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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2015

SMOKEJUMPER



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Check the NSA website



Message from the President



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

AS I WRITE this article I am just back from the Smokejumper Reunion held in Missoula, which celebrated 75 years since the first fire jump. **Jim Phillips** (MSO-67) and his crew did an outstanding job of pulling everything together to create a most successful gathering, with jumpers attending from the 1940s through the current decade.

I'm going to shoot straight with you. Have we just experienced the last all-base reunion? The NSA Board of Directors is going to have to deal with this question in the coming years.

The bulge in the number of jumpers who entered our ranks was during the 1950s through the 1970s. Since then, the number of jumpers coming on new each year has greatly declined. Those "college years" of smokejumpers have given way to career jumpers.

If there is going to be another big reunion, it is going to take jumpers from the 1980s to the 2010s to step up to the plate. I would like to get your feedback on what you see in the future for

reunions – going with individual base reunions or try for another all-base reunion, maybe in 2020 to celebrate 80 years.

At our NSA board meeting held immediately prior to the reunion, we had the opportunity to hear from Tom Harbour, Director of Fire and Aviation Management for the U.S. Forest Service.

Director Harbour signed off on a directive July 1 to officially set into motion the transition from the FS-14 round parachute system to the ram-air system. At our board meeting he explained the rationale behind the decision and also stressed the changing landscape into which smokejumpers will be used in the future.

The future of the smokejumper program is secure, but the romance and myth of the "two-manner in the Bob" is not in the cards for smokejumping. It has been years since that was the case.

The priority for today's smokejumper is the high-value fire that has the threat of escape – particularly when there is danger to the urban-wildland interface that threatens property and lives.

As for the move to the ram-air, the belief is the round parachute system has reached its highest level of performance. It's a great system but the USFS believes that greater forward speed will be an advantage in the future. Also, this directive will allow the USFS to provide parachute manufacturers with specs for further development.

One thing being sought is a ram-air that will have greater sta-

bility and safety in that last 100 feet before landing – a parachute that will be more forgiving if a late landing adjustment is needed.

You can learn more about this by going to <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/people/smokejumpers/index.html>.

We have been assured that during the next 10 years, as the transition is underway, there will be very intense evaluation given at every stage. If it should appear that this transition is not being successful, it will be possible to reverse the decision. We'll have to see how it all goes forward.

There is another matter that I want to bring before you and hope you will provide some feedback. Suicide is something that is occurring among our numbers – particularly among those who have been long-term jumpers and who have retired. However, it is not being discussed openly.

I would like to bring it into the open so that we might begin to understand the problem and bring some help to individuals and families. In many re-

spects I am guessing that this is not greatly different from PTSD experienced by returning members of the military.

Consider for a moment: a jumper lives in a high-adrenaline environment with the jumping and the firefighting. Death is always just an accident away. A jumper is part of a tightly knit group where trust and camaraderie are critical to success.

The work becomes an integral part of one's identity and sense of worth – but the job is tough on one's body. What happens inside the mind when the body gives out – the knees and hips, back and shoulders – and one can't do the work any longer?

It's not a matter of "if" it happens but, rather, when it will happen. What happens when one is dismissed to the sidelines? What happens to that identity and sense of worth? How can we help those who are facing that situation so they can make a successful transition?

I'd like to hear from you. Let's get a conversation going. Let's get some solid data to work with. 🐼

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

Anchorage..... ANC	Grangeville GAC	ReddingRDD
BoiseNIFC	Idaho City IDC	RedmondRAC
Cave Junction CJ	La Grande..... LGD	West Yellowstone WYS
Fairbanks FBX	McCall.....MYC	Whitehorse Yukon YXY
Fort St. John YXJ	MissoulaMSO	Winthrop..... NCSB

Get Smokejumper One Month Before Anyone Else

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

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

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

If you want to be added to the electronic mailing, contact Editor **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59): cnkgshley@earthlink.net. 🐼

Is The Forest Service Making The Best Decision In Going To The Square Chute?

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

All underlining and bolding in this article are mine.

From the *U.S. Forest Service Ram-Air Parachute System Implementation Project* document: "The Director, Fire and Aviation Management, has made a decision to begin a measured transition to a ram-air parachute system in the U.S. Forest Service smokejumper program. A 'square' ram-air parachute system will eventually replace the 'round' FS-14 parachute system currently in use."

From *Decision Memorandum For The Director, Fire And Aviation Management*: "Round parachutes, which U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers have been using since the program's inception in 1939, have reached the limits of their performance while ram-air parachute technology is still evolving. *Ram-air parachutes are more maneuverable and enable smokejumpers to jump in higher winds than round parachutes.* This supports an *earlier response* to critical wildfires, reducing the chances that they will become large, costly, and dangerous to other firefighters and the public. Investment in the ram-air parachute delivery system at this time is expected to yield further *improvements in safety* and efficiency in the future.

