such inspiring and hard-working individuals. I now spend time with my five children and six grandchildren. I raise blackberries and have honeybees. I hope to go on a smokejumper trail project this summer."

**BILL SHAFFER** (Missoula '62)

**Now living in:** El Paso, Texas

**Jumped:** GAC 62, MSO 63

**Since jumping:** Earned bachelor's degree in Geological Engineering from University of Minnesota in 1964; U.S. Air Force veteran, 1964-68, working mostly on civil engineering research projects at the Air Force Weapons Laboratory, Kirtland AFB, N.M.; graduated

from University of New Mexico in 1971 with a master's degree in Geology which, during the summer of 1970, included mapping the geology in the northern Big Belt Mountains not far from Mann Gulch; worked in 1971-72 at two underground copper/gold mines outside Lordsburg, N.M.; moved to El Paso in late 1972 and, as manager of exploration for El Paso Coal Co., evaluated many of the coal basins in the western U.S.; formed a limited partnership in 1981 to prospect and mine gold in Alaska; after prospecting during that summer in the Brooks Range and elsewhere, mining started in 1982 and continued until 1997; mined on Eagle Creek at 103-mile Steese Highway, Candle, on the northeast coast of the Seward Peninsula, Tofty, (near Manley Hot Springs) and finished up at Fox, outside Fairbanks; since 1997 have been working as a mining/exploration consultant involving field work in Nevada, New Mexico, Peru, Guyana, Turkey, Siberia and Mexico.

**Bill says:** "I've been married to Didi for 43 years. We were blessed with three wonderful daughters and three grandkids."

**GREG ZSCHAECHNER** (Redding '76)

**Now living in:** Albuquerque, N.M.

**Jumped:** RDD 76-79

**Since jumping:** Earned a bachelor's degree from Colorado State University in Forestry and Fire Science (1981); worked for the Bureau of Land Management's Nevada State Office doing fire behavior/effects studies for eight years and started the Great Basin Live Fuel Moisture Program; worked at NIFC Fire Training, then became the assistant state fire management officer for the BLM Colorado State Office; as a result of the Yellowstone fires of 1988, was chosen to be the interior fire operations position at the Missoula Fire Depot; was on several Type I teams as a fire behavior analyst and was on national cadres for fire behavior analyst and fire in ecosystem management; worked as coordinator of Eastern Great Basin Coordination Center, then headed the Utah Interagency Smoke Management Program, retiring to Albuquerque, N.M., in 2007; since retirement, learned to sail (not in New Mexico but Florida) and gained certification to captain monohulls up to 50 feet, and have sailed from St. Maarten to Dominica and participated in the North Atlantic Rally to the Caribbean sailing from Bermuda

to St. Maarten; have also been trying to work in as much travel as possible spending time in Belize and Panama; other than that, just enjoying retirement!  
**Greg says:** “Jumping sure gave me the confidence to do many things in life ... like no other job. My e-mail address is gaz52@comcast.net.”

**RICHARD GERSBACH** (Redding '79)

**Now living in:** Midland, Texas

**Jumped:** RDD 79-81

**Since jumping:** Moved to Midland (home of George Bush and Baby Jessica) after the 1981 season, chasing the “oil boom” in Jan. 1982, but hit the “oil bust”; applied with the fire department in Midland and got on to become a driver and EMT/paramedic in two years; married in 1986; helped run our dry-cleaning business and had two children; quit the fire department for one year, but realized I missed it too much and got back on with them; unfortunately, got a divorce while going through nursing school; became an RN in 1995; tried everything from medical-surgical to intensive-care jobs and even was a flight nurse for a year or so; retired from fire department in 2001; moved to Philadelphia so my new wife, Lori, could go to a fellowship for Hand Therapist experience; then moved to Bristol, Tenn.; moved back to Midland in summer of 2006 with my wife opening her own hand clinic; have continued nursing and am currently relief charge in surgery unit; have a 5-year-old son, Owen, and a 2-year-old daughter, Devyn; will be 70 when they leave the roost so I'm trying to stay in good shape; fishing, hunting and playing golf when I can find the time; plan on stopping by the Missoula base in November during an elk and deer hunt near Thompson Falls, Mont.

