

10-1-2003

## Smokejumper Magazine, October 2003

National Smokejumper Association

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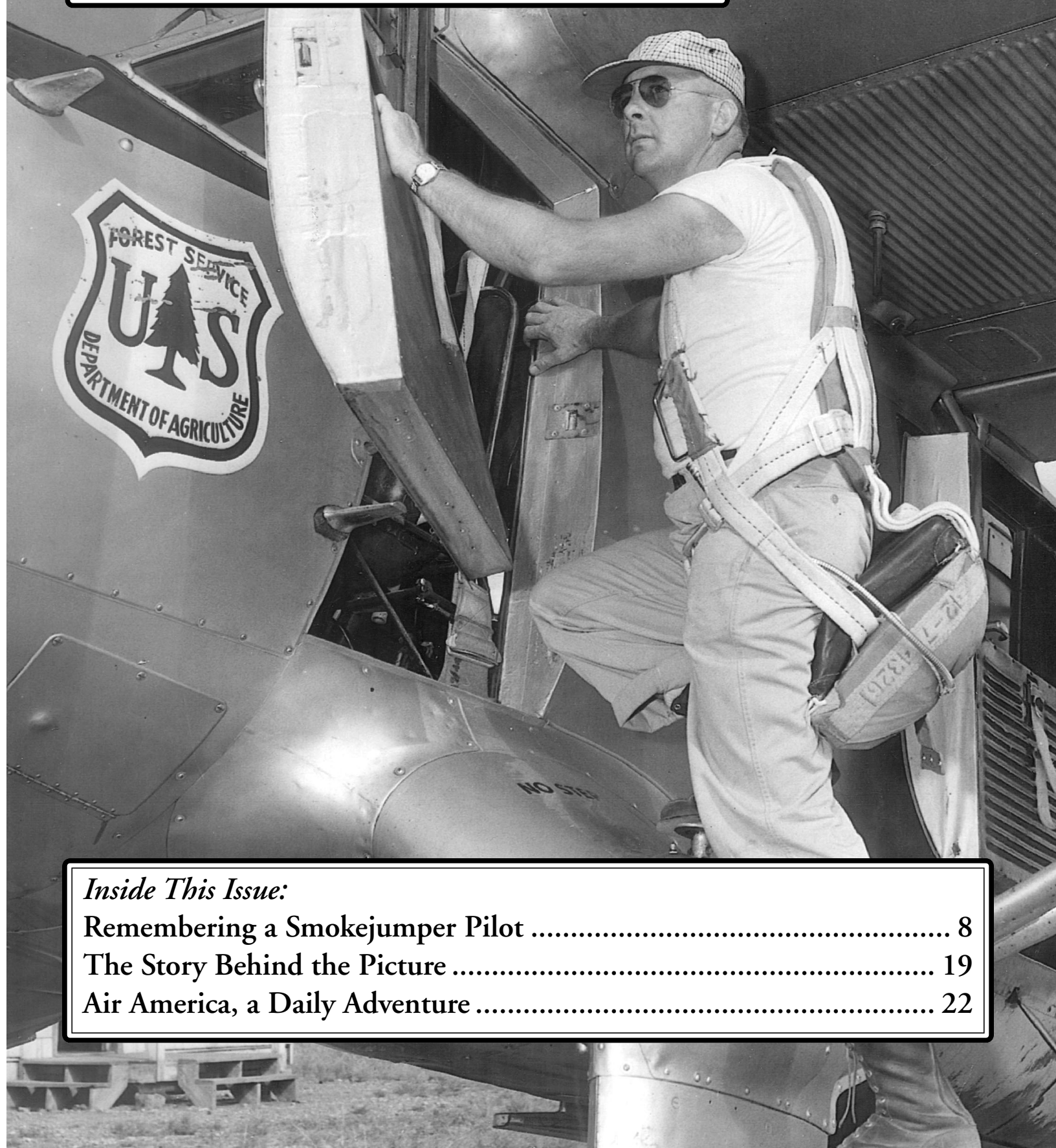
National Smokejumper Association; Yansen, Bill; Kirkley, Johnny; and Dixon, Jerry, "Smokejumper Magazine, October 2003" (2003).  
*Smokejumper and Static Line Magazines*. 41.  
[https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper\\_mag/41](https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper_mag/41)

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
OCTOBER 2003

# SMOKEJUMPER



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SMOKEJUMPER, ISSUE No. 41, OCTOBER 2003  
ISSN 1532-6160

Smokejumper is published quarterly by:  
THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION  
c/o 10 JUDY LANE  
CHICO, CA 95928

The opinions of the writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the NSA.

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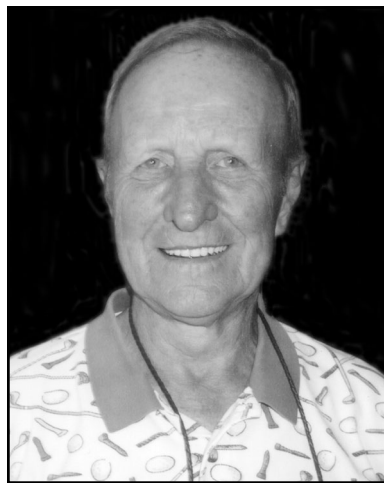
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Layout/Printing: *Larry S. Jackson, Heidelberg Graphics, Chico, CA*

Cover photo: *Wally Tower, smokejumper pilot (Courtesy Randy Tower)*



## Message from the President



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

AT THE LAST COUNT ON July 8, we have 112 life members. We are well on our way to our goal of 200 memberships by our Missoula reunion next year. How about if each of you current life members recruited one other buddy to your ranks? For myself, I encourage the following individuals to step up to the plate if at all possible and make a commitment to the outfit through purchase of a life membership—M.H., B.R., C.S., R.P. K.K. and G.W.

My hat is off to the many in our Association who volunteer countless time, energy and talent to our programs. Two in particular stand out consistently: Carl Gidlund and Jon McBride. Carl of course is a past president but has led many efforts since his time as president. Most recently, he led the KIA plaque program and prior to that he led the yearbook program to its successful conclusion. The NSA has received a lot of publicity in presenting the plaques because of Carl's efforts at news releases etc. In Boise, for example, we had reporters from the local paper and three television news stations at the presentation including one from Fox Network. We also had the

pleasure to meet the executive director of the Wildland Firefighters Foundation, Vicki Minor, who attended the presentation. This foundation is charged with managing the Wildland Firefighters National Monument at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise. If you are ever in Boise, I suggest you stop in at NIFC and visit the monument. It is a special place.

We recently appointed Carl as our public affairs officer for the Association. This is a voting position on the board of NSA and Carl will serve as our advisor on public relations and as our liaison to the media and as spokesperson for NSA. Carl has unique qualifications and education for this position considering he was a journalism student in college and has worked in government and the military for decades as a public affairs officer.

Jon McBride continues to work his buns off on the highly successful Art Jukkala trails program. Think about all the work involved—menu planning, food purchasing, transportation planning, cost collection, packaging for pick-up or horse delivery of the food and gear. He also sees to it that we have the necessary equipment for the job—axes, Pulaskis, stoves, outhouses, saws, etc. It's a big job and we all owe Jon a big "thanks" for taking it on and making it work, especially us guys and gals that participate.

Jon, who retired as chief pilot for Exxon-Mobil Oil, recently received a financial grant from them for the program and even more recently, the program was presented with three new Poulan chain saws from that company. Congratulations Jon and thanks to Mobil Oil and the makers of Poulan chain saws for their generous donations.

More later on the great members we have in NSA. 🍄

# A Bear with Horns

by Charley Moseley (Cave Junction '62)

**O**n Christmas Day 1969, **Tom Crane** (FBX '63), **Bob Webber** (MSO '62) and I stood on Bob's porch high above Fairbanks as pencil-like columns of smoke still rose through the bitter cold of winter. They explained that it just wasn't supposed to happen like this. The snow was supposed to put out the fires during the winter—not this year!

The '69 season was my first in Alaska after two in Cave Junction. Spring came early in '70 and the tundra was like several inches of dry tobacco and the spruce was ready to start torching. Three of the fires that burned throughout the winter were ones that I had jumped last season and there were still 12 fires burning.

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### Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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

We proceeded to man the more important ones. Then Mother Nature jumped up and bit us in the form of a bear. Little bear, big bear and more bear. They came out of hibernation hungry and belligerent. One of our crews called dispatch with a request for help. A bear had come into camp and was dragging a fellow around in his sleeping bag before some of the others drove it away.

**Larry Cravens** (FBX '64) was sent out to the fire with his rifle to eliminate that problem. However, his report was troubling. "He was an old male with good teeth but in real poor condition. That drought last summer must have wiped out the berry crop. Even after being wounded, he circled around back to camp and I think he fully intended to ambush the next SOB to come down the trail."

As the fire season progressed, so also did the bear problem. Mostly blacks but an occasional grizzly. We had to hire professional hunters on the project fires and the stories of bear kills made sleeping an uneasy luxury. After jumping several fires with a big .44, I switched it for a little .22 that **Mick Swift** (CJ '56) had given me in Laos. It was lighter and I could probably shoot a bear in the eye anyway. Did I hear you laugh?

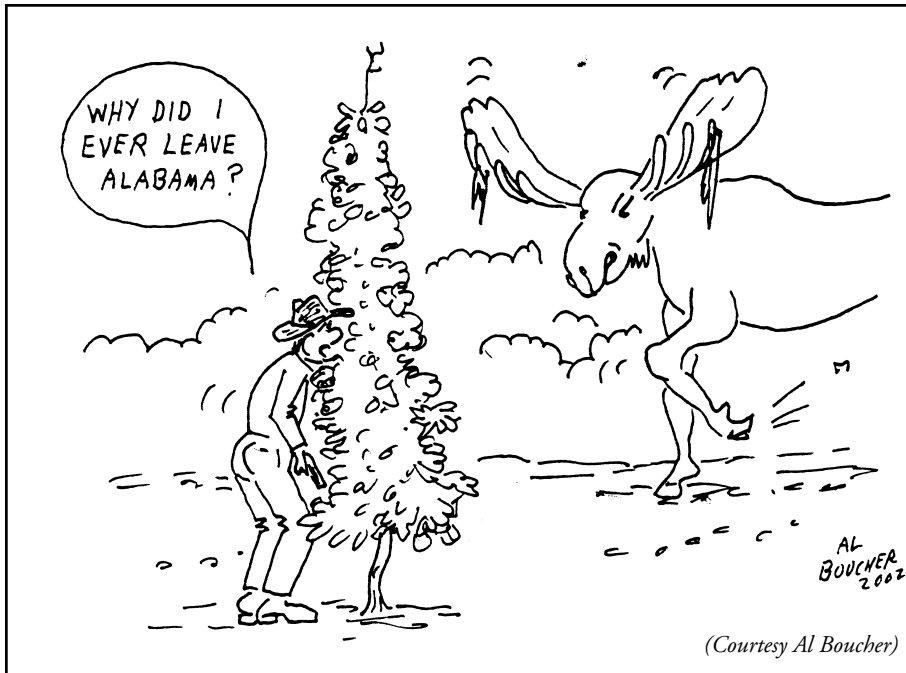
The rains finally came and in late July sixteen of us jumped a lazy fire near the Selawik River. Dispatch instructed fire boss **Ron Berkey** (MYC '65) to send myself and another jumper to meet Curley Brandt (fire management officer) at another fire where they were having bear problems. "Be prepared" was dispatch's slang for bring your weapons. Nobody would lend me anything to replace my .22 as it was nearing the end of the season.

Tom (a former Redding jumper who still works near game wardens and does not want to be named) accompanied me with his .44. When we arrived, a very PO'd Curley Brandt was waiting with some crisp instructions: "We've got one of those outside overhead teams milking this fire and I want to get rid of them. Put the fire out and go home. Understand?" "Yes, sir!"

The chopper pilot took us on a tour of the fire relating that he had already hauled out two bears and some injured people. "Wait until you see the size of the grizzly just south of the camp," he said. We didn't see anything and were beginning to wonder if he was jerking us around.

## Upcoming Reunions

NSA ... June 18-20, '04, Missoula



(Courtesy Al Boucher)

pilot has said a big grizzly south of camp. What a stupid way to die. I shot all nine solid points fast and low behind the left shoulder and sprinted hard and fast while searching for a tree. There was no tree but a big bush about ten feet tall. Something for me to get behind as I reloaded. Where is the bear? My heartbeat and adrenaline rush had my ears stopped up like a bad cold. Definitely not boring!

I peeped through the bush and spotted the bear standing on the spot I had just vacated—but the bear had horns. It was a bull moose, big with enormous horns and a bad attitude. He was snorting out billows of vapor and looking for the stupid bastard who had dared to hurt him. My mind flipped over to remember everything Bernd Gaedeke (FBX '66) had ever said about moose.

The fire was a real let down at about 100 acres next to the rocks and probably shouldn't have been manned in the first place. There was a seven-man overhead team and about 200 firefighters. When we landed, most of them were in their tents avoiding the miserable misting rain but probably logging all the OT the law allowed.

Nobody had informed the overhead team that a couple GS-6 jumpers were relieving them. In order to salve their wounds, I pointed out that Fairbanks thought they had done such a good job that two jumpers could now finish it up. George Huslia ruined that political moment by laughing out loud. "The hell you say, Moseley." George was the hired gun for the fire and looked the part in his black outfit; big bore rifle and belt of shells draped over his shoulder. He was a sled dog champion and hero to many Alaskans, native or white eyed. George also wanted off that fire and left with his rifle in the first load.

Tom and I agreed to keep the 21-man EFF crew from Gambrell and ship the rest back. I wanted to scout the fire while Tom handled the demob. This meant a bunch of walking armed with my Beretta, but there didn't seem to be any bear and not much fire. Boring!

The next day we were working the few remaining smokes when a smaller (200 pounds) black bear began rooting in our work area. We didn't want to shoot the bear but needed to get it out of the way or we would never get any work done. I herded it across the tundra using a club in one hand and the Beretta in the other. It bluffed a charge a couple times but was a youngster and gave ground until I had moved it about a mile and a half away from the fire. Even though I was enjoying this, it was about time to turn back when a huge brown/black critter gave a startled grunt and started getting up from its prone position about ten feet from me.

My brain and heart went into overdrive. Grizzly! The

"They have real poor eyesight, a good sense of smell and they ain't afraid of anything." The bush was about 30 yards from the bull and hid me well.

Time went by as he turned his head searching for one scared smokejumper. He wanted some of me and I wanted out of there. I wanted to look at my watch but wouldn't risk the shiny metal catching his attention. He wouldn't move. The tension finally got to me and I took aim with the Beretta. Pop! He shook his head. Pop! He shook his head again. Nine shots and he only shook his head like a fly had bit him. No more shooting as I was nearly out of bullets. My legs were about shot and I ever so slowly sank to my knees to wait. Finally he simply turned south and ambled off.

Going back to camp would probably have been the best thing to do, but I had already fouled up enough today and did not want to leave a wounded animal. After waiting 30 minutes, I followed the track until I found him lying down in a grassy meadow. There was bloody froth coming from his nostrils. It was time to get Tom and the .44 and end this bad scene.

Tom was quite skeptical of my story and was even reluctant to go back with me. "You got to be kidding—a bull moose with a popgun?" The bull was still in the same spot when we got there and Tom finished the job with the .44. We skinned back a hindquarter, which four of my old Air America buddies from CJ and McCall helped my family eat back in Fairbanks. We cut a willow stick to check the inside horn measurement. It measured sixty-two inches. 🐿

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

# Bear Wrestling on the Fourth of July

by DeWayne C. Davis (McCall '53)

**I**t is true that I wrestled a 350-pound black sow bear in a cage, for \$10 in McCall, Idaho, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1953.

I was working as a smokejumper, having just completed some very rigorous training—comparable to that of today's Navy Seals, but all on dry land.

For example: We had to climb a 1½-inch 20-foot rope by holding our feet straight out, making a right-angle with our bodies, then going hand-over-hand 20 feet up and 20 feet back down. We had to just dust our fannies without taking body weight off our gripping hands, then go 20 feet back up and down without hesitation.

I had made some training jumps and a couple of fire jumps. In camp I had been given the rare privilege, for a first-year jumper, to pack parachutes. The rule was that you practiced packing until your mentor—in my case, my friend “Paperlegs” Peterson (MYC '47)—okayed the first packed-to-jump chute. Another rule was that a packer jumps his first packed-to-jump chute. (That's supposed to trick old *Murphy*). My first was on the Fourth.

I'd done the usual calisthenics and run a mile or so, as usual, to keep my body weight down to the max-jump limit of 180. I then jumped on the trampoline about an hour, beat the speed-bag about an hour and ran the obstacle course, including the rope climb a couple of times. The food was so good and so healthy, I really had to work to keep my weight down. There was no extra fat in that 180!

After a shower, Pete and I decided to walk the mile or so downtown to McCall to have a beer. On the way, Pete, with his subtle macabre sense of humor, kept talking about crystallizing D rings and other such theoretical eventualities *Murphy* might have in store for a rookie jumping his first chute-packed-to-jump. It was an Eagle chute, with two control slots but no tail like the Pioneers of the day had. Eagles snapped open and had a propensity to form May Wests and inversions.

I'd had a May West already, jumping an Eagle in training, and it converted into an inversion, with the control slots in front. Result: I went backward instead of forward, and pulling the right control cord turned me left, and vice versa. Needless to say, *Murphy* was calling the shots, but I was pretty sharp and, except for landing a half-mile from the jump target in knee-deep water, I was pretty cool.

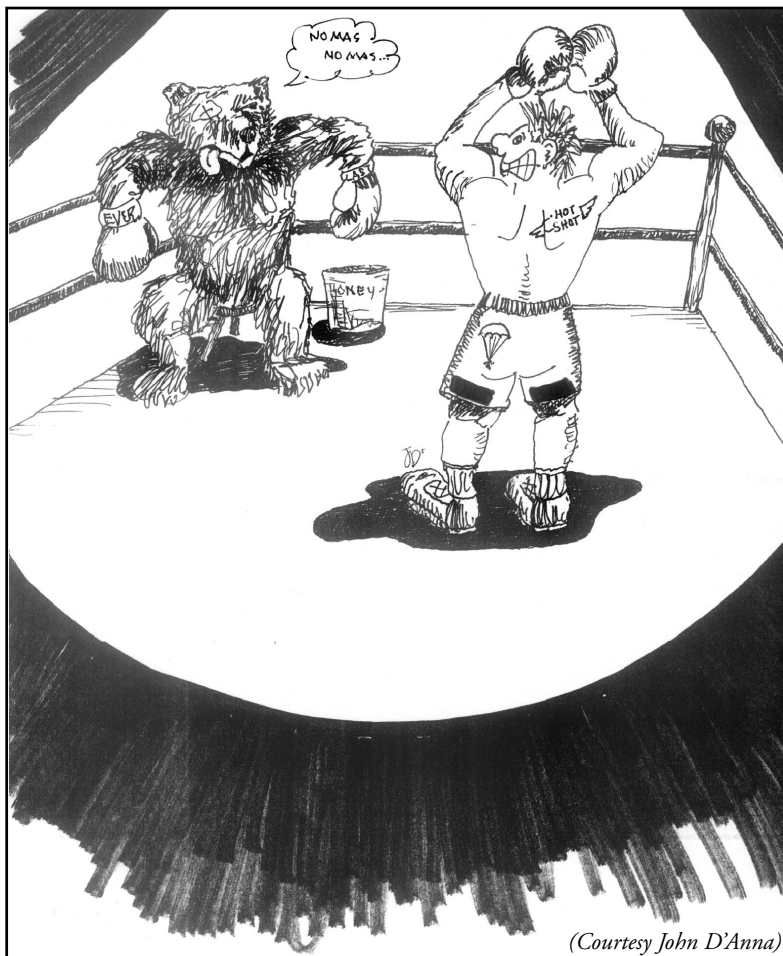
Well, Pete and I were never able to down just one beer. So after about three apiece, we headed back to camp by a different path, which led right by a man in a circus cage. A couple of ten-year-

olds were trying unsuccessfully to pin a cinnamon-colored black cub bear to the floor. The carnival barker had offered the boys five bucks to pin the cub.

As the wrestling un-match ended, the bear owner traded the cub for a full-grown 350-pound black sow bear. “She's got 'er teeth pulled and all 'er claws clipped. I'll pay any man \$10 if he can wrestle this old she-bear to the floor and hold her there for a minute.”

Well, I could always use 10 bucks. I had a \$300 academic scholarship to Texas A&M and the promise of a full four-year football scholarship if I could make the freshman team. I was tempted to wrestle the bear, as I had some experience.

I'd been in the Marines at 16 for a couple of months, and that had given me some self-discipline. The DI had jujitsu'd me when I had been slow in responding to his umpteenth order. Then in '51, I got in a fight with the platoon bully, who poked me in the eye with his elbow as we were “playing” (Marines play rough). I had that bully down and was pounding his head until I began to feel sorry for him. I'd begun to ease up when I saw the DI shaking his



(Courtesy John D'Anna)

head, signaling, "Not yet, Davis." So I pounded the tough-guy some more for insulting my mom.

Later that summer, in Texas, I almost killed an 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne guy who told me his hands were lethal weapons and he meant to kill me with them. The fight lasted about eight seconds, then the parachutist was unconscious at my feet, bleeding from mouth, nose and ears. He tried to get up, then he collapsed into a coma, and I prayed that he'd wake up okay. He finally woke up two weeks later in intensive care at Fort Hood. Later, his colonel paid me a visit in Judge Lewis' office. He was puzzled. Was I ashamed? "No!" I answered, "I'm not going to join the Army when I'm 18!"

The summer of '52, I worked with the U.S. Forest Service near Potlatch, Idaho, camping with some Iowa State wrestlers who were psych majors. They taught me a lot about wrestling—hands-on, one-on-one—and they taught me some about psychology.