"The U.S. Forest Service has gathered and thoroughly examined extensive data on injuries and fatalities experienced by smokejumpers on both round and ram-air parachute delivery systems and has *concluded that a transition to the ram-air parachute delivery system will improve overall safety in the long term.* Due to ram-air parachute technology allowing for *slower vertical landing speeds, it is expected that the Forest Service will see a reduction in injuries to the ankles, legs and hips during parachute landings.*"

View From The Other Side

I've been told not to write anything on the square/round parachute issue. The word has gotten back to me that the NSA and myself have already been criticized because of the stance we have taken on this issue and that we had "better not" get involved. The problem with that thinking is that the NSA has *not* taken

any stance on this issue.

NSA President **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) has asked questions about the ram-air system so that our readers could further understand the system. If people are offended about anyone asking questions about a government program, they are the ones who should step back and take a deep breath. We all know that the USFS is a government institution and supported by the taxpayers. By being citizens of the United States, *we have the right and responsibility* to be involved in our government and the decisions that each part of that government makes. If that bothers you, take it up with the founding fathers. (*"I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of a government."* Thomas Jefferson)

That said, I will be glad to publish opinion pieces and letters stating opinions that are the opposite of mine. I may not agree with those opinions but I'm certainly not going to get mad at someone who has views that I don't agree with. (*"Let me never fall into the vulgar mistake of dreaming that I am persecuted whenever I am contradicted."* RW Emerson)

For those who feel this magazine is biased toward the round parachute, please note that there are two well-written articles in this issue that are positive to the square parachute. I have published 5-6 favorable square parachute articles in the past years and *only one* by an author who feels the round is better.

I can say that I am not an expert on the square parachute, but I've been doing my best to become educated. Critics will say that I don't have the background to get involved. However, I feel there is a real safety issue here. As a citizen and taxpayer, I feel we are "stockholders" in our government and *have the right and responsibility to become involved.* (*"We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate."* T. Jefferson)

This is an opinion piece stating my concern about the change in the delivery system. If I have made mistakes involving square parachute characteristics, I will correct them in future articles.

During the reunion at Missoula, the NSA board

had the opportunity to meet with Tom Harbour, the USFS Director of Fire & Aviation, and the smoke-jumper team involved in the change over. All are impressive individuals, smart and articulate. The smoke-jumper program is in strong hands.

During the NSA board meeting, one of our directors said that during a recent meeting he had heard some of the participants say that the NSA should not get involved in this issue. As a teacher I always challenged my students to get involved, question and be good citizens. I felt that whenever anyone tries to discourage questions, one should see the red flag.

I worry when individuals involved in smokejumping are so concerned about the opinions reflected by the magazine. Reality check – *The NSA has no power or influence on any USFS policy.*

“Where the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe.” Thomas Jefferson

Very few of the current smokejumpers are even members. Our biggest tie to the smokejumper community is the hard-earned dollars we put into the annual \$6,000 worth of scholarships that are going to smokejumpers and their children. In addition, there is the \$55,340 that we have given to smokejumpers and their families in need. You might even, at some point, consider us as “good guys.”

This is an opinion piece. *Remember that my opinion will not change any policy—it is just an opinion.* If I had any real power in the area of wildland fire, I would do the following:

1. During the fire season, respond to all wildland fires with the same sense of urgency that you would expect out of the city fire department if your house was burning.
2. Have all forests make a response plan that is automatic and updated hourly as resources change. As they say, “better to send them home rather than not have enough.”
3. Increase the smokejumper program by 200 jumpers.
4. If smokejumpers can reach the fire first, require their use. Most fire people would like to have a Hotshot Crew on a fire immediately. They need to realize that smokejumpers can be that crew.
5. Have an annual 15% turnover in the smokejumper program where 15% of the experienced jumpers leave the program and fill the needed leadership positions at the district and forest fire management level.
6. Hire a percentage of the rookies from the top forestry schools in the country. These individuals should have a goal of becoming a part of the upper level decision-makers in fire and not a career smokejumper.
7. Re-start the lumber industry in the U.S. Trees grow and can be harvested within guidelines that protect our forests. Jobs can be created, towns and schools moved from the dead to the living, and fire hazards reduced.

Is there anyone who does not have any wood in their house? What do we gain by cutting down the forests of Southeast Asia and feeling good about killing the lumber industry in the U.S.?

We know that none of this will happen—it is just an opinion. Please don't worry about my opinion. It won't hurt the changeover in the parachute system and, as a citizen and stockholder in this country, I'm entitled to have an opinion.

“The most dangerous man to any government is the man who is able to think things out for himself, without regard to the prevailing superstitions and taboos.” H.L. Mencken

Please note that I am not dealing with the BLM as they already have a system that works for them in the areas that they cover. My focus is with the USFS and the areas they cover.