**Richard says:** “I loved my brief stint with the Redding Smokejumpers as well as my initiation with training in Missoula. We had a fine group of athletes representing Redding as I recall. The Missoula gang was great and showed us a good time during training and after hours – crazy and wild! Memories include my first jump in the Middle Fork of the Salmon River – steep country and a 300-acre fire. Also, circling Glacier National Forest around summer of 1980, found a fine second man on the initial jump, **Ken Perkins** (RDD-77), who saved our Twin Otter and crew from crashing by grabbing a reserve chute deployed in the plane by the first man getting into position with the D-ring hooked onto the reserve handle. We ended up jumping into the Bob Marshall Wilderness. It snowed on us getting out.

“Also, on the last jump of my career near Bend, Ore., in August 1981, I landed into a wall of lava. My chute

got ripped up in a juniper snag; it was kinda windy! I still remember my rookie clan – **Max Sand** (RDD-79), **Rick Haagenon** (RDD-79), **Tim Quigley** (RDD-79), **Thor Johnson** (RDD-79), **Sven Klaseen** (RDD-79), **Steve Abrams** (RDD-79) and **Rick Rife** (RDD-79), along with veterans **Ken Perkins** (RDD-77), **Gary Johnson** (RDD-69), **David Nani** (RDD-63), **Richard Tracy** (MSO-53), **Ronald Omont** (RDD-78), **Timothy Huntington** (RDD-77), **Dennis Golik** (MYC-74), **David Noble** (RDD-74), **Larry Hartgrave** (MSO-75) and **Spud Sexton** (RAC-78).

“I wasn't really serious about my career with the smokejumpers and was just wanting to have a good time and enjoy! I regret my attitude at the time, but appreciate all that I learned about character, integrity and work ethics. That kept me in good stead during my fire department career and those 'hairy situations.'

“I became a life member of the NSA a while back and am proud to support this honorable institution that protects America's resources. I'm planning to contribute to the NSA Good Samaritan Fund as I presently contribute to the Wounded Warriors Project and conservative constitutional organizations that help to protect Americans and America. I hope all present and past smokejumpers would help with all these great projects.”

**WILLIAM “GREGG” MARTIN** (Fairbanks '81)

**Now living in:** Boise, Idaho

**Jumped:** FBX 81-83, MYC 85

**Since jumping:** Injured in a fall while hanging 64s to dry in Fairbanks Aug. 22, 1985, and survived as a T7/T8 paraplegic; attended Boise State University and obtained a teaching certificate to become a substitute teacher from 1989 on; have three sons – Josh, 29, who's in the Navy; Ross, 27, a hard-rock miner nearby; and Ben, 25, a ranch manager locally and who was born while I was an outpatient in Anchorage; I have two wonderful grandchildren – William, 5, and Autumn, 2, of Ross and his wife Vera; we are very close; another grandchild is on the way from Josh and wife Theresa.

**Gregg says:** “A heartfelt thanks, forever, for those who were present and saved my life so many years ago. My passions are fly fishing, family, working out, gardening, etc., but recent rotator cuff problems have made extreme activity troublesome. Smokejumping was the most wonderful and exciting time of a young life, and the personalities I had the privilege of meeting and serving with will stay with me forever. There are far too many people to thank who guided my life during this time and helped me form an ethos I live by to this day. But briefly I would give kudos to **Jeff Bass** (MYC-77),



**Bob Quillin** (FBX-71), **Tommy Hilliard** (MYC-67), **Steve Nemore** (RAC-69) and **Mike Clarkson** (RAC-65). To all again – thanks!”

**KIM MAYNARD** (Missoula '82)

**Now living in:** Missoula, Mont.

**Jumped:** MSO 82-90

**Since jumping:** During the last years of jumping, detailed into international natural disasters, such as locust plagues and hurricanes; after leaving jumping, moved into manmade disasters such as wars, and gave refugee and humanitarian assistance.

**Kim says:** “I developed a specialty in conflict and worked in civil wars around the world, supporting community- and country-level recovery. That’s part-time now, as I’m back in Missoula, enjoying the recreational life with smokejumper bros.”