Then, my senior year in high school, I won the Central Texas Golden Gloves Heavyweight Boxing Championship at Brownwood.

So, when Paperlegs volunteered me for the bear fight, one might say I was duly prepared.

There wasn't much to the fight. I had no inkling how fast a bear can be. She gnawed on my arm with toothless jaws, and she swatted me hard with clawless paws—or almost clawless. A couple of her claws were not completely clipped, so she opened two three-inch lacerations above my left kidney. But pretty quickly, I learned how to fake her out. When I had her off-balance, I'd put my heel behind one of her ankles, and down she'd go with me on top, grappling with all my not-inconsiderable man-strength. But every time I just about had her pinned, that bearkeeper would shock her with a "hotstick," and she'd get back on her feet, gnaw on my arm and my neck, and slap the hell out of me with her forepaws.

I told that bearkeeper to stop hot-stickin' that she-bear, but he wouldn't. So I had to develop a bearshocker-proof strategy. I'm not going to go into what I did to overcome the shocks, but it worked. I pinned her for two minutes by my watch. Then I got up. She stayed down. I said to the carny barker, "Give me my ten bucks!"

His response, "Ladies and gentlemuns of tha audience: I didn't know this man was a professional wrestler. I cain't pay no professional wrestler to pin ma baby black bear!"

"I pinned her. Now pay me my ten bucks, you lyin' son-of-a-bitch!"

"Stay away from me, mister; I think you killed ma bear!" The bear had begun to rouse.

"Gimme that goddammed hotstick! I'm going to sell it for ten bucks somewhere!"

"Somebody call the poleese!" he yelled.

Then from out in the crowd, Pete said, "Come on Davis, I'll pay you your ten bucks, I got you into this."

I gave the man back his hotstick, patted the groggy bear on the head, got out of the cage and put on my shirt. Paperlegs gave me my ten bucks. A pretty 18-year-old daughter of a ranger I'd done some work for said coyly, "My!

DeWayne, I didn't know you were so strong and so muscular."

On the way home, Paperlegs said, "Davis, you sure looked stupid in there wallerin' around with that old she-bear. If she hadn't had a stroke or a heart attack, she'd'a cleaned yer plow!"

Next morning, Pete was my spotter when I went out on a smoking snag about five miles above Chamberlain Ranger Station, to jump my first packed-to-jump chute. When Paperlegs slapped me on the back, the Ford Tri-motor cut its throttles back and raised her tail. I stepped out and must have angled over onto my side, because when that Eagle snapped open, a riser slapped me hard on the side of my helmet. The wind was way too high. At first, as I came back to consciousness, I thought I was still in the airplane, as the downed logs below were whizzing by at about sixty miles an hour. The 8-mph forward speed of my tailless Eagle chute was nothing. So in violation of all my safety training, I turned downwind and searched for a tree. I found one ... SWOOSH. Like landing on an air mattress.

Then I looked for Woody, who was second out. He followed the rules. When he hit a downed log ... CRACK! I thought he'd broken his back. Pete kept circling as he was supposed to. Woody couldn't talk. Winded! I said I was going to signal for a radio. "No, I'm okay, Davis. Signal two Ls." I did, and the Tri-motor lumbered off to the west.

It was a small fire—a one-manner, really. Being first jumper out of the plane, I was fire boss. Woody didn't like it, but I made him stay in camp. He was hurt and spittin' up blood. So he rested 'til time to head downhill to Chamberlain Ranger Station.

As we started on the trail downhill it was getting so dark in the forest I could hardly see the trail. I was a hundred yards ahead of Woody. Then ... SNORT! CRASH! BAM-BANG! I ran smack into a cow elk!!! I smelled something and reached to feel my pants. No, it wasn't me, but what was that smell? Then I stepped in it!

That's the way it was in '53, up in Idaho, sometimes working where white men had never before trodden! 🐾

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# Five Years with a Lady NED: Deanne Shulman (McCall '81)

by "Wild Bill" Yenson (McCall '53)

In 1981, we had a new NED with long blonde hair! I was helping with the training, and I particularly remember the packout. Big Ernie caused it to rain and the trail marks were hard to see. Half the NEDs got lost, and their packs got wet and heavy, so the packout was postponed for better weather. Only a few of the NEDs made it in, but one was Deanne Shulman, our first lady jumper. She had not adjusted her packout bag very well, and an adjuster had chewed an inch square hole in her back, but when they had the packout a few days later, she made it again. She was not first, but she was not last either.

My first fire jump experience with Deanne was up near Brundage Reservoir in late August. It was a big soft meadow jump spot and what we would call a "gravy jump." Deanne landed a little way from me, with her chute over a small brushy tree. I had my gear all sacked up, so I went to help her, as I would any other smokejumper, but she said, "No, I can do it!" She must have thought that I felt she really needed help, when all I wanted to do was get us down on the fire as fast as possible.

In 1983, a load of us spent two weeks near Minden, Nevada, working on roads and cleaning up around Forest Service facilities. We stayed at a camp near Carson City that had hosted the Nevada Boys and Girls State, and I remember Deanne matching wits with **Brian Dougherty** (MYC '83) on our many bus rides to and from work. Her presence in the crew caused no problems at all, and she always did more than her share of the work.

I got to know Deanne very well in 1984, when she rode up to the Missoula reunion and back with me. We talked about all kinds of things and had a great time. At the reunion, **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB '40) said he wanted to give me a knife to engrave for him. The next day I played golf and never connected with him, but when I picked up Deanne for our trip home, she had Francis' brand new Buck knife. It was a real thrill to engrave "NCSB 1939" and jump wings on Francis Lufkin's knife. I sent it to him and he wrote me a thank-you card, which I have in my cabin in McCall to this day.

Then came a string of four fires in a row with Deanne. The Bear Pete fire north of Burgdorf was a six-manner—or should I say a five-man'er plus Deanne? Some fire fighting footage of Deanne working on a hot spot on that fire is in the Smokejumper Association video, *Smokejumpers—Firefighters from the Sky*. We put the fire out and about dark we were ordered to stack our gear on the copter spot, put our P.G. bags and jump gear on our backs and walk about three miles to the road. The base needed jumpers. We started as it got dark. Between the base of the mountain and the road was a meandering stream, or you could just call it a swamp. **Barry Koncinsky** (MYC '74)



*Bill Yenson (NSA file)*

and **Mick Moore** (MYC '77) were leading us, and we waded around in that swamp for over half an hour in the dark. When Deanne and I realized that we had passed a certain tree twice, we both got out our compasses and told Barry and Mick to follow us. We knew all we had to do was go due east, and we were on the road in ten minutes.

The next fire was Red Ledge over on Hells Canyon. Deanne and I were jump partners on that fire and we landed ten yards apart. One of the funniest things I ever saw while smokejumping happened that afternoon. **Dan Pierson** (NIFC '76) and I went down to check the line at the bottom of the fire, accompanied by **Dave Hall** (MYC '80). Dave was really a great guy, but he did things to earn the nickname Pin, for Pinhead. A thundercloud came at us and started dropping those big half-bucket drops. We crowded up against a sheer rock cliff and hunkered down, and only one shoulder got wet. We had been there for a couple of minutes when Dave went nuts! He was jumping around like a wild man! His fire shirt went flying off in one direction and his T-shirt in another! A mouse had crawled up his sleeve and was trying to dig a hole in his armpit. Pierson and I just about split a gut laughing.

When I got back up on top to camp, the rain had turned into a steady drizzle, and I found all the "Queenie" (Visqueen plastic sheeting) had been ratholed and there was nothing left to make a hooch to keep dry. Well, being an old-timer, I did what we did in the fifties: I took a cargo chute, tied a line on the apex, threw it over a limb on a big tree and made a teepee. Then I went up to get something to eat and there was poor Deanne, all by herself. She had found all the Queenie gone and had no place to sleep. I told her to get her sleeping bag and "come on down to my place." Impressed with the "old ways," she spent a nice dry night in my cargo chute tent. We slept



back to back in our own sleeping bags.

A few days later, a DC3-load of us was sent to Missoula. On the way, we flew over a very steep fire on the Bitterroot, along the Salmon River. We all said, "I'm glad I'm not on that steep SOB!" We spent the night in the barracks in Missoula, then right after breakfast, an Otter-load of us went back and jumped that fire. When the fire was over, we were de-mobbed by jetboat. I took some movies of Deanne during the jetboat ride, as we went 35 miles up the river to the end of the road at Corn Creek. What a great ride that was!

My last big experience with Deanne came in 1985. Four of us were picked to suit up and go down to Boise to meet some VIPs, including the veep, George Bush. There were Deanne—the first lady jumper; **Tim Farrell** (MYC '84)—our strongest and most handsome NED; **Tom Koyama** (CJ '74)—one of our few ethnics; and me—old "Wild Bill," the

old-timer of 29 seasons.

We landed in Boise and stayed suited up for two hours waiting for Vice President Bush to show up—and he did not. I'm still pissed at him! Sitting in a jump suit, even in the Beech 99's wing shade, is like being in a sauna. Finally, the Forest Service chief and the secretary of agriculture showed up and we got to take the suits off. Mr. Secretary had been in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, so we had a good talk with him.

I worked with Deanne for all of her five years of jumping. She always did a good job and never bitched or whined. She is one tough, intelligent, nice, hardworking lady. She is indeed a credit to all smokejumping. 🍄

*"Wild Bill" Yensen taught and coached in Southern California for 35 years and jumped at McCall for 30 seasons. Bill is a regular contributor to the magazine.*

## Remembering a Smokejumper Pilot

by Randy Tower (North Cascades '63)

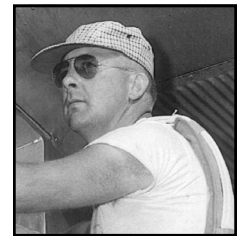
I want to let you know officially that my dad, Wallace R. "Wally" Tower, took his last flight on Saturday, June 28, from his home of 24 years in Salem, Oregon. I also want to give you the family's perspective on how much his Forest Service experience and his association with smokejumping meant to him. Dad was 88 years old when he died, but up until about a week before his death he still loved telling stories (which his grandchildren greatly enjoyed) about his years flying jumpers and of the many "characters" he had known along the way.

Wally started flying in 1935 and, prior to his start with the USFS in 1952, worked as a flight instructor, test pilot, ag and spray plane pilot, and company pilot. But in 1952 Dad's career took a turn that changed his life and ours. He was hired as a "seasonal" pilot at NCSB, becoming a full-time Forest Service pilot after his second season at Winthrop. We moved to Okanogan (Okanogan National Forest H.Q.), but spent all our summers in the Methow at NCSB. Spending much of our childhood around smokejumping provided some colorful experiences—to say the least—but it wasn't until later in life that my brother Denny, sister Terri, and I really understood how unusual our summers were and how unusual Dad's job as a smokejumper pilot was. I know that his years at NCSB were some of the best of his life, and he made some friendships that literally lasted a lifetime, many of them true smokejumper legends in Region 6. I could not possibly mention them all, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention people like **David "Skinny" Beals**, **Jim Allen**, **Hal Weinman**, **Bill Moody**, **Elmer Neufeld**, and of course **Francis "Pappy" Lufkin** and family. (Dad often said he was probably one of only a handful of pilots that Francis actually liked.)

Wally was quite familiar with most smokejumper "traditions and shenanigans" with the pilot often being the victim. But he really loved telling about how he got revenge. One of his favor-

ites was buzzing the bunkhouse on an early weekend morning, after an early jump or cargo drop, sneaking in from the north or south and giving that big radial engine full power and full pitch right over the bunkhouse at low altitude. If that didn't bring you right up out of your bunk, nothing would. Since we lived just across the runway from the base, our family can personally attest to just how loud that old Nordyne Norseman was. But his very favorite story involved "getting even" for the annual tradition of ambushing the pilot and throwing him in the irrigation ditch that ran through the base.

After Dad got out of the ditch (they had allowed him to remove his wallet to preserve his pilot's license), he told the assembled jumpers not to worry but at some point in time he would get even. As fate would have it about a week later Francis came over in the middle of the night (a relatively frequent occurrence during fire season) to tell Dad they've got fires in the Wallowas and he was to take a load of jumpers down to LaGrande. Just before daylight they loaded up the Nordyne, and wouldn't you know it, several of the four jumpers going were among those who had helped with the "ditching." After takeoff at the crack of dawn they climbed to altitude and by then the four jumpers were sprawled out among their gear and fast asleep. As Dad told the story he leaned over to alert the squad leader (I believe it was Tony Percival) who was in the co-pilot's seat not to be alarmed, but instead of switching from the belly tank to a wing tank like he normally did he was going to let the belly tank run dry. Of course when that eventually happened that big old engine started coughing and sputtering and shuttering and shaking like crazy. Dad used to laugh out loud describing the scene he and Tony saw behind them—



Wally Tower

nothing but assholes and elbows in mass chaos as four sleepy smokejumpers tried madly to find a parachute before Dad switched over to a wing tank. After everything returned to normal (other than four jumpers pumped full of adrenaline) Dad turned around and calmly said with a smile, "I told you I'd get even."

After the 1959 fire season at NCSB, Wally was promoted to regional air officer for Region 6 and we moved to Portland. Dad served in that capacity until early 1976 when he retired. During his tenure as regional air officer he oversaw the movement away from USFS owned and operated aircraft to the use of much contract flying; helped develop the use of fire retardant "bombers," lead planes and the contracts that manage them; developed budgets and administered them for the Region's air operations (not his favorite part of the job); and had primary responsibility for the inspection and certification of contract aircraft.

One of the projects Dad was particularly proud of was being involved in the site selection, planning and implementation of what became the Redmond Air Center that opened in 1964. He was also responsible for the selection and training of USFS pilots in Region 6, including smokejumper pilots. It was in this light that I personally became part of smokejumper history. Dad came to NCSB in 1963 (under the guise of training the new pilots at the base) just as we rookies were preparing for our first practice jump. In retrospect I have no doubt that he and "Pappy" made the arrangements, and after telling us the night before of the jump order for our first day of practice jumps (I was #1 jumper in the first stick in the first load), Francis came up and casually mentioned, "Oh, incidentally, your dad will be flying the first load tomorrow." It didn't mean much to me at the time that my father flew me on my first jump, but it sure does now. Are there any other smokejumpers out there whose dad flew them on their first jump, or am I alone in that distinction?

By the time Wally stopped flying a couple of years after he retired he had logged just over 21,000 flying hours, a large portion of that with the Forest Service. Those who flew with him know that safety and thinking ahead were his credo and the key to his longevity in mountain flying. Those who knew him personally know that he was a devoted family man and I can tell you, on behalf of the family, that he made us proud. And of all the things he did and the contributions he made to aviation, probably the one thing he was most proud of was being a smokejumper pilot—and a pretty good one at that. He often joked with jumpers, myself included, that "I don't see why anyone in their right mind would want to jump out of a perfectly good airplane." But make no mistake, when he was in the cockpit, his main concern was the well being of the smokejumpers in the back and then putting their fire packs down on the deck in easy reach.

Dad and his encyclopedic memory and knowledge of aviation, airplanes, people, and particularly USFS aviation, will be sorely missed. But we, as family, take solace in knowing that he led a full life, made a contribution, and touched a lot of lives.

In his later years he often referred to himself as A #1 Pilot; we knew him as A #1 Father and Husband (wife Pauline "Snix" Tower was also a pilot); but most importantly he will be remembered as an A #1 Good Person. 🍄

## Good Boots

by Steve McDonald

I bought cheap boots  
My first year in the woods.  
I suffered for it—  
Blisters, turned ankles and fatigue.

So, as I suffered,  
I saved my money.  
Money to buy good ones—  
White's boots, from Spokane.

I went to the factory  
Where cobblers with arms of steel  
Pounded nails into leather,  
Like machines.

They measured my feet.  
I paid for high top stitch-downs  
With Swiss-made Vibram soles.  
They would come by mail in a month.

The box arrived on time.  
Big black boots.  
Stiff, and close fitting,  
Like fine dress gloves.

Some wear them for "style" now.  
Office workers playing forester.  
Never in the woods.  
Laughable, stupid people.

Oh, they wear the clothes  
And talk the big talk,  
But those unmarked office boots,  
They betray them.

Good boots save you from pain  
And give you faster, surer movements.  
Mine got soaked, scarred and worn,  
And better and better.

Later, I sent them in to be rebuilt.  
New soles, new stitching.  
It made them last another year,  
Those good boots.

Good boots are tools of the trade  
Of foresters, fire fighters and loggers.  
Along with the "stride,"  
That agile, ground-gobbling stride.

See good, worn boots and that stride  
On a strong, quiet man:  
There's a woodsman,  
Not a fake.



Steve McDonald  
(NSA file)

*Dr. Steve McDonald retired in 1996 after 36 years with the U.S. Forest Service. He is the author of the novels Baker 30 and Bitterroot and poems with forestry themes. Steve can be contacted at: [sem42540@hcnews.com](mailto:sem42540@hcnews.com)*

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

# WILLIAM (“BILL”) MOODY (NCSB 1957)

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WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE a “get-yourself-through-college” career ended up being an exciting and challenging 33-year career for Bill Moody—lasting from 1957 to 1989.

Born in 1939, the year of the “Great Parachute Jump Experiment,” Bill spent his early years in western Washington, graduating from high school in Seattle two weeks before starting his rookie training at Winthrop (Okanogan Aerial Project).

In the summer of 1956, at age 17 and still in high school, Bill and his foster brother **Ron Loney** (NCSB '57) worked in a gypo sawmill in Crescent, Oregon, before getting on the Crescent Ranger District fire crew in the Deschutes National Forest. They fought their first fire on their very first day of work.

During Bill’s senior year, classmate **Jack McKay** (NCSB '57), who had worked with some NCSB jumpers in the North Cascades in 1956, suggested applying for jumping at Winthrop. Bill, Ron and Jack applied and all three were hired for the 1957 crew.

In July, the morning after the rookie graduation bash, Bill and five other hungover jumpers flew to the NCSB spike base at LaGrande, Oregon. The Norseman Noorduyn, piloted by veteran pilot **Wally Tower**, smoked along at a blistering cruise speed of 115 mph. After arriving in LaGrande, the crew of Moody, **Ron Roberts** (NCSB '57), **Ray Casey** (NCSB '57) and **Tim Wapato** (NCSB '53) was dispatched in a Twin Beech to a fire along Hell’s Canyon near McGraw Lookout. Waking up as the Beech made a circle over Hell’s Canyon was absolutely terrifying, Bill recalls. He asked himself that same question many of us have asked, “What in the hell am I doing here?” Minutes later, after a rapid windy descent, a 130-foot hang up in a giant ponderosa and a “balls to the wall” initial attack on a miserable two-acre steep rocky fire, it sunk in: “so this is what smoke-jumping is all about.” Two days later

it was a 15-mile hike-out—quite an initiation!

In 1958 Bill served as rookie PT leader and first aid instructor just before the fatal smokejumper airplane crash of June 1958. Bill recalls, “The 1958 plane crash that killed three jumpers and our pilot was one of the most tragic and emotional experiences of my life. Four of us—myself, **Chet Putnam** (NCSB '52), **Roy Percival** (NCSB '57) and **Jim Wescott** (NCSB '57) — had jumped the ill-fated jump plane on its last successful mission a few hours before the crash. Many of the rookies thought seriously about quitting—but none did.”

During the off-season, from 1957 to 1961, Bill earned a B.A. in education (geography) from Central Washington University. At Central, Bill met his wife of 41 years, Sandy. While continuing to jump, Bill taught geography and contemporary world problems in Wenatchee junior and senior high schools and coached football and track. In 1964 he earned an M.Ed. in social studies from Central and returned to Wenatchee, where he taught until resigning in 1969 to become a full-time squad leader at NCSB.

### Mentoring Under Pioneer Francis Lufkin

From 1961–69 Bill served as squad leader/spotter and rookie trainer. Dur-



*Bill Moody (Courtesy Bill Moody)*

ing the 1964 and 1965 fire season he was in charge of NCSB’s satellite base at LaGrande. After joining the NCSB staff full-time in 1969, he became the training foreman and mentored under smokejumper pioneer **Francis Lufkin**. Bill recalls, “The 1970 season was a mega fire season for NCSB—several seasons compressed into one very intense long season, one continuous fire bust.”

In 1972 Bill became NCSB’s second base manager. “My first years at NCSB were challenging and at times very difficult,” he says. “I was mentored by Lufkin and grew up with agency and smokejumper values of the 1940s and '50s. The jumpers of the '60s and '70s were from a different culture. The challenge was to preserve the foundations and critical values of

the early days and build upon the strengths and values of the new generation of jumpers.”

### The Russian Connection

In the mid-1970s, the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in the U.S.-Soviet Scientific-Technical Exchange Program. As part of this program, the Forest Service sent Bill and Washington Office Fire Manager **Doug Bird** (McCall '57) to the Soviet Union for a month to review the Soviet smokejumper and rappel program—specifically to look at the Soviet Forester parachute. The U.S. was in the process of replacing the FS-10 parachute system and thought possibly the Forester system could give us some ideas.

While in Ust-Ilimsk, East Siberia, Moody made two jumps with the Russians from their 1930s vintage AN-2 bi-wing—one jump with the American FS-10 system and gear and one jump with the Russian Forester freefall system and Russian jump gear. The following year the Russians joined Moody, Bird and the NCSB crew at Winthrop for a “reciprocal jump” and a formal presentation of the Forester parachute /jump gear to the U.S. Forest Service. Upon receiving the Forester system, the Forest Service sent the chute to Missoula to be examined by the equipment development team. The Forester concepts were incorporated into the new Forest Service chute—the FS-12. A few years later, the BLM incorporated the Forester drogue chute into their Ram Air system.