We have heard that jumping fires in the wilderness is a thing of the past and that jumpers need to become move involved in the urban interface. The mission has changed. “No more two-manners in the Bob.” What a mistake! That's the place where we should use jumpers, make the fire a two-day, one-page event and save resources and money for the “big ones.”

Let's see what is going on out in the real world. June 11, 2015, just after midnight, lightning started the Buckskin Fire, which is currently (7/24/15) 60% controlled at 5,345 acres and is listed as a “Full Suppression Fire.” Guess what? It's inside the Biscuit Fire burn from 2002. The locals are calling it the “Little Biscuit Fire.” This does not look like much of a mission change. On a fire that is listed as starting just after midnight, jumpers were called late in the day on the 11th when 30 mph winds were blowing the fire and couldn't jump. Wonder what would have been the result if they were called at 0800 that morning?

If the mission is changing and the square parachute supports “earlier response,” wouldn't it be easier to call for jumpers earlier in the day? Let's prevent the disease rather than treat it. We can easily get an “earlier response” by making an earlier call.

Today (7/24) there is a lot of news about the fire in Glacier N.P. The Park Service are pioneers in let-burn, so this should be a good chance to do so. NFC—not a # chance with thousands of pissed off tourists fleeing from their hotels and campgrounds. Looks like their mission might be changing in another direction.

I say the public *will not allow* us to ignore the two-manner in the “Bob” and Kalmiopsis Wilderness Areas. Sure, allowing fires to burn naturally in the wilderness is the way nature did it for centuries. We didn't have 321 million people in the US then either.

The initial paragraph speaks about one of the rea-

sons for changing to the square is to support an *earlier response* to critical wildfires, reducing the chances that they will become large, costly, and dangerous to other firefighters and the public. If this is a goal, we will need to continue jumping fires in the wilderness and isolated areas. Getting there first and fast is critical.

Here's my best guess as to what will happen. Under the extreme drought and warming conditions, fires will continue to burn hotter and consume so much acreage that the *public will not allow* wilderness fires to burn and destroy thousands of acres of forest and watershed. The USFS will not be able to stand back and do a "let-burn" policy. If these fires are not stopped with prompt initial attack (IA), they will consume tremendous amounts of firefighting assets. The lack of these assets will result in slowed IA on other fires and create the domino effect throughout the fire organization, and other fires will become major events due to lack of resources.

We all saw what happened when prompt initial attack was absent on the Biscuit Fire in 2002. Even though there were over 100 smokejumpers available, no jumpers were called. The USFS continues to this day to feed the media with statements that there were no available smokejumper resources available. This is a whitewash because we know that there were jumpers available, but no request was made.

The Biscuit Fire was in an area that was covered for 38 years by the Cave Junction smokejumpers. The Siskiyou N.F. averaged 20,000 acres *burned a year* between 1910 and 1940. It is no accident that in the 41 years between 1940 and 1981 the burn was just about 800 acres a year. That area was covered by smokejumpers from 1943-1981.

What happened to the "let-burn" idea? The Biscuit Fire destroyed 500,000 acres and was fought at the cost of, by some estimates, \$400,000,000. Maybe we should continue to jump those two-manners in the wilderness if we want to save half a *billion* dollars.

I've been involved in wildland firefighting since the summer of 1957 until my retirement from the USFS in 1995. I was a smokejumper for 12 seasons, not a lot by today's standards but a reasonable number of years. In my years as a smokejumper, I jumped the lower forty-eight for eight seasons and Alaska for four seasons. I've had as many as 25 fire jumps in a season down to seasons with only 3-4 fire jumps.

Jumping different regions and forests each presented different challenges. New Mexico had high-altitude jump spots, high winds and many rocks. The Klamath, Shasta/Trinity, Rogue, Siskiyou, along with the dreaded Umpqua, had few open jump spots, trees touching each other and a lot of them being above

150'. A key to making it to the ground in the big-tree spots *was steering all the way to the ground.*

I have a real concern about the move to the square parachute. This is my opinion based on reading and research. The square parachute has tremendous capabilities, but is it the best delivery system for the Forest Service, especially in Regions 5 and 6?

We have had a proven, safe and effective delivery system with the round parachute for 75 years. There have been no fatalities directly related to that canopy. The round canopy has been improved over the years to the point where malfunctions, such as line-overs and inversions, are almost non-existent.

An analogy can be made between driving a regular car (round) vs a high-performance race car (square). The amount of skill and training needed to drive a square is definitely much higher than that of the round. The ram-air canopy has a 20-25 mph forward speed vs 9 mph for the FS-14 round canopy.