**MATTHEW SUNDT** (Redmond '83)

**Now living in:** Monterey, Calif.

**Jumped:** RAC 83

**Since jumping:** After the 1983 fire season, went to work as a “yard dog” for a local concrete contractor on California’s Central Coast; worked like a dog for six months after which Lubin Construction offered me a full-time position as a concrete apprentice with the company (union shop); did the concrete gig for two years – this is what I quit fires for; back injury compelled me to quit construction in 1985; spent a year in rehab; after the back settled down I commenced to do a lot of walking, swimming, bike riding, playing the piano and just plain living on the dole; helped oldest brother in his used-book business (about the time I saw Redmond 1983 rookie bro Mike Quinones working an ambulance in Monterey – last I saw of him); in 1986 I commenced to work in my current profession – city planning/environmental consulting work; was fortunate to be able to parlay my college degree in environmental studies from University of California at Santa Cruz; worked for two local land planning/environmental consulting companies until I started my own company, Golden State Planning and Environmental Consulting, in 1998; 2011 was the worst year in my 26 years in the profession; I forecast the same for 2012 and 2013; such is life; may go off in a completely different direction in 2012. We shall see. During my first complete physical in May 2009, I was diagnosed with intermittent left-atrial fibrillation, compelling me to undergo a catheter ablation procedure in January 2011; this ablation worked for a couple of months but the procedure did not take; have resorted to using flecainide, an antiarrhythmic, which works by slowing electrical signals in the heart to sta-

bilize the heart rhythm, and does by inhibiting sodium chloride transfer in cells; no side effects for me other than my athletic performance may be and is reported to squelch the top end – i.e., limited time in the red zone; am unfolding my training program now; another physical issue I have is arthritis in my right index-finger knuckle, the result of playing conga drums in local African dance classes on the Monterey Peninsula from 1986 to 1993, two hours straight, twice per week for seven years; regardless of the health issues, which are minor, life must go on.

**Matthew says:** “I continue to ride my bike (joined a local race team in 2000 – ‘Earthbound Farms,’ which morphed into ‘Newman’s Own’ and then morphed into ‘VOS Racing.’ I am gearing up for the 2012 race season. I stopped racing in 2009 because of the fibrillation. Though I am 194 pounds, 6-foot-5 and 53 years old, I still have tremendous weight-to-strength ratio, am tenacious in a race and will always be the first ‘Clydesdale’ across the finish line on the mountainous stages. Have not focused on sprints yet but shall do so this year through weight training. Commenced paddling on the Monterey Bay with the Ke Kai O’Uthane Outrigger Canoe Club in October 2010 – beautiful sport! Going marine and seeing the life and coast from afar is near life changing – love it! Racing too. So far I have entered four- to 10-mile races in Monterey and San Francisco bays. Some of the races are substantially longer – there is a 24-mile Santa Cruz-to-Monterey cross-bay race. Paddlers in the Pacific Islands do substantially longer distances. Also doing trail maintenance in the Los Padres National Forest – mostly in the Ventana Wilderness. I started organizing maintenance projects back in 1995 and organized local pack-horse folks to carry the load for our volunteer work crews. Fun being outdoors for a good cause. Pack teams worked gratis on the account our work benefited pack companies that carry paying customers through Ventana Wilderness trail system. Back scratching, if there ever was! I joined the Ventana Wilderness Alliance a couple of years ago so that I could get more serious about this trail maintenance – certainly this activity is a vestige of my firefighting days. Got certified on a cross-cut saw in April 2011. Just like the good ol’ days with Uncle Sam’s Forest Service. Gotta tell ya, firefighting was such a game-changer for me. I can honestly say at risk of being cliché that it “made me the man I am.” Not only did it pay my way through college (UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz), but I got paid to have fun! I have a stack of carousels full of photo slides of the 1978 to 1983 fire seasons. What a kick it is to watch them, which I did again for the first time in about 15 years.

“For 2012 I will be the president of the Velo Club

Monterey and Monterey County Landwatch – local, community-based, non-profit land development organization that promotes “sound” land-use policies through grassroots activism. Married Elizabeth Caraker in 2000. She is the principal planner for the City of Monterey and the daughter of a Navy officer and big-game hunter. She worked for Greenpeace in her early years and saves and cleans her plastic bags at the kitchen sink. My kind of girl.

“Keep in mind, it is just me and my wife. No kids. No dogs. No cats. Just work, play, eating and reading.