### An Inch and a Half Shorter

Bill used to be six foot even but after a bad downdraft 200 feet above the ground and a “crash and burn” landing, he’s now five ten and a half. His femur was broken in six pieces. This was his only jump injury in his 612 (616 by NCSB’s records) Forest Service jumps. Bill jumped with a “short leg” for three years before shortening his “good” leg to get “evened up” and to prevent future back problems. Until he retired in late 1989, Bill remained “jump active,” jumping several fires each year when base manager duties permitted. “Being an active fire

jumper and spotter keeps you in touch with the troops,” he says. “You are the middleman between higher-level fire managers/WO and your troops—you need to keep a balanced perspective.”

### Struggling to Keep NCSB Open

When asked to recall his biggest struggle of the '80s, Moody replied, “Keeping NCSB alive and a viable base.” After many base studies, re-studies and political battles, NCSB survived—thanks in large part to the efforts of Okanogan Forest Supervisor **Bill McLaughlin** (MSO '58).

### His Career Ends

In December 1989, Bill Moody ended his 33-year smokejumping career. His jumps included 208 fire jumps; 31 EMT, search and rescue jumps; 33 backcountry helispot construction/ project jumps; and several aircraft/parachute evaluation jumps. He jumped 25 different aircraft, but the final one—the Ford Tri-Motor jump for the smokejumper documentary *Smokejumpers: Firefighters From The Sky*—was one of the most memorable. “Not only did I get to jump the Ford, but I also jumped in my mentor Francis Lufkin’s 1939 jump suit—what a privilege!” Ex-Johnson DC-3 smokejumper pilot Penn Stohr, now pilot for Evergreen Aviation, flew the Ford.

Since retiring, Bill formed his own company, the North Cascades Fire Service, specializing in wildland fire and aviation operations consulting and training. From 1998 to 2000, Bill and his wife Sandy worked with Doug Bird on an integrated fire management project in Mongolia. They trained Mongolians in fire suppression and fire prevention. “It was like going back to the turn of the century in the U.S.,” Bill says.

Since retiring, Bill has remained an active Air Tactical Group Supervisor and is currently working on an ATGS contract in northern Minnesota. In 2000 and 2001, Bill flew air attack on several fires throughout the West.

Still living in the Methow Valley near the jump base, Bill enjoys running, hiking/backpacking, cross-country skiing and outdoor photography. He’s a NSA life member and board

member, and a member of the History and NSA Trail Advisory Committees. He also serves as a board member of the Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center and is active in his church. Bill and Sandy’s daughter is a bilingual (Spanish) teacher in the Seattle area and their son Mike is a paramedic in Leavenworth, Washington.

“Jumping was a major part of my life for so many years,” Bill says. “The friends, associations, experiences and challenges have given me a strength and confidence that continue to guide my life and help me to meet the challenges of ‘senior jumperhood.’ And your ole buddies are still there to give the support you need, to share the load, to inspire you to reach the trailhead and complete another mission.” Oh, to be a rookie again! 🦋

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## June Update from BLM Boise Smokejumpers

Eight rookies finished training mid-May and are on the list. Additionally, Mel Tenneson (AK), Dennis Geving (MYC), Derrek Hartman (AK) and Ashley Markley (RDD) transferred to us this season.

Dennis Terry will miss the season, still recovering from last year’s femur fracture. He’s healing well finally, and has passed the pack test. He’s trainee Ops Section chief on Rowdy Muir’s IMT.

Bob Hurley continues on detail to the BLM’s Canon City Field Office.

With transfers and retirements, our headcount is 80.

The season has been a little on the slow side so far, jumping some 20 fires out of Grand Junction, Colo.; Cedar City, Utah; Elko, Nev.; and Twin Falls, Idaho. Sixteen jumpers boosted Alaska in early June.

Six of our jumpers are slated to fill IMT positions on Great Basin teams. Detailers are helping staff overhead positions on shot and helitack crews, and are acting as district AFMOs. 🦋

# LETTERS

Dear Editor:

In the past week, I have received the July issue of the *Smokejumper* and the new book ... *Smokejumpers*. Both publications brought back old memories.

I had been looking forward to the feature on new life member, **John Twiss**. I thought perhaps he would explain how he constructed an entire home at Smith Rocks from the squad leader's office at RAC. Seriously, John framed what smokejumping was for me in my late teens and twenties. I too grew up in the smokejumpers ... they too were my role models ... the **Tony Percivals**, **Hal Weinmanns**, **David Beals**, **Jim Allens** were all very influential in my "growing up." And I thank them for that.

In the book *Smokejumpers*, I've spent time thinking of three guys no longer with us. Rusty Allen was not really a tough character but he had a cockiness matched by few. I remember him suggesting to a fellow at the 86 Corral (the local bar frequented by smokejumpers over 21 and those close to 21) that they step out side to settle a dispute. The fellow was much larger and meaner ... his mistake was allowing Rusty to exit first and then never saw it coming as he stepped out the door.

I remember the first time I met **Ed Weisenback**. He pulled up to the RAC barracks with a deer in the space where the back window of his Karman Gia had previously existed. Ed had hit the deer so hard on his way to RAC that it flipped over the top of his vehicle and landed through his back window. So Ed drove it on in. He also had a pet baby rattlesnake that bit him more than once. What was a small inconvenience would have killed you and me. **Bruce Jackson** wrote in a recent issue of the *Smokejumper* about the jump where Ed broke his back and bit his tongue almost in two. I too was on that jump ... he was one tough guy.

**Dave Mellon** was a student at the University of Idaho as was I. At RAC, we called him "Waltermellon" ... most likely because of his slow, lackadaisical style. He and I would drive to LaGrande from Moscow, Idaho, to see

some gals we had met the summer before while on smokejumper duty. We were so poor (very poor) that we turned off the engine on his car at the top of the Lewiston grade and "dead sticked" the car to the bottom to Lewiston to save money.

Thank you for the quality magazine and book put together by a committed few. It is something I look forward to in my mail. As I said above, those were my formative years.

As a final comment, I also enjoy reading about Trooper Tom ... and articles by Trooper Tom. I remember him too as quite a guy.

**Dave Wood** (Redmond '66), Bend, Oregon

Dear Editor:

*Enjoy your articles in Smokejumper magazine and agree with you about the Biscuit fire. Keep up the good work.*

If the Cave Junction base would have been operating, that fire would have been out in two or three hours and the Biscuit fire would have never been known. Just think how long \$170 million dollars from one fire would have maintained the CJ base.

Some people may not believe this but smokejumpers have jumped a forest fire in Oklahoma. The location was in the Ouchita N.F. about 15 miles from my house. I believe they were working out of the Ft. Smith, Arkansas, airport.

**Bob Johnston** (Cave Junction '51), Heavener, Oklahoma

Dear Editor,

Regarding Chris Sorensen's article in "The View from Outside the Fence" in the April 2003 issue, I found it quite well written and informative until I got to where he unfortunately compromised his veracity and revealed his liberal bent when he wrote, "however with a president obsessed with thinning forests and waging war," etc. What a shame an allegedly somewhat intelligent individual can't produce an article such as this on our tanker program and control the urge to vent a personal political vendetta. The credibility of the entire article was compromised.

I would hope that as an organization, we would rise above politicizing our excellent NSA publication.

**Bob Whaley** (MSO '56), Missoula, Montana

Dear Editor:

It's been 57 years since I stepped out on top of the world as a smokejumper in the summer of 1951. I had intended to man a lookout that summer never having heard of smokejumping. Being a forestry student at Oklahoma State, I did learn about it and was generously allowed to switch and ended up driving with six others to Missoula and taking on that world-class adventure. I appreciate how *Smokejumper* magazine keeps it alive

## Add this Photo to Your Collection

NSA Life Member **John Helmer** (RDD '59) donated copies of this color photo taken by



**Jerry Schmidt** (CJ '62) to the NSA. The photo is printed on odd-size Fuji Pictro paper which will trim to make an outstanding display in a standard 8 x 10 frame. This picture is the cover shot of the NSA video *Firefighters from the Sky*.

\$15.00 covers shipping/handling. Use merchandise order form when ordering the "Jumper in a Tree" shot.

It's not all scenes of firefighting and parachuting (or using those climbing spurs—the scariest part) that I remember. There were many daring doings in town. I didn't have much time to show for my leisure time reading Plato's *Dialogues*. Later I realized how I used some things I learned from smokejumping in a career of counseling and psychotherapy.

Oklahoma was a long way from Montana but when we got back to school that fall, we enjoyed a little celebrity status among the forestry club members.

John Hawk (Missoula '51), Rohnert Park, California

Dear Editor:

A few words to let you know that you are doing a fine job putting *Smokejumper* together and also the investigative reporting and then the analysis. I am referring to the devastating Biscuit fire which was a time consuming task to get at the truth.

Another positive note—the great response from past jumpers and members agreeing on your findings concerning Initial Attack. Keep up the good reporting, speaking out for justice using constructive criticism.

A final note concerning the "Point" in the July issue.

That person has every right to express his or her opinions; however, suggesting that "there is a need for some type of officer or director oversight on editorials—to ensure that the right (?) people have made conscientious decisions on the opinions we share in our publication" is an insulting statement. He misses the whole point of editorship. I got steamed reading the "Point."

Ed Sullivan, Eugene, Oregon

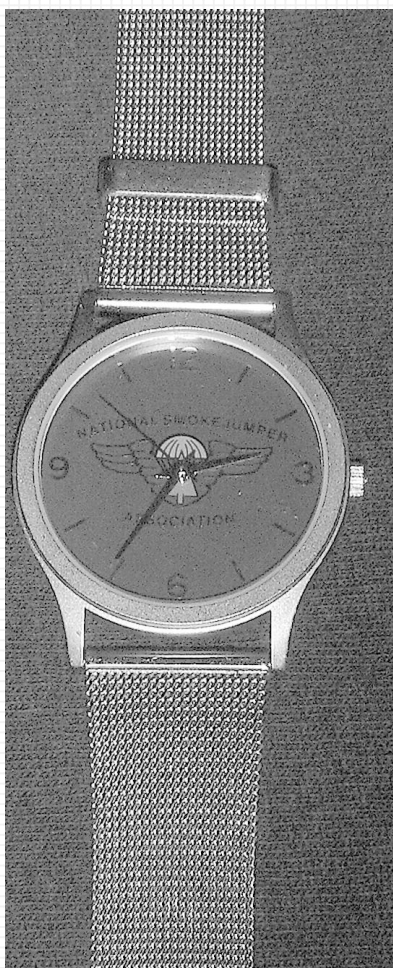
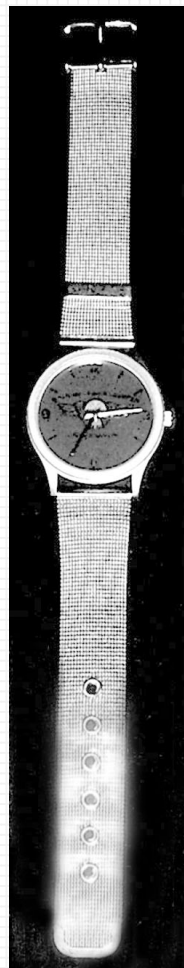
Dear Editor:

Enjoy each issue of *Smokejumper* immensely. The articles point out to me the differences of then (1942) and now.

Recent articles have jarred my memory. The comment about the severity of the open shock of the Eagle chute reminded me of having had many a stiff neck after each of my first three jumps.

In mid-June of 1942 we were trained for two days by some FBI agents on how to disarm a person and also on the proper use of a firearm. They were worried that arsonists would start fires and we would be able to catch them as they were coming out of the backcountry.

George Eichhorn (Missoula '42), Roseville, Calif. 🦉



## ***NSA Logo Watch— Great Christmas Gift Special!***

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***Stainless Steel Band***

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***Feature Special Price \$35.00***

# Form a Federal Fire Service

by Jim Klump (Redding '64)

**N**ot to flog a dead horse, but the past several issues of the NSA magazine have taken some critical shots at how some fires have been fought in the past few years. In many instances this criticism is justified. Folks must also bear in mind there are people in the forest service who are still kicking serious tail in the day-to-day job and who are being hit from all sides by criticism (including other agencies). There are still people at the higher ranks in California (guys like Norm Walker and Don Studebaker) who are being politically incorrect in calling those little piles of smelly, muffin-like objects with flies buzzing around them exactly what they are.

I have my own spin on what the problem is and, hopefully, solutions are. When I began my career in the U.S. Forest Service in the early 1960s, an important concept of how the outfit functioned and why it was so effective was (and we youngsters were told this a lot): "There are only four positions: the chief, the regional foresters, the forest supervisors and the district rangers. They have the power to make or change policy in the organization." These positions were referred to as line officers. The term, I was told, came from the Navy term for officers of the line or command officers. It had a positive effect on the organization from the standpoint we always felt that someone was at the helm. Neat concept, huh? Were there weak links among those ranks in those days? Sure, but there was enough strength to hold those people up. Some of the outstanding people I worked directly for in the old days were tough, tenacious and outspoken. Regional foresters like Charlie Connaughton and Doug Lietz, forest supervisors like Dick Worthington and Bob Lancaster, and district rangers like Frank Johnson, Gary Munsey, Tom Neenan, Dave Mohla and Dave Hammond. All were people with focus on serving the public, their people and taking care of this magnificent piece of earth with which we were entrusted. You may not have been in total agreement with them, but there was no doubt in our minds where the buck stopped. Those folks were personally involved within their sphere of influence.

Something I have noticed even before I retired is that "line officers" nowadays disassociate themselves from those things that have been entrusted to them—serving people and caring for the land.

I recall when district rangers made fire readiness inspections with the forest supervisor and fire staff. Hell, I remember when we would be kickin' ass on something, hear the "old man" squawking and look up and see him with a drip torch or Pulaski in hand. We're kidding ourselves if we think it could ever get back to that point. My best shot at a solution, and I've thought this out for a long time, is to form a Federal Fire Service. All agencies, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife, NRA and civilian forces protecting military facilities should all come under one uniform. If done correctly, think of how efficient

an agency such as this could be. Leadership could be regained. Professional pride and morale could again flow among the ranks of the fine men and women who protect our national heritage, our public lands. 🦋

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## Forest Service May Face Lawsuit over Retardant

by Chris Sorensen

In April the Forest Service Employees For Environmental Ethics (FSEER) served Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth with a 60-day notice of their intent to sue the Forest Service for allegedly violating the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. According to Andy Stahl of FSEER, "The Forest Service uses 15 million gallons of fire retardant in an average year of fighting wildfires. Most of it is dumped out of air tankers, and some retardant falls into creeks and kills threatened and endangered fish, shellfish and crustaceans. The agency has failed to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or NOAA Fisheries under the Endangered Species Act to update guidelines for dropping fire retardant around waterways in light of new studies showing how deadly the compound can be. The Forest Service also has failed to get permits under the Clean Water Act to cover accidentally dumping fire retardant in streams or for discharging harmful sediments into streams while bulldozing fire lines."

If FSEER is successful in suing the Forest Service, will incident commanders have to complete an Environmental Assessment before ordering a retardant drop? Assuming that an air tanker is a point source, will every air tanker contractor be required to apply for a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for each of its tankers? Will an NPDES permit be issued for the season or for each individual fire? Will every retardant drop have to be analyzed for potential violations of the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act? Who will be liable for violations? Will an environmental division have to be added to the incident command structure? The constraints that this suit could potentially put on fire managers are almost incomprehensible. FSEER cites the case of 21 fish being killed in Fall River near Bend, Oregon, last year as the result of a retardant drop. Is data available documenting fish kills as the result of erosion after riparian areas burn? I would speculate that more than 21 fish were killed last fall and this spring from erosion resulting from the Biscuit fire. Some of these lawsuits are starting to border on the absurd. Environmental litigation has grown so out of control that tort reform is the only real solution. More lawyers are going to get rich before this case is settled. 🦋



# Sounding Off from the Editor



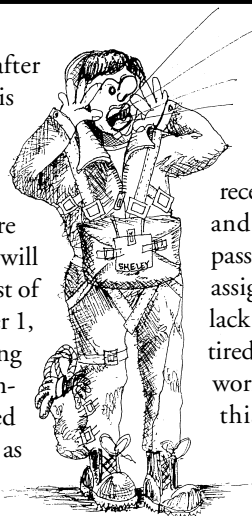
by **Chuck Sheley**  
(Cave Junction '59)  
MANAGING EDITOR

WHEN I TOOK ON THE TASK of editing the magazine, one of my goals was to get it in your hands on a timely basis. At that time my most recent newslet-

ter had arrived two months after the date on the cover. My aim is to have the magazine in your hands by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the cover month. The process has now worked down to the point where the majority of the members will have it in their hands by the first of the month, in this case, October 1, 2003. Members are now calling the month before the issue wondering why they haven't received their issue. This is a good thing as I am encouraged that the readers are looking forward to their next issue of *Smoke-jumper* magazine.

In order to meet this goal, deadlines must be set and followed. Now I'm finding myself up against my own guidelines.

For the past nine years since the death of my father, I have been the



caretaker for my mom. The need for extra hours became constant and was there seven days a week. Her health recently took a turn for the worse, and the past 34 days, until her passing, have been like a long fire assignment with long hours and lack of sleep. I've always liked the tired feeling you get from physical work. The exhaustion I got from this situation leaves the body tired but with the poisons of stress. I know fellow members **Dennis Golik** (MYC '74) and **John Robison** (CJ '65) are involved in a similar situation and I can empathize with them.

Bottom line is a short column here. No time to go after the Initial Attack System. Will get this magazine out on time and try to make a comeback in later issues. 🔦



1954 Silver City Crew. Standing L-R: "Little Joe"—, Hans Trankle, Dave Cuplin, Fritz Wolfrum, "Paperlegs" Peterson, Stew Whisman, Harry Roberts, Roland "Andy" Andersen, unidentified, unidentified, Bill Hoskinson. Sitting L-R: John Williams (mechanic), Ken Benish (pilot), Jim Wright, unidentified, Max Allen, Herb Oertli, Fred Barnowsky, Bob Crick, Bill Buck. (Courtesy Bill Buck)



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# Feedback from the Field

**I**STRONGLY support “Editorial Freedom” and your views on the federal fire policy. If we don’t speak out, Congress won’t do anything. I’ve always felt the smokejumpers should have control on fires, not the local district rangers and not calling for smokejumpers on small fires doesn’t make sense.

Jim Clatworthy (MSO ’56)

**T**hanks for another excellent magazine issue, as always. Regarding editorial oversight: In my opinion, there should **not** be a review process for editorials. A document or article written, reviewed and/or edited by the Board is a position paper, not an editorial. If the Board sees fit to produce a position paper on the subject of Initial Attack, or any other subject, that is fine but it needs to be presented as such, not as an editorial. Your editorials have been informative and thought provoking. Please keep it up.

Jon Klingel (CJ ’65)

**J**ust returned from Colorado to find a 1000-acre fire burning on Taos Pueblo lands, which is several miles from my cabin. Listening to the USFS, I was relieved to hear they were making good headway today, perhaps 30% contained. They had all the resources they could want, tonight is predicted to be cool and calm. Figure they should have significant containment by morning, BUT THEN HE SAID, “they are pulling firefighters off the line for tonight!!!” The next few days are predicted to be hot and getting hotter with moderate winds and lower humidity with fire behavior prediction as High. If that was my fire and I really wanted to lose it, what would I do? I think I’d pull all the crews off at night.

Just had a call from an old friend who used to be head of fire control for State of Nevada, Forestry. He heard the same report that they were pulling crews off the fire at night. He wants

to know what the hell is going on? I’m headed for the cabin.

Jon Klingel (CJ ’65)

**I** was dispatched to the **Biscuit fire** as a cat boss and later assigned to the Shelly fire. In talking to the overhead from the California Department of Forestry they said the Biscuit fire overhead did not want any suppression action taken on the Shelly fire as it was a spot fire from the Biscuit incident.

A few days later I was talking to some of the kitchen crew who heard the overhead arguing and saying “Why don’t we put the #!! Thing out like we used to?” The last important bit came from my cat operator who heard that the overhead would let the two fires (the Oregon & Calif. fires) burn together so that they could get FEMA money. If you look at the crew assignments and the burn pattern, that’s exactly what they did.

Kev Hodgins (RDD ’67)

**I**n the July 2003 *Smokejumper*, there was some discussion of editorial supervision. I think you’re doing a fine job and don’t need a layer of bureaucracy between you and the printed word.

Perry Rahn (MSO ’61)

**I** was just going through the April issue of *Smokejumper*—great issue on the federal policy, or lack thereof, and I was delighted when I saw Rep. Dale Kildee, Mich., as a member of the House Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health. I’ve had a number of meetings with him and his staff on education issues and will be delighted to go after him on the smokejumper program. I think the Committee ought to hear from smokejumpers on their personal experiences with how local control prevented smokejumpers from doing their job and loosing vital natural resources.

Jim Clatworthy (MSO ’56) 🐿

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## LETTERS

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Dear Editor:

I strongly support the editor in publishing his opinions on issues such as the current fire management and smokejumper use without any review from anyone! You have indeed taken our magazine and organization to a new level of increased relevance above that of rehashing “silk stories.”

Editing by committee results in soft-pedaled, politically correct pabulum that few can take issue with and is of no interest to anyone.

I do object to the publishing of any article whose author does not sign his/her name to especially to the “Point” in the July issue. This article, in my opinion, is the position taken by some official in the Forest Service who is defending the mismanagement of the Biscuit fire by attempting to muzzle the editor and discredit the thousand or so experienced and knowledgeable members.

It is my personal suspicion, considering the right wing

conservative philosophy of the administration in power, that initial attack on the Biscuit fire was *purposely withheld* in an attempt to manufacture a political point.

The idea was to allow the fire to move out of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area and *then* stop it. This would give the public perception that wilderness and roadless designation of public lands is the root of all evil in controlling wildfire and such special areas should not exist nor any more be created.