“P.S. – I will never forget the 1.5-mile run the rookies did in 1983 at the local public school track in Redmond. This would be the last timed official run for us rookies in 1983, possibly the biggest rookie class on record. I vaguely recall the school being on the north end of town. Anyway, I figured I was a contender for No. 1 in this race. Dirk Blackdeer (RAC-83) and I kept pace with each other and I ... well, I miscounted the laps. I thought we had one more lap to go and so was holding back. While I was being a knucklehead, Dirk blew past me like a tornado in a trailer park. Crap. Even if I had not won this race, I wanted to go to the line with Dirk for a lung-explod-

ing grand finale. Oh well. I hope Dirk is living well.”

**JOHN SPENCER** (North Cascades '98)

**Now living in:** Entiat, Wash.

**Jumped:** NCSB 98-11

**Since jumping:** Still teaching high school chemistry and biology, with 24 years so far; involved as a temporary seasonal wildland firefighter 27 seasons, of which 13 have been as a smokejumper.

**John says:** “I just retired from coaching soccer for 30 years. I am currently training to get my air attack qualification, and jumping is still a kick in the pants.”

**JOHN MUIR** (Missoula '00)

**Now living in:** Casper, Wyo.

**Jumped:** Missoula 00-04

**Since jumping:** Busy raising two wild little boys and getting really good at avoiding my honey-dos; took a job on a structure department in Casper; still busy in the wildland world; now working for Natrona County Fire Protection District.

**John says:** “If you’re looking to flyfish the North Platte River, I know a good guide! And oh, yeah – huck your meat!” 🍖

## NSA Good Samaritan Fund Helps Wife of Former Jumper

**R**on Stoleson (MSO-56) presented a Good Samaritan Fund check to Karen Jeppson, widow of the late **Richard Jeppson** (MYC-67), last March. Richard, a NSA Life Member, passed away in November 2012. He jumped at McCall 1967-73.

The Jeppsons lost their home, out buildings and two dogs to the Charlotte wildfire near Pocatello, Idaho, in June of 2012. Richard passed away from prostate cancer that same year.

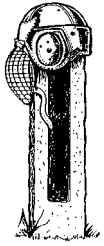
Dick was a Biological Science teacher at Highland High School in Pocatello for 33 years, a job that allowed him to return to McCall during the summers for smokejumping. Karen fondly remembers those years and the friends (including **Wild Bill Yensen**) they had at the trailer park where they resided in McCall. Richard, during his smoke-

jumping career, traveled the west as far south as New Mexico and to the far borders of Alaska, narrowly missing his goal of 100 jumps due to an accident he had

while jumping. He fell 100 feet after landing in a tree and injured his legs. Dick was also an expert taxidermist and lost a lot of his work in the fire. 🍖



*Karen Jeppson and Ron Stoleson (Courtesy R. Stoleson)*



# Off The List

Remember and honor fellow jumpers with a gift to the NSA Good Samaritan Fund in their name. Hard times can fall on many of us at any time. The NSA is here to support our fellow jumpers and their families through the Good Samaritan Fund. Mail your contribution to:

Chuck Sheley  
10 Judy Lane  
Chico, CA 95926

## Alex Theios (Cave Junction '65)

Alex, 68, died Jan. 14, 2013, in Boise, Idaho, after a lengthy struggle with Parkinson's disease and dementia. He was an accomplished skier, surfer, hunting and fishing guide, and manager of a Western guest ranch. He also bred and raced Alaska sled dogs, earning a top-10 ranking among mushers in North America. Alex jumped from Cave Junction during the 1965, '66 and '69 seasons, and from Fairbanks in 1967, '68 and '70. He became an accomplished rider of bucking broncos, using this skill to work as an extra and stunt man in a Western movie.

## Richard "Dick" Wengert (Missoula '51)

Dick, 82, died Jan. 28, 2013, in Winchester, Kentucky, following a three-year bout with lung cancer. After earning a degree in Forest Management from Purdue University, Dick joined the Army and served two years in Korea, attaining the rank of sergeant. One of his final assignments was to give U.S. prisoners of war American clothing as they crossed into South Korea at the time of the truce. Dick jumped at Missoula in 1951. After military service he had a 39-year career as forester with the Forest Service, ending as forest supervisor at the Daniel Boone National Forest. He retired in 1993, but opened a business as a forestry consultant three years later.

## Robert 'Bob' Taber (Redding '66)

Bob, 71, died Dec. 4, 2012, in Fresno, California, from a blood clot while undergoing cancer treatment. He earned a degree in Forestry from Humboldt State College and worked in fire management in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest's Hayfork Ranger District in the early 1960s. Bob transferred to the Sierra National Forest's Pineridge Ranger District as the district fuels management officer. He trained and jumped at Redding in 1966, then returned to jump the 1969-72 seasons. He then worked in facilities maintenance in the Pineridge district, resigning to open a home contracting business along with another former Forest Service employee. Bob and his wife, Sue, became involved in missionary work, serving in Poland for eight years just prior to his death.

## Sam Wakefield (Missoula '49)

Sam, 84, died Feb. 8, 2013, in Poulsbo, Washington. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Forestry from the University of Montana. Sam served in the Navy during the Korean War, based at the Kodiak Naval Air Station in Alaska. Following jumping stints in Missoula in 1949-50 and 1955, Sam worked as a Forest Service ranger in Bozeman, doing this partly while pursuing his master's degree. His career took him from the Forest Service in Montana and Idaho to the Federal Water Quality Administration in Portland, to the Environmental Protection Agency in Denver and Seattle.

## Joe Philpott (NIFC-09)

Joe, 26, died in an avalanche March 2, 2013, on Cameron Pass, near Fort Collins, Colorado. He was enrolled at Colorado State University as he pursued a degree in Forestry. Joe had jumped three seasons at Boise after a three-season stint as a Hotshot. He was an accomplished backcountry skier, surfer, mountain biker and paraglider, as well as a painter, poet and banjoist. Joe was an NSA Education Scholarship Award winner in 2011.

## Paul Boyer (Cave Junction '61)

Paul, 72, died March 2, 2013, in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. After earning a degree in Science from Colorado Springs University, he embarked on a 34-year teaching and coaching career in Toledo, Oregon. He jumped at Cave Junction during the 1961-64 seasons. Paul returned to Colorado after retirement in 1997 and began his second career as a finish carpenter with Stewart Custom Builders, using his artistic skills to create cabinetry and carve holiday decorations. He was also a member of the Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers.

## William 'Bill' Hatton (Missoula '52)

Bill, 85, died March 15, 2013, in Kalispell, Montana. He joined the U.S. Army after graduating from high school and served 16 months as a truck master during the Korean War. Following his service, Bill attended Western Montana College before jumping



at Missoula in 1952 and 1954, and at Grangeville in 1953. He worked as a logger in Montana and Alaska,

and later owned Roto-Rooter franchises in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Kalispell. 🐿

## NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

### Contributions since the previous publication of donors, April 2013

<u>Donor</u>	<u>In Memory/Honor of</u>
W. Bradley Willard (MSO-58).....	Jon Rolf (MSO-57) Missoula Smokejumpers 1958
Squad VI .....	Bert Tanner (MSO-68)
Vance Warren (MSO-54) .....	Lane Lamoreaux (MYC-09)
Joan/Grey Steed.....	Scott Wicklund (NCSB-91)
Bill Woolworth (MSO-68) .....	Lane Lamoreaux (MYC-09)
Bob Hough (NCSB-51).....	Lane Lamoreaux (MYC-09)
John Packard (RAC-65).....	Lane Lamoreaux (MYC-09)
Lee Lipscomb (MSO-58).....	Lane Lamoreaux (MYC-09)
Bob Smee (MSO-68) .....	Lane Lamoreaux (MYC-09)
Chip Houde (FBX-88).....	Lane Lamoreaux (MYC-09)
Jack Cole (MYC-55) .....	Lane Lamoreaux (MYC-09)
Boise Smokejumpers .....	Finn Ward
Lowell Hanson (MSO-58) .....	Finn Ward
Robert Hastings .....	Finn Ward
Todd Onken (MSO-82)	
Ted Nyquest (MSO-54) .....	Dick Tracy (MSO-53)
Dan Roberson (MSO-75)	
Bruce Marshall (BOI-71)	
Mark Motes (RDD-86).....	Finn Ward
Larry Edwards (MSO-02).....	Finn Ward
Daniel J. Uminski.....	Finn Ward
Elsie Bull .....	Finn Ward
Kim Brown .....	Finn Ward
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Patti/Fred Barrett .....	Scott Wicklund (NCSB-91)
Karl Kiser .....	Finn Ward
Mark Petroni.....	Finn Ward
Philip Mason (LGD-76) .....	Finn Ward
Bill Moody (NCSB-57).....	Scott Wicklund (NCSB-91)
Colorado Mountain College's Program	
Veterinary Technology Class of 2014 .....	Joe Philpott (NIFC-09)
Bob Hewitt (MSO-56).....	Doug Michaelson (MSO-56)

**Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004—\$22,800**

Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to: Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico, CA 95926



# ODDS AND ENDS



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to Ed Courtney (MSO-58), Rich Halligan (MYC-76), John Culbertson (FBX-69), Denis Breslin (NCSB-69), Joe Lord (MSO-56), Gary Romness (MSO-62), and Larry “Big Sky” Anderson (MSO-58), who just became our latest Life Member(s).

Wayne Williams (MSO-77) passed along information that Ruana Knife Works in Bonner, Montana, has put out an “American Smokejumper” knife. This issue is based on their most popular knife. Ruana made 200 special-addition knives for both the Missoula Smokejumper welfare fund and the NSA in the 1990s. This knife, with NSA logo and your name, will be available through NSA merchandise.

Art Morrison (MSO-68): “I retired as Regional Legislative Coordinator in the Albuquerque office after an enjoyable 39-year Forest Service career. The best time, of course, was jumping out of MSO (68-77) and hitting every other base at least once. After I lost my Division Boss line quals, I started going out as a Type I Public Information Officer (PIO) 2-3 times a year and did fires, floods, plane crashes, hurricanes—and even Mt. St. Helen’s.

“A special thanks to Bill Allred (MSO-63) and Steve Hall (MSO-70), who were the only ones at my retirement celebration who had any stories to roast me about. They both did a good job of shocking the others who participated, with some alleged improprieties of my youth.

“My wife, Alicia, and I decided to move to Wickensburg, AZ, and open our United County Double Star Realty. I got called out on three fires as a contract PIO in the Southwest before completely moved from NM. I also went to a fire in northern California and another in central Idaho near Grangeville, where I jumped for Foreman Nels Jensen (MSO-62) and Homer Courville (MSO-61) a couple years in the early 1970s.”

From 1971 Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Log: “The Illinois Valley R.D. requested jumpers for the Moon Festival Fire. Both Twin Beeches were dispatched. This was an X-rated fire with naked men and women fighting the fire, arguing with firefighters and stealing food



and equipment from the smokejumpers. Retardant was dropped on the hippies before they could be moved out of the area. We lost a lot of equipment.”

Besides being honored with the BLM Al Dunton Leadership Award for 2012, Ben Oakleaf (NIFC-05) was the guest at a pretty exclusive dinner last August. Three

people and their guests made up the six-person group that had dinner with President and Mrs. Obama in Washington D.C. that honored winners of the “Dinner with Barack and Michelle” fundraising contest. The other winners and their guests were all teachers, prompting President Obama to comment: “I’m glad we’ve got at least one firefighter to mix things up.”

Mike Overby (MSO-67), owner of Express Employment Professions of Irving, Texas, has just been notified that his business has been nationally honored by The U.S. Chamber of Commerce which just announced the 100 small businesses named as the 2013 Blue Ribbon Award winners. For the past 8 years, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has been scouting the country for the best in business and honoring leading companies with this prestigious award.

These top 100 winners represent small businesses and entrepreneurs who are working each day to strengthen our economy and create much-needed American jobs.

Mike’s quote of the day: “Everything in business and life I learned from being a Smokejumper.”

Bill Yensen (MYC-53): “In late July of 1975 our fire season was slow, so the powers that be tried to keep us busy and get some necessary work done all at the same time. They decided to jump us on trails in the backcountry with tools, food, and camping gear enough for a two-day stint. Five of us were picked to jump out in the Chamberlain area and work the old Three Blaze Trail. Dave Butler (MYC-70), Jack Firestone (MYC-75), Tim Pettitt (MYC-75), Rich Halligan (MYC-76) and I loaded up the necessary gear and flew out to the wilds in the Chamberlain Basin and jumped. We were to work two trails 15 miles back to Chamberlain.