This politically driven shenanigan and gamesmanship backfired and clearly shows that when conditions are extreme, fire will burn in both “managed” and “unmanaged” forests beyond any human control.

Perhaps this is the reason that the Forest Service continues to “talk around” the fact that 70 jumpers were available at the time and were not called.

Ben Mitchell (MSO ’60), Sitka, Alaska, USFS/Retired 🐿

# Chief's Summary

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

I recently read through Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth's speech that he presented at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, California, on April 22, 2003. The speech is entitled "Managing the *National Forest* System; Great Issues and Great Diversions." In his speech Chief Bosworth identified the "Four Great Issues Facing" *National Forest* System Lands:

1. **Fire and Fuel Management:** "Americans must decide: We can remove some of the trees and lower the risk of catastrophic fire or we can do nothing and watch them burn."
2. **Invasive Species:** Invasive plants now cover over 133 million acres nationwide, and are expanding at approximately 1.7 million acres/year.
3. **Habitat Fragmentation;** Every day we loose 4,000 acres of open space due to development. We are loosing the ecological integrity of the land as a whole.
4. **Unmanaged Recreation;** Last year the *National Forests* hosted 214 million visitors, and it's going to keep growing.

The "Great Diversions" include:

1. The Forest Service is just using excuses to get the cut out. It's a bogus debate over logging, and that is wrong. The issue is fire and fuels.
2. The publicity surrounding individual endangered species and the efficacy of the regulatory system. Our time is spent on individual species and not on the underlying problems like invasive species.
3. The great diversion is grazing on public lands. Americans should focus instead on how to buffer the *National Forests* by protecting open lands and by keeping ranches and working forests in operation.
4. "The Forest Service is building roads only to get out the cut." In reality, we construct about 150 miles of road/year on the *National Forests*. At the same time, we have decommissioned 14 miles of road, for each new mile that has been added to the system. So, in fact, the *National Forest* road system is actually shrinking.

That is my short and sweet overview of the speech. If anyone would like a copy of the full speech, just send me an e-mail at: k.brauneis@fs.fed.us. I would be glad to get you a copy. In addition, an excellent video entitled *Trees are the Answer* as hosted by Dr. Patrick Moore is an excellent production that addresses all of the chief's issues and more. The video is produced by Chambers Productions and can be ordered through the **Green Spirit Production** Web site. Patrick Moore is the founder of Green Peace who converted through time to a "Forester First Class"! This is the number one tape I use in the community to teach multiple use management and the need to harvest more trees—not less. 🌲

# Sharing Historic Memories

*The following is excerpted from a letter by Albert Gray (CJ '45) to Starr Jenkins (CJ '49). Although they both jumped at the same base, they never knew each other until they recently came into contact via the Baldwin College alumni newsletter.*



*Albert Gray, Cave Jct. 1945 (Courtesy of Albert Gray)*

What a joy to read your book (*Smokejumpers '49, Brothers in the Sky*). Every page brought back great memories or taught me things I never knew about smokejumping.

First, I noted some of the things that changed at Cave Junction between 1945 and 1949. We didn't have quick release harnesses nor did we ever carry headlamps for night work. There were no helicopters in 1945, so we always had to walk out to the nearest road. One such hike was 20 miles to the ranger station at Happy Camp. We did not get paid for our work or jumps since we were all drafted as C.O.'s. The Mennonite Church gave us \$5 a month out of which we had to buy our own jump boots. I think they cost me about \$15. We did earn "comp" time for over hours that we could use at the end of the fire season. In October of 1945 all 15 of us (jumpers at CJ) transferred to Powers, Oregon, to burn slash.

**Earl Cooley** and **Wag Dodge** trained us at Nine Mile. I talked to Earl at the 50-year CPS reunion in 1992.

I recall trouble I had on a practice letdown. I had to chin myself with one arm so that I could thread the rope through the loops on the harness. They let me hang there for a long time until I managed it on one last attempt. Remember, I came to camp from my job as a young economics instructor at Drexel University in Philadelphia, so I was not in the best of shape.

We were asked to practice a "slip jump" and the results were the same. Few of our guys were able to do this maneuver with any success. I remember pulling down on several of the lines but don't recall spilling any air or a more rapid fall.

I was never hurt on any of my jumps but a buddy who jumped just before me landed in a rock pile and broke his arm and crushed his facemask. 🌲

# In Search of Moon Trees:

## Hundreds of trees have been to the moon; How they got there and back again is a curious tale

by Tony Phillips

*Dr. Tony Phillips is an astronomer and science writer with the Science@NASA Web site ([www.science.nasa.gov](http://www.science.nasa.gov)). This article was originally posted on the site.*

**S**cattered around our planet are hundreds of creatures that have been to the moon and back again. None of them are human. They outnumber active astronauts three-to-one. And most are missing.

They're trees. "Moon trees."

NASA scientist Dave Williams has found 40 of them, and he's looking for more. "They were just seeds when they left Earth in 1971 onboard Apollo 14," explains Williams. "Now they're fully grown. They look like ordinary trees—but they're special because they've been to the moon."

How they got there and back is a curious tale.

It begins in 1953, when **Stuart Roosa** (CJ '53) parachuted into an Oregon forest fire. He had just taken a summer job as a smokejumper. It was probably the promise of adventure that first attracted Roosa to the job, but he soon grew to love the forests too. "My father had an affinity for the outdoors," recalls Stuart's son, Jack. "He often reminisced about the tall ponderosa pine trees from his smokejumping days."

Thirteen years later, NASA invited Roosa, who had since become an Air Force test pilot, to join the astronaut program. He accepted. Roosa, Ed Mitchell and Al Shepard eventually formed the prime crew for Apollo 14, slated for launch in 1971.

"Each Apollo astronaut was allowed to take a small number of personal items to the moon," continues Jack. Their PPKs, or Personal Preference Kits, were often filled with trinkets—coins, stamps or mission patches. Al Shepard took golf balls. On Gemini 3, John Young brought a corned beef sandwich. "My father chose trees," says Jack. "It was his way of paying tribute to the U.S. Forest Service."

The Forest Service was delighted.

"It was part science, part publicity stunt," laughs Stan Krugman, who was the U.S. Forest Service's staff director for forest genetics research in 1971. "The scientists wanted to find out what would happen to these seeds if they took a ride to the moon. Would they sprout? Would the trees look normal?"

Krugman himself selected the varieties: Redwood, loblolly pine, sycamore, Douglas fir and sweetgum. "I picked redwoods, because they were well known, and the others because they would grow well in many parts of the United States," he explains.

On January 31, 1971, Apollo 14 blasted off. The astronauts landed five days later in Fra Mauro—a hilly area where Shepard famously launched his golf balls using a geology tool as a make-shift driver. Roosa remained in orbit aboard the command module *Kitty Hawk*. Inside his PPK was a metal cylinder filled

with seeds. Together they circled the moon 34 times.

Apollo 14 was a success. Scientists were delighted with the mission's geology experiments, and they were eager to study the 43 kg of moon rocks collected by Shepard and Mitchell. Krugman was just as eager to study the seeds.

But then, there was a setback. "We had a bit of a scare," Krugman recalls. During decontamination procedures, the canister burst, and the seeds were scattered and traumatized. "We weren't sure if they were still viable," he says. Working by hand, Krugman carefully separated the seeds by species and sent them to Forest Service labs in Mississippi and California. Despite the accident, nearly all of them germinated. "We had [hundreds of] seedlings that had been to the moon!" he exclaims. Thirty-one years later, Krugman still sounds excited.

During the years that followed, the trees thrived as scientists watched. "The trees grew normally," Krugman continues. "They reproduced with Earth trees, and their offspring, called 'half-moon trees,' were normal, too." In 1975, they were ready to leave the lab. "That's when things got out of hand," he says.

Everyone wanted a moon tree. In 1975 and 1976, trees were sent to the White House, Independence Square in Philadelphia, Valley Forge. "One tree went to the emperor of Japan. Senators wanted trees to dedicate buildings. We even did some plantings in New Orleans, because the mayor there, Mayor Moon [Landrieu], wanted some," says Krugman. There were so many requests that "we had to produce additional seedlings from rooted cuttings of the original trees."

No one kept systematic records, notes Dave Williams, which is why today most of the trees are unaccounted for. Often they're encountered by accident—identified by a sign or plaque nearby that identifies them. Williams himself stumbled across one close to home. "I found one moon tree right here at Goddard near my office," he laughs. "I had no idea it was there."

Williams now maintains a Web site listing all known moon trees ([www.nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/moon\\_tree.html](http://www.nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/moon_tree.html)). If you find one, contact him at: [dwilliam@nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov](mailto:dwilliam@nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov). He'll investigate the find and add it to the collection if it's authentic.

Moon trees are long-lived, says Krugman. The redwoods could last thousands of years, and the pines have a life expectancy of centuries. Indeed, they've already outlived Stuart Roosa and Al Shepard—two of the humans who took them to the moon.

Says Jack, "I think my father always knew that these trees would serve as a long-lasting, living reminder of mankind's greatest achievement—the manned missions to the moon. These trees will be here 100 years from now. By then, I believe we'll be planting Mars trees right beside them." 🌱

# The Story Behind the Picture

by John Culbertson (Fairbanks '69)

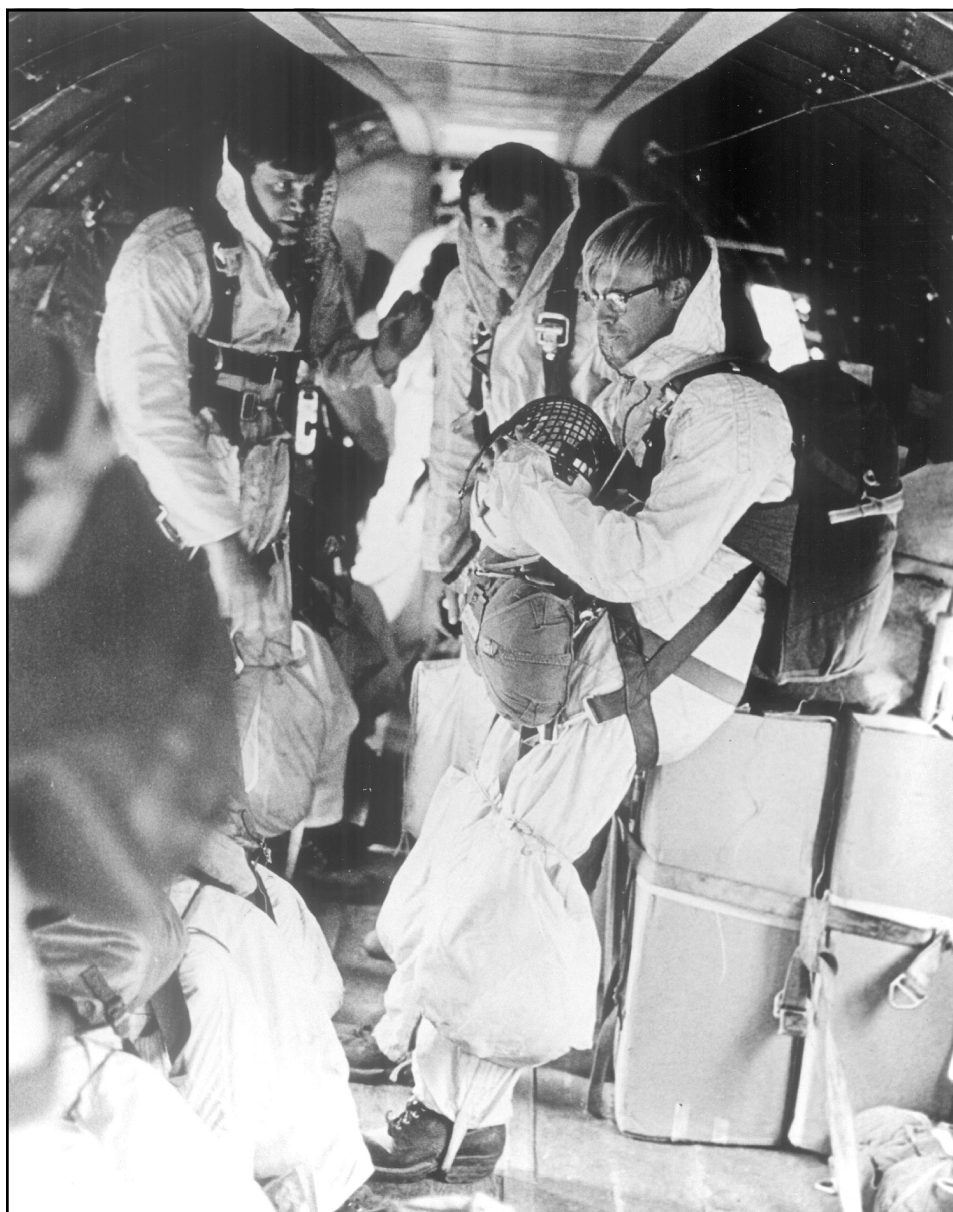
**I**t was my third season jumping, and we were operating during a lightning bust.

The base was filled with outside jumpers, including the “regular Missoula booster crew,” which came to Alaska each summer, plus several loads of Zulies up for the bust. As was the custom at that time, all fires throughout the state were manned as soon as possible, with a few Alaska jumpers being left behind as overhead for the village crews. As soon as a jumper returned to Fairbanks (or to McGrath or Anchorage), they were jumped out again.

The shack was located at the east end of the runway on the side opposite the current base. The visiting jumpers were staying at the old Creamers Field Dairy, and a busload from Missoula had just shown up at the standby shack looking sleepy and tired. I was standing in the shack, which consisted of a Butler building full of fire packs, cases of C rations and cargo chutes. Next to it was a funky trailer filled with empty pop cans, cigarette butts and military goose-feather sleeping bags, which we used to snooze away standby time. Some of those bags were pretty ripe, since Vitalis was still popular with jumpers who favored the (pre-) “urban cowboy” look.

I was headed over to the trailer to beat the Zulies out of the best sleeping bags when **Al Dunton** (FBX '67) told me to get a load out on the ramp, since an empty DC-3 was due in shortly. There were only four Alaska jumpers at the base—myself, **Bob Stockman** (FBX '67), **Gene Hobbs** (IDC '61) and Al. While Bob and I made up a 16-man load, Al was talking to dispatch about some new fires in McKinley Park. Soon, a contract Doug came chugging and popping onto the ramp, and we formed a chain to load her up. Rumor had it that this craft's last assignment had been hauling horsemeat in Argentina. As I recall, none of the Missoula guys had been to Alaska before, and they didn't seem too impressed with our operation. That made me nervous, but Bob told me they were okay guys, and that skepticism is normal under quickly changing circumstances.

Al came out on the ramp in his usual easygoing manner—cigarette, coffee cup and map in hand, calling “suit up” in a quiet voice. The jumpers call that demeanor “coolness under stress” in a sort of mocking way, but it really did help settle things down. Gene was the spotter, and he and Al headed up to talk with the pilot. Soon, we were bumping and



*L-R: Bob Stockman, Al Dunton and John Culbertson, 1971, Alaska. (Courtesy John Culbertson)*

swaying along down the Tanana Valley. All eyes were glued to the windows, and headers were visible around us.

Over McKinley, on the Lake Minchumina side, we found three fires, two really cooking. Al decided to split the load and go back for another load of jumpers. He turned to me and asked if I could handle that hot fire with a load of jumpers who were not used to Alaska firefighting.

So there I was with Al and Bob—both cool and calm and very much my seniors—and 13 other guys who were looking at us with that big question mark jumpers are so good at producing under such circumstances. Leaning against the cargo, bouncing along in a turn, I was pretty nervous. I wanted to do a good job, and I was proud of getting asked to take on the fire, but I had doubts about myself. I was kind of wild then and often had one wheel spinning loose in the sand. I guess I was telling myself to get serious. Somebody took a picture while all that was in my head, capturing what, for me, was an important moment in time. Years later, when I saw the photograph, I knew instantly what was going on. I wish I could thank the photographer.

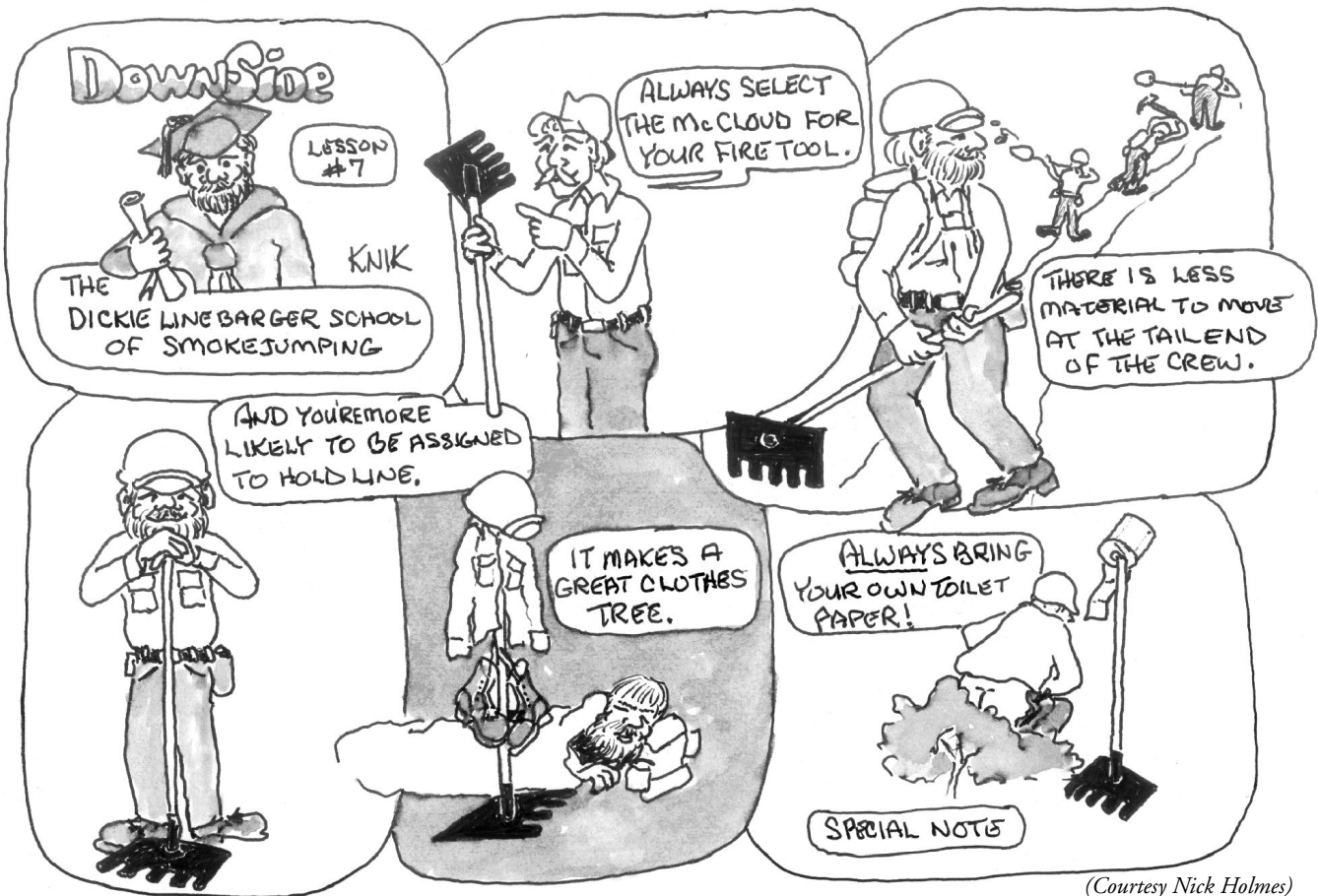
Well, we jumped that fire, and those Missoula guys worked like there was no tomorrow. They took my orders and gave back great advice. I couldn't have been working with a better crew, and it may have been the best fire of my life.

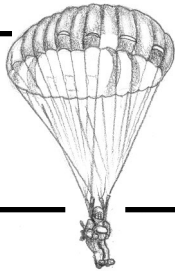
As soon as I stood up, I knew it was a hot fire—several acres of black spruce moving uphill with the wind into tall

white spruce. We split the crew and tried to flank it for an hour or so, but the ember drop began igniting too many spot fires, and group torching was frequent. I decided to go parallel and indirect, suppressing our firing line as we went. It was touch and go, but we were able to hold our firing line. Eventually, we tied into a creek on the back slope, and with the help of two B-25s, **Bob Schlaefli's** advice and another load of jumpers—and with many drops from a scooping PBY—we picked it up in the early-morning hours.

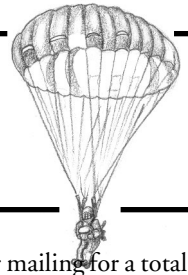
Taking a break along the line, we started to get to know one another, and I was all nervous laughter sitting there with these guys who had done such a great job. Some of the guys were heating cans of rations in the embers, while others squabbled and traded pound cake or canned chocolate for those little cartons of WWII vintage cigarettes. The PBY got low on fuel and came by for a final flyby, opened a window and waved. Just then, all his maps got sucked right out of the window and came drifting down to us as shredded bits of nonsense. Caught up in the silliness of the moment, the jumpers made ridiculous attempts to find matching pieces, running around on the dry, windy hillside while trying not to spill their meatballs with beans and “Ham, Water Added, Eggs, Chopped, Canned.” 🍌

*John Culbertson lives in Carpinteria, California, with his wife Kathy and four children. He can be contacted at: 4516 La Tierra, Carpinteria, CA 93013 or [jkc@sbceo.org](mailto:jkc@sbceo.org). He will be doing more on pilot Bob Schlaefli in the January issue.*





# Odds and Ends



by **Chuck Sheley**

After five years in the USAF, 20 at Pam Am, and 12 at United, **Herb Fischer** (MSO '57) is still flying jets. He is currently a pilot for Netjets flying Falcon 2000 Bizjets. Herb relates that as a hotshot on the Shasta-Trinity N.F. in 1956, his first contact with jumpers was with a couple of the Gobi jumpers from over the hill at Cave Junction. "I thought two things about those guys: 1) Coolest dudes I had ever seen and 2) They mostly walked downhill. I was impressed!" He headed to Missoula to rookie the next year.

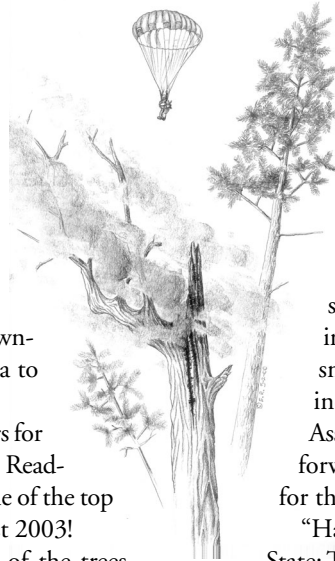
Associate **Chris DeMarest** continues to take honors for his children's books. Recently the Kansas State Reading Circle listed *Smokeyjumpers One to Ten* as one of the top ten books in their Recommended Reading List 2003!

"Americans must decide: We can remove some of the trees and lower the risk of catastrophic fire or we can do nothing and watch them burn. I think the choice is obvious: In a good part of the West where forests are overgrown we must return forests to the way they were historically, then get fire back into the ecosystem when it's safe." —Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth, Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, April 22, 2003.

**Ron Lufkin** (CJ '60) forwarded information that the Forest Service has placed a kiosk and memorial honoring **Ron Neely** (NCSB '74) at the Fish Lake Campground on the Okanogan N.F. Ron died in the Fish Lake-Gibson Creek fire July 27, 1977.

A cartoon from the *Rapid City Journal* (South Dakota) forwarded by **Perry Rahn** (MSO '61) shows two trucks and the heading "Which Trucks Would You Rather See In Our Forests?" One is a logging truck heading out and the other is a fire truck heading in. This same cartoon run in San Francisco would have a third choice—no trucks. Just depends where you live I guess.

**Bill Moody** (NCSB '57) has revised the NCSB history book.



The price is \$14 plus \$2 for mailing for a total of \$16. Contact Bill at: PO Box 262, Twisp, WA 98856—phone 509-997-5971 or e-mail: [bmoody@mymethow.com](mailto:bmoody@mymethow.com)

The University of Montana alumni June newsletter featured Carl Seielstad (MYC '93) in a short profile. Carl is in the Ph.D. program in the school of forestry.

**Tom Kovalicky** (MSO '61) did the honors in presenting a plaque to the Grangeville smokejumpers in a ceremony in June. The plaque honors the 30 smokejumpers killed in the line of duty since the inception of the program in 1940.

Associate and *Smokeyjumper* columnist **Chris Sorensen** forwarded this to me just as I was about to start layout for this issue:

"Hawkins and Powers Aviation Receives Loan from State: The State of Wyoming Loan and Investment Board approved a \$500,000 short term operating loan in July to Hawkins & Powers Aviation Inc. of Greybull to keep the business operating until the fire season. A Big Horn County bank will loan the company \$500,000 and the state will buy the paper. Collateral for the loan is one of Hawkins and Powers Bell helicopters. Long term financing to buy equipment is being arranged through the sale of \$4 million in state industrial development bonds. Hawkins & Powers is one of the largest employers in the Big Horn basin with an annual payroll of \$6.8 million. One-third of the children in the Greybull school system are children of company employees. Employees are deeply involved in community civic affairs. It is encouraging to see the State of Wyoming supporting a small, main street business during tough economic times. 25 employees had to be laid off last winter as the result of the C-130 and PBY air tankers being grounded permanently. The company suffered two fatal crashes last year. One was on June 17, 2002, near Walker, California. The second crash occurred on July 18, 2002 between Lyons and Estes Park, Colorado." 🐼



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# Air America, a Daily Adventure

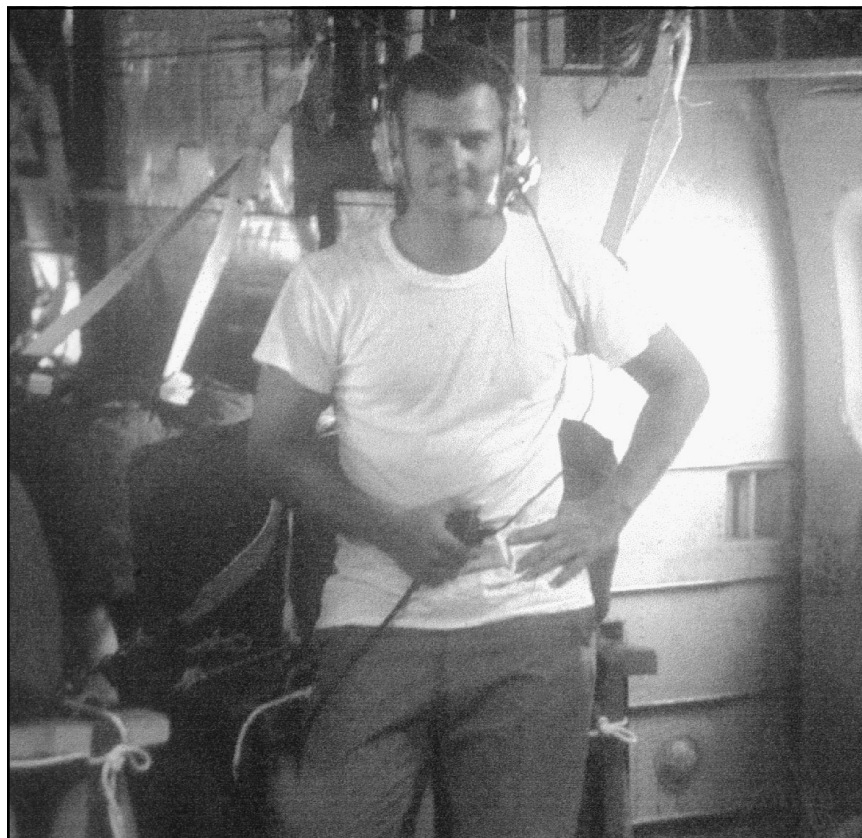
Friday, May 2, 1969

by John Kirkley (Cave Junction '64)

It was still dark at quarter past five in the morning when the blue and white Air America VW shuttle bus pulled into the driveway. "Sawadi kulp," I greeted the Lao driver while stowing my flight bag in the rear. Wattay Airport in Vientiane, Laos, was a short drive and there was enough time to have breakfast before my dawn departure.

Following a few pancakes, I walked over to flight ops to check the weather and see if any changes had been made to my flight schedule. It confirmed that I'd be flying with Pilot Rayford "Jeff" Jeffrey and Co-pilot Frank Reniger in a C-123(K), with a remain over night (RON) in Udorn, Thailand. As I walked up to the plane, Jeff was doing the pre-flight inspection and Frank was checking the fuel supply. "Hey Jeff, where we headed?" I questioned. "Outa Pepper Grinder," he answered in a Southern drawl. Jeff grew up in Alabama as I had and flew combat missions as a flying sergeant in North Africa the year of my birth, 1943. Frank was from North Carolina and trained in the Navy. Having flown with both of them over the years as a "kicker" (air freight specialist), I trusted their flying abilities and judgment in the one twenty-three.

Udorn Thani was a 20 minute flight due south across the Mekong River and site of one of the largest U.S. Air Force bases in Thailand. Here we worked out of AB-1 or Pepper Grinder. AB-1 was where we loaded humanitarian supplies i.e., live pigs, chickens, water buffalos, white rice and passengers. Pepper Grinder was where we loaded "hard rice" e.g., ammunition, howitzer shells, rockets and bombs, as well as 55-gallon drums of aviation gas going to upcountry Laos. Today's 10,000 pound load of 250 lb. bombs and 50 caliber ammunition would be re-supplying the T-28s flying



*Johnny Kirkley in the back of C-123 with 155mm ready for drop. (Courtesy of John Kirkley)*

out of Long Tieng, Laos, aka, Lima Site 20 Alternate (LS-20A).

Following a 45-minute flight, we landed on the dirt strip of 20A and taxied to the offload ramp. Long Tieng nestled among the mountain tops about 150 kilometers north of Vientiane. This was the headquarters of General Vang Pao and his Hmong (Meo) guerrilla army and where the "Customer" (CIA) directed the not so secret war in Laos. While I helped Lao soldiers unload, the Customer walked over to Jeff and Frank as they exited the plane to stretch their legs. We were informed that overnight Vang Pao had secured control of the town of Xieng Khouang on the PDJ, (Plaine Des Jarres). Our plane and another C-123(K) flown by Bob Watson (MSO

'51) and Co-pilot Joe Conde would fly in and pick up captured Communist weapons. The Plaine Des Jarres gets its name from the hundreds of jars carved out of granite. Ranging from 3 to 10 feet tall and weighing up to seven tons, these jars are an enigma as to what purpose they served 2500 years ago. Theories vary from brewery cauldrons to funereal urns. In the early 1960s Vang Pao and the Hmong moved to Long Tieng out of necessity when the Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forced them off the PDJ. Xieng Khuang Province was a strategic area of Laos. Many U.S. military and Air America planes had been shot up and shot down over this region. We had avoided the unfriendly PDJ for over five years and now we were di-

rected to land there. In this work there were times of boredom while on standby waiting for weather or mechanical problems to be repaired, mixed with times of white-knuckle awareness. There was never a typical day, circumstances happen in wartime that changes things immediately. This profession was impromptu, spontaneous and at times, combustible. Air America was the perfect occupation for anyone who enjoyed living on the edge in an exotic environment.

The Pratt & Whitney R-2800 engines fired up as we headed to the front lines. Reaching flying altitude, the reverberation and lower pitch of the engines being throttled back lulled me into reflective reverie as I looked out the rear door at the jungle a few thousand feet below. Anticipation of “what if” surged through my body, that funny feeling which comes with adrenalin when about to enter the realm of the unknown. This emotion was now summoning up similar rushes from my past, like getting in the open door of a Twin Beech as a smoke-jumper and waiting for the signal to exit to fight a raging Oregon forest fire 900 feet below. This sensation was also ever present when flying night missions for the company. Since hiring on in 1965, I had endured several types of

night missions. There were night flights out of Savannakhet, Laos, in a Caribou (DHC-4), night flights out of Naha, Okinawa (Kadena), in a DC-6, but the ultimate gut check of all was the night frights out of Udorn, Thailand, in a modified Onmark B-26. These unmarked B-26s were equipped with terrain-following radar that allowed us to fly in the dark below the tops of the limestone-karst mountains and above the trees at 250+ mph. The mission was dropping supplies to reconnaissance outpost along the Lao/North Vietnam border on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Mugia Pass. It took four guys up front to fly this baby with two kickers in the rear dropping cargo out a 3 by 3-foot hole in the floor. All of us remained wide awake on this duty, especially when the North Vietnamese anti-aircraft guns started lighting up the night sky. Kickers lovingly referred to this plane as the “flying coffin”—no jumping out at low altitude, we were all in for the ride.

Meanwhile, as we entered the PDJ, two U.S. A1-Es passing below us brought me back from déjà vu doo. Grabbing my camera, I photographed the bombs from the A1-Es hitting anti-aircraft gun emplacements overlooking the airstrip where we were about to land. When the wheels dropped I stuck

in the gear pins and buckled up. As we taxied to the end of the short dirt runway we were met by General Vang Pao and Edgar “Pop” Buell and several dozen Hmong soldiers. The captured booty of Russian 37mm anti-aircraft guns and French vehicles would be shuttled to Long Tieng. To our relief flying in and out of the unstable PDJ went without mishap, no bullet holes or emergencies.

As dusk came we headed to Udorn to overnight. First stop, Club Rendezvous to wash down the upcountry dust, play darts, gossip and chow down. After dinner Jeff suggested we call it a night, first light came early. As we exited and rounded the corner we came upon Frank dangling by one arm from the awning covering the walkway. His eyes were closed as he hung perfectly still. “Hey Frank, what the hell you doing up there,” I chuckled. He opened one eye and with a sly grin exclaimed, “Just hanging around!” We burst into laughter as much at the spectacle of him loitering four feet above the pavement, as the profundity of his usual calm Frank-ness. These were temporary and uncertain times we experienced together and it wasn’t just about the hazardous duty pay, it was more about “just hanging around” to see what adventure the morrow would bring. 🦋

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## MEMBER PROFILE

### GILBERT WELDY (McCALL '44)

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by Wallace “Pic” Littell (Missoula '44)

GIL WELDY WAS DRAFTED IN THE summer of 1943 after a year at Manchester College, a Church of the Brethren college in Indiana. His first assignment was to a Civilian Public Service Camp at Wellston, Michigan. From there he transferred to a CPS camp in California and applied for service as a smoke-jumper in 1944.

Like most CPS smokejumpers, he saw this as an opportunity to do true “work of national importance” as conscientious objectors (COs) were expected to. He says it also gave him an opportunity to demonstrate that he was not a “slacker or yellow belly.”

Gil, or “Tex” as he was known then, reported to CPS 103 at Nine Mile for training in June of 1944 and successfully completed the rigorous training for smoke jumping. Having been an athlete in high school and a football player at Manchester College, he says he found the smokejumper training to be “quite manageable and satisfying.” His only problem proved

to be a tendency to motion sickness, which, on his first day of training, he discovered on a plane ride directed at acclimating jumper trainees to flying. He says he “barely made it down before losing it” on his first jump.

However, this did not deter him from a successful two-year career as a smokejumper during which he made 21 jumps, 13 of them on fires. He did this at the McCall, Idaho, smoke-jumper base, where he was assigned after training at Nine Mile.

During the 1944 season, his smokejumper training continued, interspersed with several jumps on fires in remote mountainous regions. On his first fire jump, he came down on a log and sprained his ankle. But, as he said, “We had work to do and stayed until we had the fire under control.” The Forest Service dispatched a packer and string of mules to get them back to the base. His unit was on fire standby for the rest of the summer and made several fire jumps.

The 1945 season, his second at McCall, was a very busy one with smokejumpers going out onto fires as soon as they





*Gilbert Weldy (Courtesy Gilbert Weldy)*

could clean up and rest from the last one. He notes that “the Forest Service trainers, spotters, foremen and pilots were all very thorough and careful to see that we were always put into situations where we could be successful in controlling the fires, virtually all of which were started by lightning strikes.”

After the war was over in 1945 and the CPS Smokejumper Unit was disbanded, Gil moved to a new CPS assignment as a ward attendant in the Veterans’ Mental Hospital in Lyons, New Jersey. Released in 1946, he returned to Manchester College from which he graduated in 1949 with a degree in secondary education and majors in English and speech. He then taught in two Indiana high schools while completing a master’s degree in school administration at Indiana University, attending summer school and “extension” classes on weekends.

Continuing a distinguished career in teaching, Gil completed a doctor of education degree at Indiana University in 1963. He headed large high schools (2,700 students) in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, and Niles North High School, near Chicago, at which ninety percent of the graduates were college bound and abundant resources provided opportunity for innovation and challenge. After serving at Niles North High School as principal for 14 years, he ended his career as assistant superintendent in the central office.

During his years as a principal, he was active in state and national professional associations. He served on several committees with the National Association of Secondary School



*Gilbert Weldy*

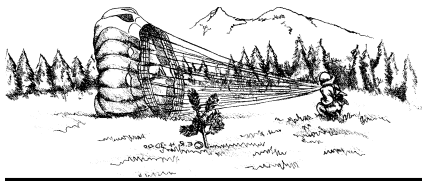
Principals, and also a five-year term on the board of directors. During these years, he wrote articles for principals that were published in professional journals, some 35 articles and five monographs. He particularly enjoyed writing humor and satire.

Upon retirement in 1985, Gil continued to be professionally active, directing a national demonstration project for the NASSP. He also directed an NASSP Assessment Center in Indiana, helping schools identify potential school principals. During this time he was serving as an adjunct professor at Indiana University where he taught classes preparing school principals.

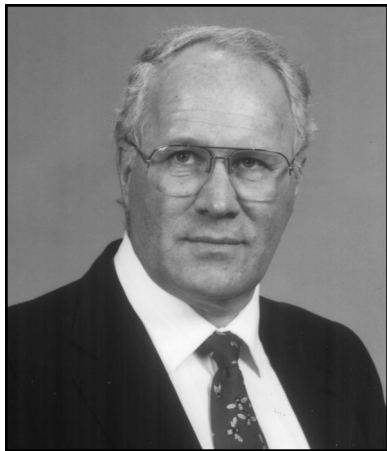
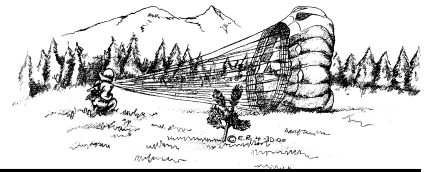
He states that “possibly the highlight of my career was being selected to evaluate dependents’ schools for the Department of Defense in 1965.” Together with a partner, he visited 21 schools in the Far East that are accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. He adds that this assignment was nearly taken away when his WWII record as a CO came to light. However, a special trip to the Pentagon in Washington, at which he explained that he could not kill for his country but could evaluate the schools they provide for the children of military personnel in an objective way, resulted in his clearance for the job.

He is currently living in a Church of the Brethren owned retirement community with his wife, Dorothy, whom he met at Manchester College and married 53 years ago. They have two children. Their daughter’s husband is manager of a pharmaceutical company. She has three children, a girl and two boys. The granddaughter is a teacher and the grandsons are in college and high school, respectively. They live in Cary, NC. Their son is a partner in a direct mail advertising company in Louisville, Ky. Their grandson is moving on to high school from a magnet school for the “creative and performing arts” in Louisville, where he has been active in musical and dramatic productions.

Gil’s address is: Gilbert Weldy, 201 Willow Way, North Manchester, IN 46962. 📍



# Checking the Canopy



by Jim Cherry  
(Missoula '57)

## Mortality's Reality

TODAY THERE IS A ROAD that skirts the area three miles SE of Shoup, Idaho, but on July 15, 1957, it was a six-hour uphill ordeal for a ground crew that had hiked through the night to get there. When our Missoula jumper crew of 16 arrived at 0945 hours under leadership of Paul Dennison and Bob McDonald, we were fresh and ready for action. On landing, Benny Musquez missed the ridge, broke his left foot when it wedged between two rocks and spent the remainder of the season rigging in the loft.

We reached the Half Way Gulch fire (a.k.a. Pine Creek fire) along a ridge top overlooking the Salmon River 3000 feet below. What faced us was a 30+ acre fire burning in grass, scattered trees and dense timber on a 85–90 percent slope with numerous rock barriers and outcrops. The 40 exhausted men from ground crews had held the fire at the ridge top, but burning debris was rolling downhill and the fire was spreading out of control. We started down the south side and built line rapidly in the dry heat of the day. After anchoring the bottom of the fire, we started to build line up the north side.

About mid-afternoon four of us

were sent back around to the south side of the fire to secure some sections that had burning snags near our fire line. (I haven't been able to remember who the others were—two rookies and a 2<sup>nd</sup>+ year jumper.) We hiked around the line we had built earlier and completed the clean-up work as we went. Finishing about 1530 hours, we sat down to catch our breath and have a sip of water.

Within minutes the moderate winds experienced throughout the day shifted and increased, blowing across the burn and fanning the fire to new life toward our position. The fire below us found new fuel and the line was breached. We quickly slid downhill, tied into the good line and began hacking out a new line down a finger ridge covered with mountain mahogany. One Pulaski lost half its blade trying to cut through one of the trees. Below us the fire began rolling downhill between finger ridges and then making button-hook runs to the top of our ridge, driven by a 25–30 mph wind—each time coming closer and hotter with its oily black smoke. With each run of the fire our line was holding and we were staying ahead of the flames—just barely. The next run would bring the flames right over us. “What are we going to do when that next run comes?” was the question we were shouting with parched throats over the roar of the fire. The response was “Drop your shovel, keep your Pulaski and head for that talus slide below us.”

With another roar the fire started its run upslope toward us and we took off for the slide area, laid down and put our faces into the rocks for fresh air. The fire swept over and around us. We had survived! After waiting for about 30 minutes we made a human chain



with our Pulaski and attempted to walk upslope through the smoke and burn to regroup with the others in our crew. The smoke was choking us and we were forced to retreat to the talus slide again, retracing our footprints in the ash. After waiting for another couple of hours we tried again and finally made our way back

to the top, past our charred shovels, and spent the night with the rest of our crew, watching the fire gobble up our line. Four of us had cheated death in that blow-up and we knew it.

At 0945 hours on July 16, another load of 16 jumpers from Missoula and eight from McCall joined forces with us. We started working down both sides of the fire from the ridge. The wisdom of experience is great—especially in that steep, rocky country. As our crew made line downhill between the rock barriers and outcrops, someone in our overhead had the wisdom to place lookouts above us. As we made line through a narrow, funnel-like area between two high rock outcrops we heard shouting from our lookouts above. “Rocks!” We quickly scrambled to the west side of the funnel and made like sardines in a can as we pressed tightly into a slight depression in the rock wall. A rock slide crashed through the funnel, some boulders as large as a VW Beetle and traveling over 100 feet in the air from one bounce to the next, all the way down to the Salmon River. Again, we had cheated death in the rockslide and we knew it well.