“We all worked on one trail till it forked. Two went one way and three the other. Dave Butler, Jim Firestone and I worked the trail till nearly sundown.

We set up camp, ate some supper, got our beds ready and were swatting mosquitoes till it got dusk. We were lying there looking up at the beautiful sky.

"The stars were just becoming visible. Then we saw a moving point of light coming from the east. Jim said, 'See that satellite?' I said most satellites come out of the west. We watched it come across the sky until it was directly overhead. We had all seen the Echo satellite before and this thing was going the same speed.

"Then it did a ninety-degree change of direction and went south! That thing quit going west and went south in a right angle turn with no change in velocity. When it did that square corner turn in the sky all three of us said the same thing: 'DID YOU SEE THAT?'

"We don't know what it was, but it was not ours. Our spacecraft cannot make a 90 degree change in direction in a split second at orbital speed (17,000 mph)."

**Nick Holmes (RDD-79):** "I have just published my first book. It is a fictional ramble through American musical history following the life of a guitar that was built in the Gibson Factory in 1938. The title is 'Kalamazoo.' I have it in print and it is available on Amazon e-books. Search with my name or Kalamazoo. I have also been forced into early retirement. This has not really hurt my feelings much. Maybe now I can join a trail crew or man the Siskiyou base for a tour."

**Davis Perkins (NCSB-72):** "I've just returned from Haiti where I, of course, lost my 'Life Member' NSA hat. (Some Haitian kid is no doubt delighted!) It was a very successful medical mission, and my team (10 of us) saw over 1000 patients. Cholera is down from last year, and I've seen some other improvements, especially in Port au Prince. Not the thousands relying on tent cities. Still, obviously desperate areas. Anyway, I'll be going back. Have been asked to join another medical team to Ethiopia in the fall. Looks like I'll be helping train the Ethiopian medics and maybe do some work in the refugee camps up near the Sudan border."

**John Culbertson (FBX-69):** "Regarding *Smokejumper* and e-delivery - I understand there is a concern to save on printing and postage. So the option of both formats is important. An additional point is that home printing of e-delivery is not the same as booklet format, unless you have a really good printer and saddle stitch stapler. Without the booklet fold and saddle stitch, the magazine looks like any other club bulletin.

"As it is, people love your magazine. Read it when they are at the house, ask to borrow it. Kids friends carry them off to forest service and local agency fire

stations. This has to be good for conservation in America. This has to be good for encouraging young people to get with it and do something.

"A young man, with several seasons on a local hand crew and wondering what to do next, told me he read *Smokejumper* at the dozer yard while swamping, and it inspired him to apply to jump. He was accepted but turned it down for a full-time fire slot. I almost killed him. But I must admit, the magazine had encouraged him to improve his life.

"Just keep printing those magazines - you are bound to hook another one. And if providence and money management in the agencies finally returns jumping and shots and engines to seasonal status, the magazine will encourage even more young people to consider the challenge and training opportunities of summer fire jobs.

"How do we help America get back to work and view work as good and fulfilling in and of itself? I believe *Smokejumper* magazine assists in that process. Read and passed on by those seeking and starting in fire and conservation jobs, it stands testament to the value of work, struggle and the brighter future that so many have obtained. The stories in *Smokejumper* stand in contrast to the whining 'Lack of funding, short of staff, no opportunity' state of mind that dominates agencies these days."

The *Idaho County Free Press* reports in a February 13 article that the Grangeville Smokejumpers are running tests on a revised auxiliary parachute (reserve). **Nate Hesse (RDD-2001)**, Assistant Loft Foreman, said the new design would allow it to open faster than the in-use model.

**John Twiss (RAC-67):** "Chuck, another great issue. I couldn't put it down. 'Three Decades of Women in Smokejumping' was exceptional. The names that I had heard for years came to life."

**Don Wallace (CJ-49)** in an email to his son and daughter concerning the January issue of *Smokejumper*: "There they were, on the centerfold, 19 remarkable women. All of them pretty. This wasn't the *Playboy* magazine centerfold. This was, instead, the quarterly issue of the magazine published by the National Smokejumper Association, and these gals were photographed in Missoula, Montana, at the 30th Anniversary of Women Smokejumpers. We got the magazine this week.