I was 18 at the time and that had been my first fire jump. It was a life changing, life shaping experience. At

that age one doesn't often think about the possibility of death. Rather, you are more likely to live as though nothing could touch you—that you are immortal. That day any illusion of my

own immortality was erased. I had felt the breath of death brush past twice. Life began to be viewed as a gift of God that is held only by a thin, fragile thread. Another year of jumping

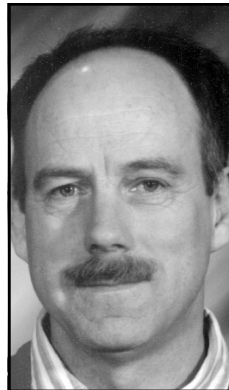
would bring another life shaping, life changing experience (more about that in another issue). This had been a lesson in mortality's reality. 🙏

# Gates of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

*Last summer NSA Life Member Jerry Dixon was on a 1200-mile ultra-marathon across the Rockies retracing the Lewis and Clark journey 200 years ago.*

**W**ith a friend, I paddled up the Missouri from Gates of the Rocky Mts. on the start of a 1200-mile ultra-marathon to the Pacific. There were peregrines, eagles, ospreys and hundreds of pelicans and geese. I saw the largest herd of mule deer I have ever seen and got to within 50 feet of a pronghorn. We portaged Hauser Dam and paddled up to Canyon Ferry. Now, from the source of the Missouri, I will traverse the Jefferson and Beaverhead Rivers to Lemhi Pass and across the Rockies to the Pacific.



*Jerry Dixon*

Our first stop kayaking up the Missouri was Mann Gulch. We hiked a stunning ridge to the site of the 1949 conflagration. Like most jumpers, I knew well the story of Mann Gulch; the 100° F temps, fire crossing below the jumpers and exploding up the hill, the sprint for the ridge top and the death of so many brave young men. What I didn't expect was to be so moved by the scene of the monuments so close to the safety of the ridge.

Actually, I was moved to tears.

They were so close. Where each jumper fell is a cross (except the Jewish jumper, which is a headstone) and a recent marker. There are footpaths connecting the monuments. On each monument and cross are small stones left by family, jumpers and those who come to remember. Like the mani walls of Asia, visitors have placed a small stone on top as a sign of remembering. I placed one on each too.

Although August 5, 1949, the day of the Mann Gulch fire was my first birthday, I do not remember it well. But I remember the story my parents tell, for that is close to the day that I had the braces removed from my legs. I was born with my feet curving inward so that if my legs were together I could clap the soles of my feet. Had I been born in any

other century or most other countries I would have been unable even to walk my entire life. Fortunately I was born in the U.S.A., a child of the Greatest Generation, and the doctors who returned from WWII were into trying new procedures. Not only would they straighten my feet so that I could walk, they made it possible that I could one day run ultra-marathons and jump from DC-3s with the best wildland firefighters in the world.

So I as stood on the hallowed ground of Mann Gulch, I could see that in 55 years the timber had just started to return as the soil was sterilized from the blast furnace temperatures. One day the trees will return, but I imagine another generation of family and the jumper family will keep the paths open. We shall never forget those who fell here.

As an Alaskan who is fortunate to live in the midst of some of the wildest country left on earth, I was truly surprised to see so much wildlife in the Gates of the Mts. and Mann Gulch Section. There are several views from here where only the mountains are visible and a voyager from 200 years ago would recognize the country. 🙏



*Major Jim Durtschi (FBX '82) with students from Jerry Dixon's class at Elmendorf AFB in May 2002. Jerry says that Jim gave the group a great tour of the base and his squadron. (Courtesy Jerry Dixon)*

# Howard Smith, BLM Pilot

by Dan Tomich (Missoula '61)

When I was gathering our maps together for a planned float trip on the Noatak River in Alaska, I noticed that one topographic map was labeled Howard Pass. This brought back stories I had heard about Howard Smith, who was our BLM Grumman Goose pilot for the Anchorage District smokejumpers based at McGrath during the 1967 season. We didn't have many fires out of McGrath that season as most activity was north in the Fairbanks District, where our small crew spent most of the summer.

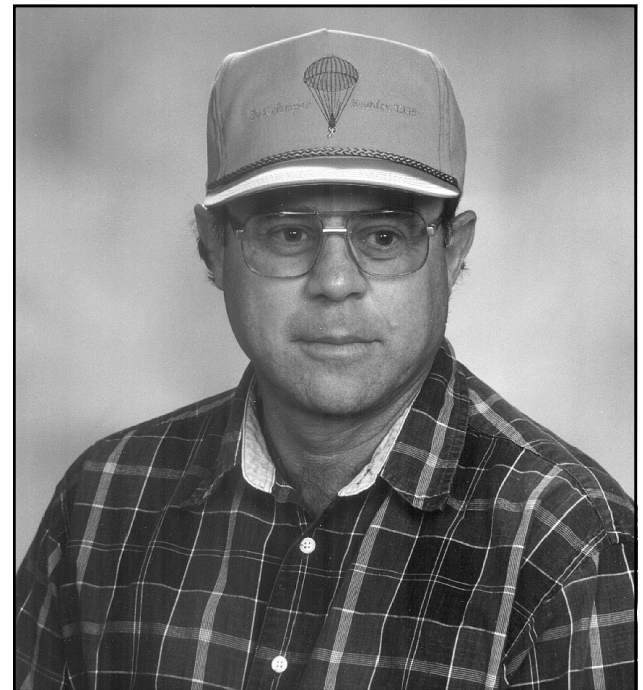
At McGrath, Howard pretty much kept to himself and tried to ignore most of the stories told about his flying exploits. Jerry Timmons told most of these stories as I recall. Howard was a very good pilot, but earned the nickname of "Howard the Coward" for some flying he did in the Brooks Range in support of survey crews mapping the region in the 1960s. According to these reliable sources, Howard was flying surveying crews and supplies from south of the Brooks Range to camps on the North Slope. A pass directly north of his flight path was the logical route to take, but this pass was high, had strong winds and was too dangerous for a loaded plane, according to Howard. So he would fly many hundreds of miles west, then north through a lower pass, and then back east on the North Slope to the survey camps. In honor of Howard, the surveyors named this low pass "Howard Pass," and near the pass they named some lakes "Smith Mountain Lakes."

Sure enough, as I looked at the Howard Pass map, there was a low pass in the Howard Hills at the divide of the Noatak and Colville River basins named Howard Pass. And just north of the pass, there are some lakes labeled Smith Mountain Lakes in the Etivluk River drainage of the Colville basin. There is also a mountain named Smith Mountain by the lakes. Some time later when we canoed the Noatak from the headwaters to Noatak Village, we floated by the mouth of the Aniuk River, which has its headwaters in Howard Pass. This sure brought back memories of flying out of McGrath with Howard in the Grumman Goose.

There was also the story of Howard making a hard landing on a lake and ripping a hole in the bottom of the Goose. I guess they say the lake surface was "flat"—no wind to generate waves for judging the elevation above the water. Apparently Howard misjudged the height above the water when he set it down and the impact tore up the plane's bottom. As the plane was sinking, Howard said it was no problem as he went out the top hatch and just had a short swim to shore. Only trouble was he had a native foreman along who couldn't swim. Howard jumped in and headed for shore, but the native guy jumped in on top of him and got a death grip on his neck so he couldn't breathe. Howard said it was a race to make shore before he passed out. He

didn't know natives couldn't swim!

Well, we had a grand trip floating the Noatak for a month and seeing the country again after all those years. We flew into the Noatak out of Bettles, which brought back another memory of when we landed there in 1967 with a jump plane. We were going to be on the ground for a short time as thunderstorms developed in the Brooks Range, and were told to stay close to the plane. Taking off on short notice, we were missing one jumper who decided to check out the native village nearby. Needless to say, it was some time before he showed up back at Fairbanks! 🦋



Dan Tomich

*Dan graduated from the University of Idaho in 1966 with a degree in civil engineering. He worked one season on the Boise National Forest and trained at Missoula in 1961. He jumped five seasons with his last year as a squad leader at Grangeville (1965). In 1967 he jumped with the BLM on the Anchorage District in Alaska before reporting for duty with the Navy.*

*Dan served as a Civil Engineer Corps officer at Guantanamo Naval Base, Cuba, and then in Vietnam with the Navy Seabees. He worked various engineering jobs with the BLM and Bureau of Reclamation, and took an early retirement from federal service after 27 years.*

*He now works for the Idaho Department of Water Resources as a staff engineer, and enjoys raft trips on the rivers in the West and in Alaska.*

# The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**  
(Associate)

ON MAY 16, THE Senate passed S. 459, the **Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act of 2003**, which was sponsored by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT). The House of Representatives is considering identical legislation, H.R. 919. The Hometown Heroes bill extends the current Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) program to public safety officers who die as a result of a heart attack or stroke within 24 hours of being on duty, responding to an emergency or **participating in a training exercise**. The House bill, which was written by Rep. Bob

## Please Tell Us When You Change Address

The postal service does **NOT** forward your copy of *Smokejumper* when you move or leave home for an extended time period. It is returned to us and the NSA is charged an additional first class postage fee. With 30-40 returns per mailing it gets expensive and takes a lot of time. Please let Chuck Sheley know if you have any change in your mailing address. Contact information is on page three.

Etheridge (D-NC), has more than 200 co-sponsors. When I heard about this bill, I immediately thought of David Liston and Billy Martin. Is there any interest in getting this bill amended to include them? It is only fair. Currently the Public Safety Officer benefit is about \$260,000.00. Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT) was a ground pounder in the 1950s. As I reported in the July issue, Senator Barbara Cubin (R-WY) is carrying legislation to include air tanker pilots and crews in the Public Safety Officer Benefit. This legislation is being made retroactive to 1976 when Congress originally passed the PSOB. Due to changes in congressional mail-handling procedures after the anthrax attack, it is encouraged that you fax your letter to your senator and representative. Contact information can be found at [www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org). Simply enter your zip code and select your representative.

The Administration's proposal to privatize jobs in the Forest Service now includes a plan to let the private sector compete for more than 10,000 jobs to meet Bush administration goals to encourage competition for federal work. At least half of the Forest Service's 40,000 employees perform tasks that duplicate work done in the private sector, such as computer operations, data collection and maintenance. The nine-page proposal, issued June 9 to regional administrators, is designed to meet President Bush's goal of opening to competition at least 15 percent of work designated as not inherently governmental by this fall. While there are no immediate plans to contract out fire management, officials spent more than \$1.5 billion putting out wildfires last year including 170 million dollars on the Biscuit fire debacle. According to an internal Forest Service memo dated June 9, "Since fire is over 25 percent of our budget and is interwoven into most of our pro-

grams, fire must eventually be studied." Thomas Mills, deputy chief of business operations for the Forest Service, stressed that the plan does not necessarily mean all 10,000 jobs will be privatized. "You go to the most competitive source that can do the work," he said. "If the government is the most competitive, then the government will continue doing it." If you want to know how well privatization will work, you only have to look as far as the underfunded air tanker program.

At last someone with a little common sense weighs in on the Healthy Forests Initiative. Michael Petersen of The Land Council, an environmental group based in Spokane, says, "We can't and shouldn't fireproof our forests, but we can work toward fireproofing our communities." Troop Emonds (CJ '66), is teaching urban interface dwellers around the world techniques for adapting to wildfire through his Escape Fire Academy, but he is getting little interest here in the United States. Are other cultures better at adapting to wildfire while we are still trying to harness it?

According to Portland TV station KATU, Evergreen Aviation of McMinnville, Oregon, is outfitting a 747 with tanks that will have a total retardant capacity of 24,000 gallons. Testing was to occur this past summer.

A well deserved tip of the hard hat to NSA webmaster Jon Robinson who has been posting news on the NSA Web site within hours, if not minutes of submission, seven days a week as well as contributing numerous news items himself. Tell him how much you appreciate his work. The NSA is lucky to have him. If you want breaking news from the wildland fire community, point your browser to [www.smokejumpers.com](http://www.smokejumpers.com). Contributions of news and information are encouraged and always welcome. 🔦

# SMOKEJUMPER MILESTONES

"Milestones" was created to serve as both a "Hall of Records" for smokejumping and as a way to encourage you to write in with related stories. If you know of an event that relates to any of the listed categories or want to nominate someone, please send it in. You will be helping to preserve our history.

## Multi-Generation Jumpers:

Father: <b>Edward Allen</b> (MYC '68)	Father: <b>Greg Beck</b> (MYC '78)
Daughter: <b>Shelly (Allen) Lewis</b> (GAC '97)	Son: <b>Jeremy Beck</b> (MSO '98)
Father: <b>James C. Baker</b> (NCSB '69)	Father: <b>Philip Brollier</b> (NIFC '71)
Son: <b>Patrick W. Baker</b> (NCSB '82)	Son: <b>Jacob Brollier</b> (RDD '95)
Son: <b>Steven R. Baker</b> (NCSB '88)	Son: <b>Justin Brollier</b> (NIFC '01)
Father: <b>Howard W. Betty</b> (NCSB '48)	Father: <b>J. Charles Blanton</b> (MYC '47)
Son: <b>Ned Betty</b> (Canada '76)	Son: <b>Richard J. Blanton</b> (MYC '74)
Father: <b>Albert N. Boucher</b> (CJ '49)	Father: <b>Don Colbert</b> (NCSB '53)
Son: <b>Donald N. Boucher</b> (NCSB '75)	Son: <b>Dave Colbert</b> (NCSB '88)
Father: <b>Alan J. Dunton</b> (FBX '67)	Father: <b>Mark Gibbons</b> (RAC '87)
Daughter: <b>Melanie L. Dunton</b> (MYC '99)	Son: <b>Justin Gibbons</b> (RAC '03)
Father: <b>Tom H. Graves</b> (NCSB '49)	Father: <b>George P. Honey</b> (NCSB '40)
Son: <b>Dave C. Graves</b> (NCSB '86)	Son: <b>Raymond Honey</b> (NCSB '55)
Father: <b>Glen A. Johnshoy</b> (MSO '67)	Father: <b>Wayne H. Kaaen</b> (MYC '68)
Son: <b>Ron E. Johnshoy</b> (NIFC '88)	Daughter: <b>Karin A. Kaaen</b> (MYC '99)
Father: <b>Francis B. Lufkin</b> (NCSB '39)	Father: <b>Glenn H. Smith</b> (NCSB '40)
Son: <b>Larry C. Lufkin</b> (CJ '63)	Son: <b>Benjamin D. Smith</b> (MSO '64)
Son: <b>Ronald F. Lufkin</b> (CJ '60)	Son: <b>Mike R. Smith</b> (MSO '69)
Father: <b>Michael M. Marcuson</b> (NCSB '64)	Father: <b>Terry McCabe</b> (NCSB '58)
Son: <b>Michael J. Marcuson</b> (Yukon '90)	Son: <b>Patrick McCabe</b> (NCSB '91)
Father: <b>William E. Selby</b> (NCSB '61)	Father: <b>Wayne Webb</b> (MYC '46)
Son: <b>Bill R. Selby</b> (RAC '91)	Son: <b>Randall A. Webb</b> (MYC '77)
Father: <b>Robert G. Cramer</b> (MSO '46)	Father: <b>Harold J. Weinmann</b> (NCSB '47)
Son: <b>John T. Cramer</b> (MYC '63)	Son: <b>William A. Furman</b> (NCSB '62)
Son: <b>Tom Cramer</b> (GAC '97)	
Son: <b>Jeff Cramer</b> (FBX '02)	

Please send your info and marks to: [pegmark@juno.com](mailto:pegmark@juno.com) or mail: Mark Corbet, 1740 SE Ochoco Way, Redmond, OR 97756.

## MEMBER PROFILE

### ARTHUR A. HENDERSON (MISSOULA '50)

ART HENDERSON SERVED four years with the Marines in the South Pacific during WWII and was wounded twice. He later graduated with a bachelor of science degree in forestry from the University of Minnesota in June 1952.

Henderson worked as a fire lookout on Slate Point Lookout in Nez Perce National Forest, going on to

serve with the Gila, Bitterroot and Coeur d'Alene national forests in various positions.

He rookied in Missoula and was stationed at Nine Mile Camp (site of the old barracks for the Civilian Conservation Corps), where he made haystacks for the strings of mules kept there for the forest service. He jumped out of Ford Tri-Motors and Travelairs.

Art transferred into the National Park Service and was the first ranger at Big Bend National Park. He worked for the Blue Ridge Parkway and later became a park naturalist, serving in this capacity at Theodore Roosevelt National Park, as well as at Capital Parks in Washington, D.C.

Art is now retired in Brookwood, Alabama. 🌲

# Big Ernie

by Charlie Palmer (Missoula '95)

**B**ig Ernie gets around. In fact, he seems omnipresent. While we in the smokejumping community have known about Big Ernie for a while, it seems the guy's a familiar presence in other circles as well.

For those near Sharon, Pennsylvania, for example, Big Ernie is Ernie Somerset, a 330-plus-pound offensive tackle who played on the Farrell High School football team in 1996.

If you belong to the Ocala Jeep Club (Ocala, Fla.), Big Ernie is Ernie Prevedel, one of the group's more colorful members and a man evidently prone to wrong turns. According to the group's Web site, Big Ernie recently steered members off course during a camping excursion, leading them on "a meandering route to the bombing range perimeter road" and exposing them to "some pretty tight

quarters." I must admit that I myself have cursed Big Ernie a time or two.

For those familiar with dirt-track racing around Gastonia, N.C., Big Ernie is race promoter Ernie Elkins. A recent article in the *Gaston Gazette* reports that Big Ernie's "flamboyant big events helped put Cherokee Speedway at the top of the area dirt-track scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s." After taking a year off, Big Ernie assumed the reins at Thunder Valley Speedway for the 2002 racing season.

Moviegoers may recognize Big Ernie as one of the main characters in the 1996 movie *Kingpin*. Played by Bill Murray, Big Ernie is the arch-nemesis of the movie's downtrodden hero, Roy Munson (Woody Harrelson). In an online review, film critic James Berardinelli gives the flick one and a half stars out of four. By Berardinelli's account, "this movie is a complete and utter waste of time." I guess I found *Kingpin* to be a little more entertaining than he did.

Around Austin, Texas, Big Ernie has formed his own musical group. Simply called Big Ernie's Barn Dance Band, the group features "Appalachian tunes and old-time country singing." I did not know that the Big E. was musically inclined, but then again there's a lot about Big Ernie I don't know.

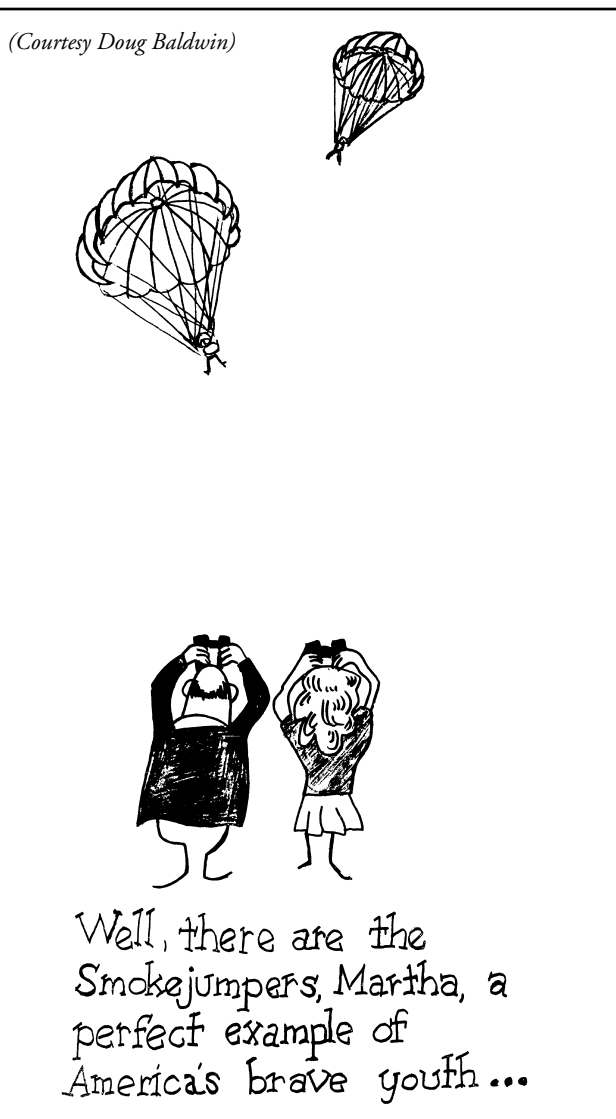
People from as far away as Germany are familiar with Big Ernie, too. German singer Arnie Treffers, who recorded under the name of Long Tall Ernie, also cut a few tunes as Big Ernie. Who can forget such favorite lyrics as "O Ome Louis/ In de sloppen en de stegen" and "Rel del wie Trekt er aan de bel"?

To golf enthusiasts, Big Ernie is Ernie Els, a rather famous golfer from South Africa. In 2002, Els accumulated almost \$3.3 million in earnings, punctuated by a British Open victory in July. Three-point-three million clams. That's a lot of overtime!

Fans of professional football might know Big Ernie Ladd. A six-foot-nine, 315-pound behemoth out of Grambling University, this Big Ernie played for several years in both the American Football League and the National Football League, finishing his career with the Kansas City Chiefs in 1968. In 1965, at a charity pancake-eating contest, he added to his fame when he ate 124 pancakes, topped with six containers of syrup. Amazingly, he didn't win, but this shouldn't diminish his legend, as he was competing against two-man teams. He eventually quit football to pursue a career as a professional wrestler, competing against the likes of Andre the Giant, Bruno Sammartino and Dusty Rhodes.



Charley Palmer



Teaming up with other wrestlers such as Bruiser Brody and Baron von Raschke, Big Ernie helped form some of the most feared tag teams in wrestling history and was elected to the World Wrestling Federation Hall of Fame in 1995. One of his favorite moves was the “boot stomp,” an effective-enough maneuver considering his size-22 shoe.

Apparently, the Big E. also possesses some entrepreneurial skills: He operates Big Ernie’s Fabulous ’50s restaurant in Wildwood, N.J. In a recent review of the place, one diner gave the place five stars out of five, noting that “the Fonz eats here ... cool.” And I thought he hung out only with Richie, Patsy and Ralph Malph at Arnold’s Diner!

Interestingly enough, some people regard Big Ernie as non-human. Up in Alaska, he’s “the king of anadromous North American fish.” In other words: He’s a salmon. At least it says so at [www.alaskabigernie.homestead.com](http://www.alaskabigernie.homestead.com), which reports:

“Big Ernie likes to travel and do things few other salmon would think of doing. Never mind could! Sometimes we think that Big Ernie acts a little too much like a human. But, all that aside, Big Ernie likes to travel. So, there will be lots of pictures of places Big Ernie has been and people she has seen. Did you notice that we said ‘she’[?] That is because she is a female. Her real name is Ernice, but she prefers to be called Big Ernie.”

Those living in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula might also know of Big Ernie. Da Tourist Trap and Museum, located west of Ishpeming on U.S. 41, is known as the “ultimate Yooperland traveler’s mecca.” Here, “Big Ernie” is reportedly the largest working rifle in the world. According to folks in the know, “it really shoots, folks.” Situated atop a large flatbed truck, Big Ernie is tough to miss, considering that it’s parked beside “Big Gus,” which the *Guinness Book of World Records* lists as the world’s largest running chain saw.

And to some Canadians, Big Ernie is the weather god for Alberta. Years ago, a hunting guide, angry that rain was spoiling his hunt, supposedly shouted to the heavens, “Big Ernie, turn off the goddamn faucet!” As Canadian lore tells it, Big Ernie hangs out with a guy named Murph, who is responsible when anything goes wrong. I wonder if this has anything to do with Murphy’s Law.

We in the wildland fire-suppression community, however, know Big Ernie as neither fish nor gun, nor restaurateur nor wrestler, nor jeoper nor golfer. He represents the god of fire. When the sky is filled with lightning and jagged bolts reach from the heavens to the earth, one simply says, “Big Ernie is pissed!” If a firefighter should happen to get too drunk during an evening’s festivities, he tells his mates, “I sacrificed to Big Ernie last night.” (In fact, if a long stretch of time passes during the summer with no fire activity, many will make such a sacrifice in hopes that the gesture will bring a fire bust.) And when the overtime logbook is bulging with hours and fires, one simply notes, “Big Ernie has been kind.”

If you’re like me, you may wonder just who is this Big Ernie, and how did he etch his way into the lore of wildland firefighting? In his book *Jumping Fire*, smokejumper Murry Taylor defines Big Ernie as “a deity with a rather twisted

sense of humor, justice and fair play.” In his role as fire god, the Big E. “determines good and bad deals for jumpers,” writes Taylor. Therefore, Big Ernie can either take care of you or put you in your place, depending on his mood.

Okay, I can understand why we firefighters might look to a “spiritual” being in order to understand our world better. And why *not* one with a mischievous streak? That just makes things a little more interesting and better fits our personalities. But “Big Ernie”? Where exactly did such a name come from? That question appears to remain unanswered.

According to legendary smokejumper and oral historian **Rod Dow** (MYC ’68), however, Big Ernie can, to some extent, be traced back to the McCall smokejumper base and the late 1960s or early 1970s. At that time, Dow says, some of the jumpers there began paying tribute to Rakashi, a Mediterranean god noted for his ability to have a good time, as well as for his somewhat warped sense of justice. Somewhere along the line, according to Dow, the name “Rakashi” metamorphosed into “Big Ernie.”

So far, I’ve been unable to find out how and when this change took place. Despite the fact that he’s become a popular figure among smokejumpers and other wildland firefighters, the origins of Big Ernie remain mysterious. If you have any information on this topic, please get in touch with me or write to *Smokejumper* magazine. Perhaps through our membership we can learn more about our community’s particular incarnation of Big Ernie. ☘

You can contact Charlie Palmer at: [msocharlie@earthlink.net](mailto:msocharlie@earthlink.net)







# Items from the Fire Pack



## Way Back

The longest pack out was about forty miles. Pack string and cross country covered 25 miles; a couple boat rides got us the rest of the way.

**Bill Moody** (North Cascades '57)

## We Were Discreet

We would kind of sneak out of camp and head down to the Nine Mile House to play pool and have a couple beers. It was handled discreetly. We didn't want Cooley or anybody to think we were beer drinkers. There was never any trouble or anything like that. Guys dressed in Levis and logging boots—there's no tourist gonna take them on.

**Chuck Pickard** (Missoula '48)

## Alaska Timber

I didn't know what to expect on my first fire jump. They jumped four, right into the trees, and I thought they should at least look for a hole in the trees. I didn't realize the size of the trees. I got on the ground and the tallest trees were about 12 feet high.

**Wendy Kamm** (Missoula '82)

## Going The Extra Mile(s)

I'm all excited today! My name was on the list chosen to be smokejumpers. It has taken me a year to get this close. I was 300 miles from camp when my transfer came through. Mr. Haynes felt responsible for me and didn't want me to miss the train for Montana, so he drove all the way out and back to get me—600 miles on his day off just to make sure I got to the train.

**George Robinson** (Missoula '44)

## Remembered Dr. Little

Abe trained at Nine Mile in the second group. Altogether he had 15 jumps, seven were on fires and there was one rescue jump. On the rescue jump, they walked two miles cross-country and seven miles on the trail.

Dr. Amos Little was on the rescue jump. Many years later I read an article about Dr. Little in the *Readers Digest* and Abe remembered him from that jump.

**Lelia Schlabach, wife of Abe Schlabach** (Missoula '45)

## Rattlesnakes Everywhere

Carl Roselli and I jumped a fire about 4,000 feet above the Snake River in Hell's Canyon. When I landed, the first thing I hear is a rattlesnake. Once I get untangled and squared away we find out they are all over the place.

**Max Graves** (McCall '47)

## Big Sky Is Beautiful!

In the spring of 1943 we received word that the Forest Service would take a few C.O.'s into their smokejumping program located in the "far-away" land of Montana. We arrived on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1943. I had never seen mountains before and recall thinking that Missoula was the prettiest city that I had ever seen. Even the "rich people" in Oklahoma didn't have anything like this.

**Warren Shaw** (Missoula '43)

## Comradery of Having Been a Smokejumper

When I started with the USFS in fire suppression, I was 149 pounds and stood six feet tall. I had to stand twice to cast a shadow. I came out at the end of the summer at 175 pounds and haven't fluctuated since. My physical conditioning and whole attitude toward work and life in general were affected. I think that the values and the virtues and the character developed by the sheer experience and comradery of having been a smokejumper transcends other superficial considerations.

**Bruce Jackson** (Redmond '69)

## Determined to Make It

When I got to Nine Mile, I was

overweight since I had been working in the cafeteria. When we ran or did calisthenics, I stayed with the group at the tail end. Mr. Cochran called me into his office and said that it looked like I would need another week of training since I had such a hard time doing my work. I begged him for one more chance and he said he would see what Al Cramer (my trainer) would say. The next day I was at the head of the group and found it no harder to run there. I climbed the trees with speed because I was so determined. With that determination I passed the test and jumped Monday morning.

**Harold Toews** (Missoula '44)

## Jump the Haystack

On my first jump they said I could go whenever I was ready. Nobody was spotting. We had one particular haystack that I'd heard them talking about. That's the place to get out—so I got out over that haystack.

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

## Bull Sessions Educational

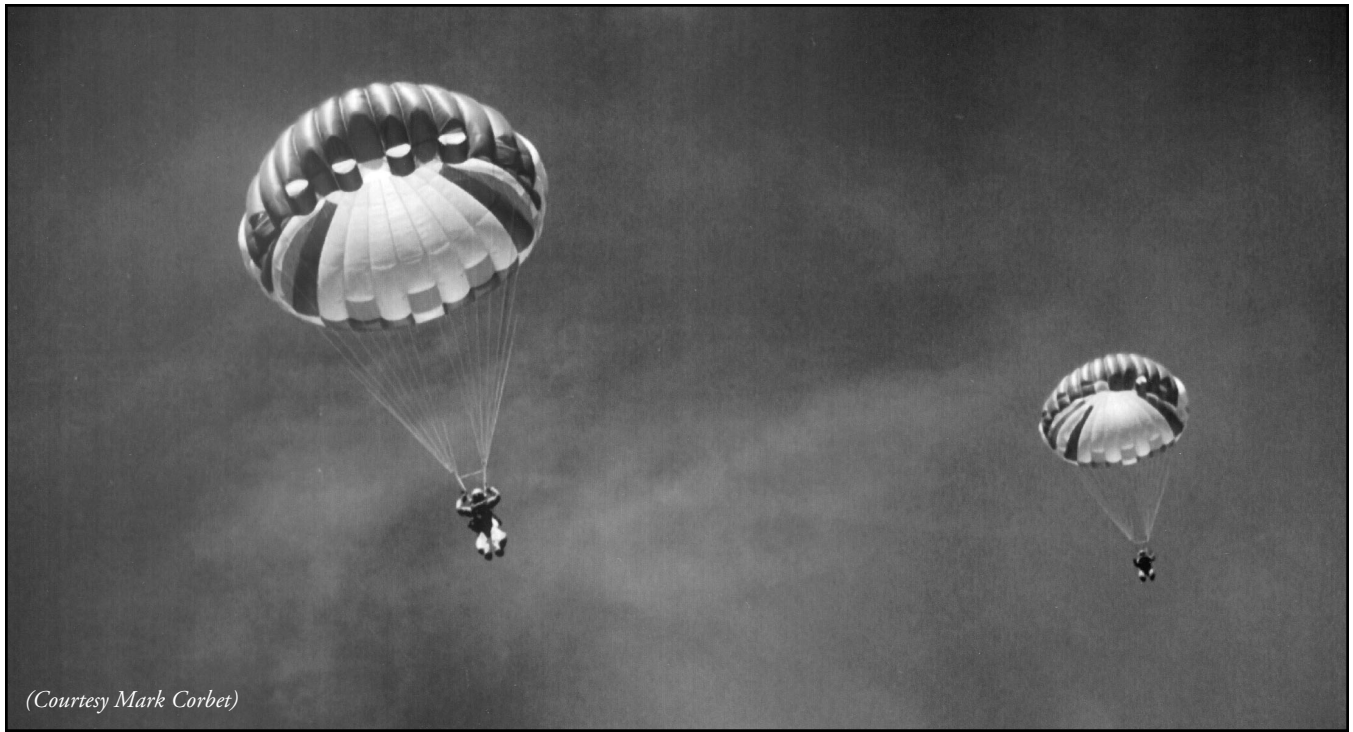
My CPS experience was the watershed in my life. The "bull sessions" in the evenings were the most interesting and educational part of the camp life. For it was here that a country boy had the opportunity to listen and participate in discussions with college men and professors on a variety of subjects.

**William Webber** (Missoula '44)

## Fire Blow-Up

About 1:00 P.M. the fire crowned on the four of us and was jumping about 50 yards at a time. We buried our parachutes and jump gear and headed for a nearby stream, but fortunately the wind changed and the fire came back to the ground. We went back to our jobs and were there for several days before being relieved by ground crews.

**Merlo Zimmerman** (McCall '44)



*(Courtesy Mark Corbet)*

### **Blessed Is the Man**

When asked to write a bit of personal history, I remember back to my days sitting in Fairview High School and reading a quote: “Blessed is the man, who having nothing to say, abstaineth from giving wordy evidence of it.”

**Norman Zook** (Missoula '45)

### **Pioneers in TV Research**

How fortunate I was to be given the opportunity to join the smokejumpers. I qualified and experienced a truly wonderful summer including my introduction to the Slavic Stomp. In 1949 I invented a new Television Program Rating Service that was later to merge into the American Research Bureau. It was exciting to be a pioneer in the vast enterprise which television has become.

**Joe Coffin** (Missoula '45)

### **Started the Base at Cave Junction**

Ten of us started the first smoke-jumper base in Oregon. **Ray Hudson** (CJ '43) was our architect and designed both the loft and hanger that we built out of old CCC barracks parts. During the first season, we lost **Winton Stuckey** (CJ '43) due to a

crushed vertebrae caused by the opening shock from his Eagle chute. Smokejumping had to be a high point in a farmer's life. The nature of the hard work seemed to attract some very worthwhile people with whom I'm always able to relate. Although there seems to be no two people who think alike, we found it interesting to consider and respect all points of view.

**Kenneth Diller** (Cave Junction '43)

### **How High Do You Bounce?**

We came into Missoula on the Northern Pacific Railroad early one April morning and were met at the station by **Earl Cooley** (MSO '40) and **Ralph Hand**. Earl took us to Seeley Lake and started us on a brush-cutting project. I remember asking Earl, “About how high do you bounce when you hit the ground?” Earl got a good laugh out of that and it seemed to break the ice.

**Dale Entwistle** (Missoula '43)

### **They Needed One More Recruit—Me!**

Early in 1944, I volunteered for the smokejumpers and was crushed when they accepted my friend, **Murray Braden** (MSO '44), but not me. I was just about to volunteer for the Malaria

Experiment when word arrived that the Forest Service realized what a great mistake they had made, and that they would train one more—me!

**Dick Flaharty** (Missoula '44)

### **We Missed a Friend**

As far as affecting the crew, Lester's (**Lycklama**) death had nothing to do with the jumping as far as that goes. I think the whole crew went to his funeral and we missed him. He was a good fellow, had gone through the training with us and was one of us. We missed him like we'd miss any friend.

**Wayne Webb** (McCall '46)

### **First Rescue Jump**

On July 15, 1940, **Chet Derry** (MSO '40) made the first rescue jump in the Moose Creek District where the pilot was killed and the cargo dropper was injured. There was a pack string that had been sent in earlier in the day and they set up camp near the crash scene that night and brought out the pilot and cargo dropper the next day. That accident prompted Dr. **Leo Martin** to take jump training to be used as a jumping doctor on rescue missions. He was later killed in an airplane crash at Walla Walla, Wash., on October 25, 1942.

**Earl Cooley** (Missoula '40) 🦋

# Ted Burgon: A Life Well Lived

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

**T**he Tasman is sea between New Zealand and Australia. Towering waves, each as high as a five-story building, crash down on the deck of the world-class 72-foot racing yacht, the *Graybeard*. The crew hurries to secure the rigging, knowing that if they are tossed overboard, they will die. The 100 mph hurricane-force winds shriek through the rigging, making a sound that, coupled with the wind, rakes the ears.

This is not a place where most people would venture, but for one sailor it is just another adventure. Ted Burgon lived a full life—of adventure, teaching and service to country and community. He enjoyed a close family and left us far too soon—but not on the Tasman Sea. It would be six days in typhoon-force winds before landfall on this crossing some 30 years ago, but he endured, even thrived, just as he did in the smokejumpers and the Marines.

I thought of Ted recently when I was sailing the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean, in a gentle breeze and always in sight of land. It was difficult to imagine 50-foot waves and 100-mph winds—let alone enduring them for six days. But Ted's entire life reads like an adventure story.

Ted Burgon was raised in Pocatello, Idaho. He was born July 16, 1931, to Lillian and Leon Burgon, the descendent of pioneer roots that migrated west in 1852. He spent his youth where the Portneuf River flows into the Snake. Ted graduated from Pocatello High School in 1949. He worked at Zions and West Yellowstone before entering college. During college, he worked as a smokejumper in Idaho City. Then it was the Marines and a tour of duty in Korea during the conflict there. Like so many jumpers, Ted saw service not only jumping from DC-3s across the West, but also as a captain in the Marines securing freedom for the South Koreans.

“He was also a member of the sheriff's air squadron and performed the role of paramedic, jumping on one plane crash. He [was] a former tank officer in the [Marines] during the Korean War, attaining the rank of captain. [He later served] as CO for Headquarters Company, Idaho National Guard. After the Marines, he worked with his father for several years in the family optical business in Pocatello. After receiving his teaching degree in 1965 from Idaho State University, he became an educator.”

“He taught one year in Pocatello (1965–66), then moved to Ono, Calif., for a year, and then moved to French Gulch for a year. He was a teaching principal at both schools, teaching grades 4–8 together. Ted and Nancy moved to Point Reyes, north of San Francisco, in 1969. Nancy had gone to Japan to teach. Ted and Nancy were married in July of 1970. In December, the family moved to Australia.”

The above quote is from a bio Ted wrote shortly before he left for his last teaching assignment at age 71 in Indone-

sia. When many people their age were looking for retirement homes, Ted and Nancy were still taking teaching assignments in the far corners of the world. Together, they worked in eight countries: Germany, Australia, Russia, Indonesia (twice), Saudi Arabia (twice), China, South Africa and Peru. For five decades, Ted was a teacher, principal, business manager, superintendent and consultant for schools around the world.

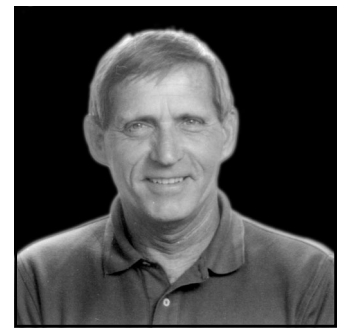
One of the world's great sailing races takes place between Sydney, Australia, and Hobart, Tasmania. Several years ago, this competition took the lives of many crew members in a storm. It was in 1972 that Ted participated in the race as a member of the 16-man crew on the *Graybeard*.

In 1975, he set sail with a friend on a 36-foot sloop to the South Pacific, where they traveled for the better part of a year. On one leg of the trip, they did not see land for 27 days. They visited five of the Society Islands (including Tahiti and Bora Bora), four of the six islands in the Marquesan Group and several in the Tuamotus.

When Ted and Nancy were teaching in Indonesia, on the Island of Sumatra, they lived on the beach along the Straits of Malacca with the jungle at their back. Ted took this opportunity to explore the jungle with two locals and a friend from Scotland almost every weekend. He photographed many animals, including elephants. Ted still found time to sail competitively in the Straits of Malacca.

During the 1991 Gulf War, Ted was in charge of security for the Saudi Arabia International School in Riyadh, as well as for the two housing compounds the teachers occupied. He and Nancy took cookies, magazines and conversation to American troops stationed south of the Kuwaiti border. At night, they watched Scud missiles entering the airspace above Riyadh. Ted, the Marine and smokejumper, took much interest in watching the Iraqi missiles being blown out of the sky by Patriot missiles.

Ted wrote a vivid article about living in Moscow, where from 1992 to 1995 he worked at the Anglo-American School, which served the U.S. Embassy in Russia. Ted told NSA members a gripping account of his eyewitness experience of the shelling of the Russian Parliament building and the Moscow city hall. Here was a jumper and combat-tested veteran, who helped secure the freedom of South Korea, documenting first-hand the events that would change the face of communist Russia forever!



Ted Burgon



# Blast from the Past

## Duster Crashes; Pilot Not Hurt

Tracy area's second crash of an airplane into water within two days turned out on a happier note Saturday night when a crop duster pilot swam

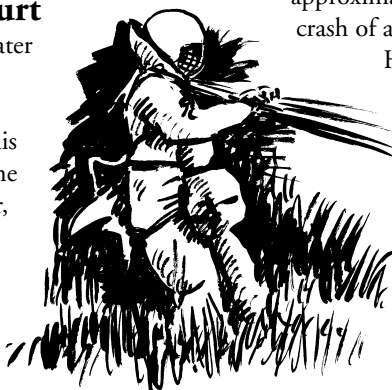


Gene Hamner Nov. 1971 in Laos (Courtesy of Gene Hamner)

away from his downed plane in Old River, north of Tracy (CA).

Gene Hamner (MSO '67), a pilot of Midway Aerial Applicators, suffered only a bump on his elbow after his plane struck a high-tension power line and spun into the water.

Hamner's crash at



approximately 11:15 P.M. followed by two days the fatal crash of another duster plane Thursday afternoon.

Hamner's plane kept afloat in the river long enough for the pilot to climb out and swim to shore.

Hamner had just completed his spraying operation at a field west of the crash scene. The pilot told deputies he remembers seeing power lines in front of him and pulling up just before the crash. The plane, a low-wing Cessna 188, clipped a 60,000-volt power line just south of a 180-foot tower on an island between Old River and Salmon Slough.

The aircraft floated atop the water long enough for Hamner to pop open the cockpit, cut off his boots with a knife, climb out and jump into the water. The nighttime dusting was scheduled to avoid wind drift of the pesticide and the hot weather of the day. The pilot, who flew six years in the Air Force, joined Midway a year and a half ago.

*Tracy Press*, San Joaquin County, Calif., August 30, 1976. 🐼

Ted loved scuba diving, photography (including underwater), sailing, biking, hiking, reading, writing articles and traveling. He was proud of his memberships in Lions International, the International American Chamber of Commerce, Adopt-A-Highway and the Deschutes County Traffic Safety Committee. It was no surprise to discover that this teacher and humanitarian had donated in excess of 120 pints of blood during the course of his long and distinguished career.

Ted is survived by his wife Nancy of Sunriver, Oregon; his son Mark (and wife Patty) of Redding, Calif.; grandchildren Jessica and Jacob (and wife Autumn) and their children, Elliott, Lisette and Sebastian; his son Dirk (and wife Diana) of Chico, Calif.; and his son Joseph and brother Gary (and wife Katherine) of Nowra, NSW, Australia.

For his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, Nancy brought Ted a surprise. It was a parachute jump. This is an enduring love story that a spouse would recognize what it means to a jumper for a chance to stand in the door and once again feel the wind in his face. Ted made that jump.

It is perhaps ironic that I am writing Ted's bio, as we met via e-mail when he was working on my jumper bio. When I sent it to him, he responded with questions, and we began a long correspondence. There were so many aspects of our lives that were similar, we hit it off. I learned about Del Catlin as a young jumper and about retired biology professors I knew in graduate school. Ted had spent time in the field studying pronghorn antelope in the Lost River Range

of Idaho. His stories were so interesting, I kept all of his e-mails.