"It was while looking at the centerfold and reading the accompanying story, that it sadly dawned on me that not a single one of these girls had been as yet born when I was a rookie smokejumper at Cave Junction, Oregon, in 1949.

"The Department of Defense has ruled that women are to be allowed to assume combat posi-



tions. Certain of those in the Marine Corps, perhaps in imitation of Jack Nicholson in 'A Few Good Men,' are dragging their feet, desperate to preserve their macho-man persona, insisting that women are not up to the physical and emotional stress. Women smokejumpers are required to climb up steep trails with hundred-pound packs on their back, rappel down from huge trees, put on their climbing spikes and go back up to retrieve their parachutes, spend all night on the fire line without sleep and, most critically, step out into very thin air when commanded to jump. I was in the military, not once but twice, including wartime, and I spent many years as a member of management at my company. I feel confident in strongly suggesting that female courage and their exercise of brainpower are the very last things that field commanders need concern themselves with.

"These 19 women were just a part of the larger group of participants in the anniversary events. In honesty, we must acknowledge that they perhaps are not particularly typical of the women walking down the city streets of America. But they are pretty 'normal' just the same, with jobs and families. But they set a standard which we may hope others will emulate."

*Don joined the U.S. Army at age 17 in 1946 and was called back in 1950 during the Korean War. He worked for Boeing from 1956-90. (Ed.)*

Was it a mistake or a joke? **Harvey Versteeg** (MSO-53) says that during training at Camp Menard, there came a day when jump suits and harnesses were issued so they could be worn during much of the rest of ground training and during the summer's training and fire jumps.

"I walked through the line, received my equipment and went into the next room to try everything on for size. At 6-foot-1, my jacket sleeves were a bit short, but that was not what caught my attention. The jump helmet was a stiff, leather, 1930s or '40s-style football helmet with crossed straps on top and a wire facemask attached," he recalled.

While inspecting everything, Versteeg noted something wrong with the helmet. It had a wide band of deep scratches across the top and a crack, 90 degrees across the middle of the scratches. He looked inside and found the lining all bloodstained. The user could have hung up in a tall tree with no lower branches and swung in against the trunk, or made a bad landing in rocky ground.

He took it back to the issue counter and said he didn't think he wanted to use that helmet. He was issued a good one.

Ever since, Versteeg has wondered if he was given

that helmet by mistake or as an initiation joke on one of the new guys. How many times did that same helmet get issued over the years? He also wondered what really happened to whoever was wearing the helmet when it was damaged.

**Starr Jenkins** (CJ-48): "Thanks for another great issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. I found the article by **Major Boddicker** especially interesting and well written. You do a great job of editing and production, and the magazine is the glue that holds the NSA together."

LtCol Ret. **Robert Hough** (NCSB-51): "In reference to the article by **Doc Smith** (MSO-59), *Smokejumper* January 2012, about the USFS Reunion in Vale, Colorado: There were other jumpers in the crowd.

"I will say that **Matt Galyardt** (MYC-02) presented a fine display of current equipment and the suiting up of **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) was well received at the Top of The Mountain BBQ.

"I was disappointed that the smokejumpers were not asked to be recognized at the banquet in the ballroom. Retirees from several Forests were asked to stand, but the only jumper recognition was the Fiddlin' Foresters, when "Cold Missouri Waters" was played.

"Regardless, I had a good time and if jumpers are invited to the next reunion, I plan to attend."

Judy Myer (daughter of **Lloyd Johnson** MYC-43): "We went to the Smokejumper coffee in Boise and were planning on going to the March 20 social, but dad came down with the cold virus. He was very ill, so we had to cancel. **Smokey Alexander** (MSO-40) was at the coffee and he is two years younger than dad. So I would say that dad, who will be 97 on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, must be the oldest living jumper." 🍄

## Do You Have News To Submit To The NSA Website?

The recent website survey completed in January shows that the membership goes to our website ([www.smokejumpers.com](http://www.smokejumpers.com)) for news and information about friends.

If you have any news that you feel should be posted on the NSA website, write it up and forward it to me at [cnkg-sheley@earthlink.net](mailto:cnkg-sheley@earthlink.net).



*Idaho City Crew 1966*