Both of us had family roots going back to Utah in the 1850s, and I was fascinated with his sailing adventures. But it was his teaching resume that staggered me. Ted had taught in 8 different countries and visited 50. As a teacher, I had been in only two districts in Alaska, so I was enthralled with his list of foreign schools.

Ted was killed and Nancy severely injured in an attack in Indonesia, where he was teaching. We still do not know if it was paramilitaries or the Indonesian military that did the shooting. He died in the line of duty, not as a smokejumper or a Marine, but as a teacher. America needs to find out who was responsible for this attack and punish the perpetrators just as we would those who attacked Americans on our soil.

Smokejumpers have been an important part of the effort to find out what happened, and it is our duty to stay with the investigation until all the facts are known.

We would do well to live a life as full as Ted Burgon's, and we'd be lucky to have as loving and caring a family that will not rest until they have answers, as well as friends and an organization such as NSA that will help pursue the truth.

The last time we corresponded, I sent him a note on his Daniel Pearl story. Ted, who had lived in so many countries around the world, knew full well the dangers of teaching in remote areas. Yet he chose to continue to teach the young and bring his expertise to remote corners of the globe. The world is a better place because of Ted Burgon. 🐼

# Remembering a Couple of Pals

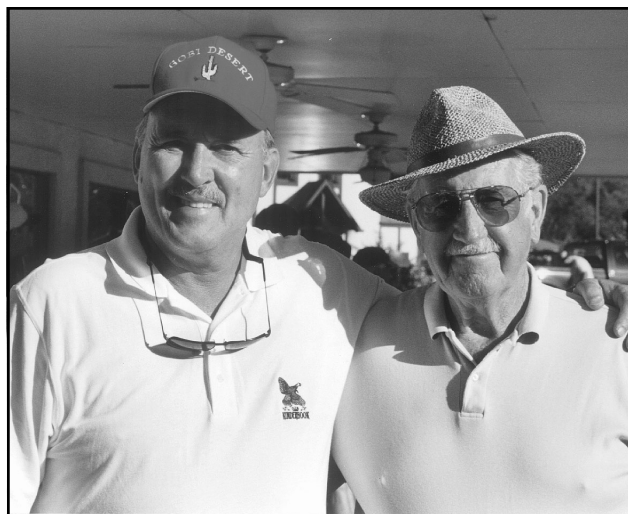
by Ron Thoreson (Cave Junction '60)

At the CJ reunion last June there was a roll call of CJ jumpers no longer with us, at which point we were asked to share our memories of those we knew. Two of those were **Gid Newton** (CJ '55) and **Benny Tucker** (CJ '59). Beyond Benny's softball pitching ability, no one shared any memories. I expected others to come forth and lacked the composure to do so myself at the time, but I would have you know something of my old pals.

Gid was a most unusual guy. Gentle, soft-spoken, sweet—you wondered how he got involved with the rest of us. He was special to Jim and Emily Allen. He was the only jumper I knew whom they trusted to baby-sit their precious daughters. Most jumpers would teach your children to drink beer, and the more creative would teach them to make beer, but not Gid. He was responsible, which led to one of my most cherished practical jokes.

Jumpers strongly believed that no virtue should go unpunished, and so it was with Gid. One hot summer evening after work, the rest of us were headed to the Chit Chat for beer. Gid declined to join us because he was on top of the jump list and wanted to be sober and prepared. When we got back from closing the tavern, he was sleeping soundly. We reset his clock to 5 A.M.; got half dressed in our work clothes, and then roused him. We convinced him we had tried unsuccessfully to wake him earlier and told him we were to fly to McCall at first light to back them up on a big bust. He leaped out of bed, quickly passed us all in getting dressed, and tore out for the landing, at which point we got undressed and went to bed!

Gid was one of many jumpers who joined Air America at the start of the Vietnam war. He was killed in an airdrop out of Vientiane, Laos, in 1963. His name, along with about 150 others, is on a plaque at the University of Texas commemorating those who gave their lives in that cause without benefit



Ron Thoreson & Jim Allen (NSA file)

of uniform. They cannot be added to the Vietnam War Memorial. I would like to get his name, and the name of the other Air America employees, onto the Memorial. I find it ironic that this most responsible and honorable of men would now be found unfit to be remembered fully and publicly.

And on the lighter side, there was my friend Benny. Someone at the reunion remembered Benny's diminutive stature and compared him to the fabled "Mouse," memorialized in this publication by his friend Troop. Compared to Mouse, Benny was a giant of a man at about 5 foot 5 inches. He did have a wicked softball pitch, that's true. But he also had a wicked sense of humor and inventive wit. He knew that at his size, that could get him hurt, so he used guys like me at times.

Benny thought up an ingenious trick to pull on **Dick Groom** (CJ '59). Dick was a big guy given to mischief himself, although he preferred perpetrating it to being victimized. He was a macho dude who was overly equipped with testosterone and never backed down from a challenge. Clearly a virtue to be exploited, in Benny's mind.

Benny had a 1954 Mercury that we used to call a hardtop convertible, which he had rigged up with glass pack mufflers. It could get very loud. We invited Dick to go cruising in Grants Pass one summer evening, knowing he would insist on sitting on the outside passenger side, with me in the middle. As we cruised by a market with a display of watermelons on a rack in the parking lot, Benny suggested that we lift one of them, to which Dick agreed. When we pulled in, Benny parked about 20–30 feet away from the rack. Dick was uneasy about this distance but couldn't put himself to snivel or back down. He jumped out, ran over and picked up the biggest melon in the rack, and started laboring back to the car. At this point Benny revved the Mercury up to the maximum decibels and peeled out of the lot, drawing the owner and several customers out to see what all the racket was. There was Dick, standing with his melon looking wistfully after us, just knowing that we were going to stop and rescue him at any moment. He was wrong about that. When he realized it, he ran through the crowd, put the melon back on the rack, fought his way free from them, and ran down the street.

We circled Dick for some time, inquiring as to his state of mind and whether he intended to do violence to us. At first he just snarled, "No, I ain't mad. Stop." We said we didn't like the tone of his voice and continued to circle him until he started laughing and had obviously forgiven us. That was classic Benny Tucker. He had taken me along in case Dick didn't recover his sense of humor sufficiently. He was a little survivor, until stricken down with a cerebral hemorrhage.

These are some of the memories of my two friends. I regret that I lacked the composure to express them at the time of our reunion. They are friends who are very much alive and dear to me in my memory. 🙏



# Smokejumpers.com: NSA on the Web



by **Jon Robinson**  
WEBMASTER

FROM ROGER SAVAGE, who gave the NSA its initial Web presence, to Dan McComb who carried it into the realm of professional development, to Chuck Sheley who stands behind the presence today, the NSA has been fortunate to have those aboard who recognize the power and benefit offered the organization by the World Wide Web.

Now we all have the opportunity to further their initial vision, and I'm very excited about the privilege of being at the center of this next chapter.

For those who have visited <http://www.smokejumpers.com> before, you have surely noted that we have recently gone through quite an overhaul. Our goals for this most recent evolution included using state of the art technology insuring quick download times and vitality in the years to come, creating an easily maintainable admin tool and displaying the large quantity of diverse information we have in a clear navigation structure. All this while maintaining and adding to the ability of the membership to easily contribute to the content and access the primary member information.

We also wanted to bring the majority of functionality forward from the

former site, including selected articles from *Smokejumper* magazine, history, in memoriam, etc. and, of course, the jump list, a core function of the organization itself.

We got a hectic start when our old Web store providers further demonstrated their reliability (or lack thereof) by going boots up without so much as a heads up. We had planned to replace them in time as I was already convinced we could do better for one of the cornerstones of the project, but certainly not smack dab in the middle of the development of the new Web site.

We survived that little hang-up by burning the midnight oil and moving the development of some other aspects of the new site back. Thankfully Dan, who did the basic design, has top-notch skills and he and I have worked together a good deal. This coupled with the fact that I had a good idea where we wanted to go lead to a very productive design phase.

The development was probably as hard as I've worked on a web project, but that hard work in my opinion has born fruit both for the organization and myself. Although there are loose ends that very much will need attention, I'm quite pleased and proud with the results and hope you will be too!

We launched at the end of March and in our first three months, we are averaging over 270 visits a day with the store, news and forum being the most popular areas.

The new and improved store is up and running at <http://www.smokejumpers.com/store/index.php>. After some fine-tuning on the run, it is humming along and paying dividends at about a purchase a day. Drop in and see the great smokejumping stuff we have available for you, and tell the bros!

The news feature at <http://www.smokejumpers.com/news/news.php> has been an area where we have tried to add relevance to the site

by keeping the content fresh. The original concept of user submitted news, opinion and obituaries is still in place.

In fact, we are very much looking for people like Chris Sorensen (who has contributed mightily), who are interested in submitting items about the NSA, smokejumping and wildland fire fighting in general. Why not visit [http://www.smokejumpers.com/news/submit\\_story.php](http://www.smokejumpers.com/news/submit_story.php) and contribute to the vitality of our new site.

Another primary feature that we are introducing to our viewership is a threaded discussion forum. This greatly enhances our abilities to carry on discussions on issues in smokejumping and the NSA. It extends the communication functionality that had previously been served by the guestbook.

We are averaging well over a post and a half a day so far, and it is my hope that this becomes a vital portal for communication on important topics within the profession. Be sure to visit <http://www.smokejumpers.com/forums/index.php> and start or add to a thread on an issue of import to you.

Another very popular feature of the previous site that we have just recently upgraded and launched is the image gallery at [http://www.smokejumpers.com/image\\_gallery/index.php](http://www.smokejumpers.com/image_gallery/index.php). Although we couldn't address this right out of the box, this has been the top search request on the site since launch and has been the final piece of the foundational structure of the site.

Many people including Mike McMillan (FBX '96) and Larry Lufkin (CJ '63) have already kindly added their knowledge and talent to this process with captions, and in Mike's case, a very substantial gift of talent in the form of his outstanding photography. His album alone is worth the visit and is producing over 10 visits a day already. Be sure to follow the links to his own site to see

more of his quality work.

With the completion of the image gallery, we can now focus on polishing and enhancing as well as the day-to-day content freshening and management that will keep the site vital. Of course in the near future we also have our caches full with a great deal of tidying up as we really double-timed it to get this baby up and run-

ning. Surely other projects will present themselves as well, but that will all come in time.

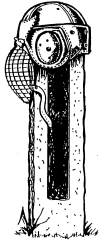
The main ingredient in the sites success, both now and in the future, is *you!*

Every major aspect of the site is designed to feature your input from news to forum discussions to images to obituaries! So please come enjoy and contribute and see what the Web has

to offer us in terms of building our proud and unique community!

I'm looking forward to serving you, the NSA membership and the greater smokejumping community.

Please share your feedback on any aspect of the web project with us by starting a topic in the forum, or by visiting <http://www.smokejumpers.com/contact/feedback.php> 📧



## Off The List

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

spread the word to others. Please phone, write or e-mail the editor (see contact information on page three of the magazine). Include the name, address and phone number of the subject's next of kin. We'll take it from there.

### Frederic J. (Rick) Chambers (Missoula '51)

Frederic James Chambers, Jr., 76, passed away on July 23, 2003. Fred was an avid outdoorsman and nature enthusiast. During the last 45 years of his life, Fred lived in Scottsdale, Ariz., with his wife of 51 years, Joan M. (Varner). He worked as an engineer at Allied Signal until his retirement in 1990. He enjoyed an active life of fly tying, fly fishing throughout the United States and Canada, camping, hiking and exploring the back roads of Arizona. He enjoyed reading and learning about the history of Scottsdale, and kept abreast of current politics and the future plans of Scottsdale. Fred was proud to be a member and supporter of The Nature Conservancy, Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Federation of Fly Fishers, National Smokejumpers Association and the National Park Service.

### Berle E. Davis (Missoula '48)

Berle Eldon Davis passed away on March 7, 2003. Berle was born Nov. 23, 1922, and grew up on the family homestead and attended school in Judith Gap, Mont. He was in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946 and served in the Philippines, New Guinea and Japan and graduated from Montana State University in 1957.

### Curtis King (Redding '76)

Curtis Dewayne King, 54, of Redding died Thursday, April 10, 2003, at Mercy Medical Center in Redding. Born April 15, 1948, in Lakeview, Ore., he moved to Shasta County in 1981 from Loyalton. He was a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War and a dispatcher for the U.S. Forest Service for 25 years.

### Edward I. Martinson (Missoula '47)

Ed died Thursday, April 24, 2003, at his home in Missoula after a two-year battle with leukemia. After high school Ed went to Camp Perry, Va., for Navy Seabees boot camp and served during World War II. Upon his return, he entered the university in Missoula where he received his forestry degree. Ed's early career choice was to follow in his father's footsteps as a carpenter, but he later migrated to the wood products industry. He worked with Intermountain Lumber, Hoerner-Waldorf and then retired from Champion International. He held numerous positions during his career beginning with production

worker at Intermountain and ending as regional manager for Champion after 35 years of dedicated service.

During the summers of his college years, he jumped at Missoula. He quit jumping and returned to his home less than a week before the Mann Gulch fire. He lost a lot of close friends that day.

### Richard C. Norell (McCall '51)

Dick passed away around July 23, 2003. After serving in the U.S. Navy in the South Pacific from 1946-48, he graduated from Utah State University with a degree in wildlife management in 1953.

Dick spent 34 years with the Idaho Department of Fish & Game retiring in 1988.

### John M. "Jack" Wilcock (McCall '46)

Jack passed away on March 28, 2003, at his home in Ninilchik, Alaska. Jack was born on January 4, 1925, at Cedar City, Utah. He graduated from Panguitch High School in Utah but interrupted his college education at Utah State to join the Navy pilot training in 1944. When the war ended in 1945 he began his smokejumping career in McCall in 1946. Jack jumped in 1946 and 1947 in McCall, attended forestry summer camp in 1949 and returned to jump out of Idaho City in 1949, '51, and '52. Jack made 65 Forest Service jumps, 46 of them were fire jumps. Later Jack went on to become a district ranger. Jack and his wife, Eunice, celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1991.

### Wallace "Wally" Tower (pilot)

Wally died June 28, 2003. He grew up in Waldo Hills near Salem, Oregon. After high school he took flying lessons and earned his pilot's license in 1935. During WWII Wally trained pilots for the military through the War Training Service in Oregon. He was also a test pilot for Douglas Aircraft during the war.

In 1952 he started flying seasonally for the Forest Service and became chief pilot for the Okanogan N.F. in 1954. Wally flew smokejumpers for the North Cascades Base for eight seasons from 1952-59. He became USFS regional air officer (R-6) and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1976. During his 41-year flying career, he logged over 21,000 hours. 📧

# The Uninvited Guests!

by Denis Symes (McCall '63)

In the last weeks of the 1963 fire season, word was received through the Johnson Flying Service pilots that Missoula's jumpers were planning a "termination party" at its base on a Friday night to celebrate the season's end. Word was that there would be plenty of beer and food, and local women would be invited!

I'm not sure who had the idea, but **John Rasmussen** (MYC '59) and **Frank Odom** (MYC '63) organized a party crash. They talked with **Swede Nelson**, our DC-3 pilot, about chartering the plane for an overnight run to Missoula. Swede had not been home to Missoula for over a month and wanted to see his wife. It seemed that the DC-3's engines needed an oil change and it could be done in Missoula just as well as in McCall. A hastily arranged party of 20 travelers was formed. We each chipped in \$20 and were sworn to secrecy since **Del Catlin** (MYC '47 and then head foreman) would certainly nix the trip.

After work on the appointed Friday, we all showered and put on our dressiest Levi's and drove to the airport (the jumper barracks were about a mile from the airport). As we entered the plane, Frank and John greeted us with glasses of champagne and a napkin (to maintain proper decorum—and wipe off the drool that would inevitably ooze from our mouths during the flight). In the center of the plane was a washtub

## Did You Lose Your Rookie Jump Pin?

Here's a chance to get it replaced. Order item # 132 on the merchandise order form. Each pin is \$10.00.



*Denis Symes (MYC '63) and Del Catlin (MYC '47), former McCall head foreman in background. (Courtesy Denis Symes)*

filled with ice and a keg of beer. We were expected to land with all the champagne and beer gone.

As the plane crossed the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, the empty champagne bottles were unceremoniously set aside and we started on the beer. The keg was completely consumed by the time we landed; only a weak foam emitted from the spout.

Stumbling into the Missoula barracks, we found a room full of beer, food and, women summer students from the University of Montana and St. Patrick's Hospital School of Nursing. There had been a fire bust that afternoon and Missoula was jumped out—no MSO jumpers were there! We had a blast!

Finally, as all good things (Hey, free beer, food and women are good things!) must come to an end, the

party wound down. The ladies without rides needed a way home, so we obliged. In days long gone, many jumpers just left their keys in their unlocked car so a buddy in distress could have wheels. So we just used MSO's cars to shuttle the ladies home. I'm sure many had indecent thoughts, but all probably remained chaste.

We returned to the Missoula base at about 3 A.M. and fell asleep anywhere we could find a spot. At about 6 A.M., someone woke us up and we paraded to the plane for the return to McCall. The flight was quiet with many tired hangovers. We arrived home at 8 A.M. to find Del Catlin coming out of the loft—he really looked mad (not angry, but MAD). "Everybody in the recreation hall in 10 minutes," he ordered.

Ten minutes later all the hurting



heads were gathered in the rec hall. Del started by saying:

“Last night, we had a call from Redding. They needed jumpers to back fill them. We went to the airport and found the DC-3 gone and lost about 30 minutes learning where it was. The Forest Service chartered a DC-6 from Continental Airlines, which had to ferry it from Denver. To save time, we drove from McCall to Boise at 11 P.M. (the guys must have been freezing riding in the back of the pickups at night for 100 miles and two hours). When we got to Redding, they were upset since we had no jump ship. I would fire you all except that it’s the end of the

season—I may not hire any of you back next year!”

With that, Del just walked out of the rec hall leaving us in a sorry, hurting stupor. As for myself, I was on really good behavior the next week and even offered to cut the grass after dinner on my own time (I really wanted to come back). I even sent Del one of the very few Christmas cards I’ve ever sent saying that I sure looked forward to next year’s season.

I guess since there were so many of us on the trip, he really had to take us back otherwise the 1964 training class would be excessively large.

I related this story to several old timers during June’s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion in McCall. Most did not know the story, but **Bruce Yergenson** (MYC ’54) recalled that something big happened in ’63 that led to “real repercussions.” Several others also recalled the same thing. **Jim Diederich** (RDD ’70) observed that it was stunts like this that resulted in the Forest Service’s clamping down on jumpers.

I’ll bet \$20 that we’d all do it again! 🍄

*Denis Symes can be reached at: 9504 Rockport Rd., Vienna, VA 22180 or at: d.symes@worldnet.att.net*

## First Time—Great Time on the Trail Crew

by Karl Maerzluft (Fairbanks ’67)

**I**t was my first time. Did not quite know what to expect, but anticipation overwhelmed my reservations. It was the trail maintenance forum for old jumpers and the place was the Bowery Station in Idaho right along the Salmon River.

The first group met at the Stanley Guard Station leaving to meet the rest of the crew near Challis. After brief introductions, we convoyed up the road until the asphalt ran out and the gravel began plus about 15 miles. Once we entered through the locked gate, we were truly at the end of the road.

Traveling from Stanley, the scenery was beautiful, but now the quiet was deafening.

The vehicles quickly lined up on one side of the “yard” and we commenced to set up the mess tent and its contents. Thereafter, personal time was filled with setting up our own sleeping accommodations and goodies. We loitered around the camp site/fire and exchanged a little personal information. The various personalities were fun and interesting as only jumpers with long and successful careers can be. The Lutheran minister was a prince of a guy and also a bee-keeper. Came bearing presents in the form of a pound of honey. What a treat! The cook was Mr. Personality but also the VP of a large national company. The former marine was now a vintner and brought samples of a fine product. Of course, the retired FS ranger, our NSA president, is a real “ringer” in the game of horseshoes. The best part was the fact that everyone left their ego at home and it was like being 20 years old in the woods again.

The night was cold and the next morning I could barely wait for 6 A.M. In fact, if at any morning anyone came out of the tent after six, they were obviously sleeping in. These guys are hustlers. After breakfast and reveille with the formal raising of the station flag, it was off to work.

Now, while the name implies trail maintenance, the

varied talents of the group were called upon to repair anything that needed fixing. First on the list was fixing the flagpole. The rope had jumped the pulley. Next was a pole fence around the station to keep the cows from trampling things. Digging was pretty rough in most areas for all the rocks. The water supply from the side of the hill was lacking pressure and the civil engineer jumped into the middle of that project with gusto. Seems the line had filled with water and split in the winter freeze. A mile of barbed wire fence had to be removed and replaced with smooth wire electric fence. This took a little longer, but was up and charging in the end. Those solar collector/batteries really put out some volts.

We also did a little trail revision, and the beauty of the land around blurred the length of the hike to the site. My question to the project leader was, who would do this work if not these volunteers? The answer was both interesting and bureaucratic: Nobody, it would just be delayed some more years.

Not to give you the impression it was all work, there was an old hot tub about 200 yards from the camp, filled with water from a natural hot spring. The slight sulfur smell was easily forgotten by the healing power of that hot water and I quickly dubbed it the healing pool of Bethesda. While I was the youngest in the bunch, these guys were hard workers to keep up with and I was using a few unfamiliar muscles. Also the newly created horseshoe pits were a great source of fun and entertainment. The watermelon helped too.

So, when someone asks me what fun things I did this summer, I will have plenty to talk about. This is truly one of the more worthwhile things I have done and can only encourage anyone with the time to come and participate. You’ll be glad you did. 🍄