Brian Germain (*The Parachute and its Pilot-3rd edition*), 15,000 jumps and described as the "parachute industry's foremost canopy designer": "The evolution of the modern parachute has seen a four-fold increase in average flying speed. This has, to put it another way, allowed us a larger scope of *potential* landing areas in which to *crash*. In other words, we have invented flying machines that require a more mature and educated *pilot* to fly and *land safely.*"

Back to the sports car analogy. Any mistakes made operating a high-performance, high-speed car will be magnified. The end results or injuries will also be magnified. Consider driving a car and having an accident at 50 mph vs a sports car accident at 150 mph. Which driver would an insurance company sell insurance to at the lowest rate?

What is the advantage of moving to the square parachute? The key for the smokejumper program is to deliver highly-trained firefighters quickly and safely to the fire. *Safely* is a key word here. Every time we create "an incident within an incident" (accident in a fire jump), we have lost the major advantage gained with smokejumpers.

Getting reports on USFS parachute accidents is hard to do. Statistics are there, but we all know that statistics can be made to prove any point of view. I would like to read the actual accident report. What was the drift, the size of the jump spot, fire activity, when was the fire reported, and when were jumpers requested? I think that in most cases we will find a significant amount of time between initial report and request for jumpers.

My biggest concern is the accident rate. There will be injuries using any system to jump fires. But, it is

the seriousness of the injury that I think needs to be addressed. There is a lot of difference between bruises and sprains vs broken legs.

However, we can turn to the sport parachute world and the people with extensive backgrounds in squares. They also have good records available to the general public. A person can get a good idea of the biggest cause of serious accidents with a square parachute:

Hard Landings.

Hard Landings With A Wing

The ram-air parachute is a “wing” with a top and bottom layer of nylon separated by ribs that divide the parachute into individual cells. As air runs or “rams” through the cells it creates an airfoil. The jumper is commonly called a “pilot,” since he/she is operating a flying wing similar to an aircraft.

Now, think of the square parachute as a flying wing, an aircraft without a motor. Two axis of orientation, **Pitch** (forward/backward) and **Roll** (bank or tilt to either side) become very important in flying a wing. Pulling down on either toggle of a flying wing causes the parachute to roll to that side. Picture a pilot rolling his/her aircraft 30 feet off the ground. Result: crash or hard landing.

Like an airplane, a square parachute *needs a landing area and should not be turned below 100’ above the ground*. If this happens the canopy is redirected and, in many cases, the jumper impacts the ground at a tremendous speed, thus the term “hard landing.”

Try not to turn when slightly overshooting that small ridge top in the North Cascades or to miss that 150 foot snag on the Shasta/Trinity. A quick reaction to a hazard is an automatic for the human body. You’re not going to blink if I snap my fingers in front of your eyes?

In my opinion the term “hard landing” is going to become commonplace in the smokejumper vocabulary if the move to squares is made.

Minimum Height For Turns

In the July issue of *Smokejumper* NSA President Jim Cherry (MSO-57) asked if there is a minimum height above ground where maneuvering should *not* be done? Answer: “Yes, on *either canopy* a jumper should be on final heading by 100 feet (above ground level) and making only subtle corrections from there.”

Again, I have never jumped a square. At the same time I have, on many fire jumps, steered all the way to the ground, with either guideline cranked to my maximum, in order to spiral through heavy timber or hold inside a small opening with a round parachute. *There was no negative effect to steering to the ground with*

a round as it is not a wing and will not be subjected to the negatives of the roll axis of a wing. I would like to see video evidence that steering a round all the way to the ground is detrimental for the jumper. I have seen numerous videos of a square being turned during landing, and the roll axis taking the jumper right into the ground at high speed.

The following is from the *sport parachute world*, but there is a lot of connection here to the use of the square parachute. Underlining is mine. From *Parachutist* website: “Since the mid-1990s, when manufacturers introduced *truly high-performance parachutes*, *jumpers have needed more skill to land safely*. Prior to that time, a *landing fatality occurred an average of once every two years*. *Since then, landing deaths have represented about one-third of annual fatalities*. The jumpers who died had an *average of 13 years* in the sport, so a lack of canopy piloting experience wasn’t much of a factor.”

Statistics show that in the sports parachute world since 2004, hard landings have resulted in over 200 deaths and make up a whopping 32% of the skydiving fatalities. You might say that we cannot make a comparison between the skydiving world and smoke-jumping with squares. I would counter that with it is the “hard landing” element we are looking at here with the square canopy. Certainly the landing zones of the sports parachute world are very large and less dangerous in comparison to what we find on a fire jump.

Experience Important?

As stated above, the sport jumpers involved in fatal hard landings had an average of 13 years experience. I’m looking at the accident reports and see sport jumpers with 4,000/5,000 jumps who made a single fatal mistake. At that speed it just takes a small mistake to turn into a serious accident. They don’t have fender benders at the Indy 500.

Navy SEALs seem to be the pinnacle for highly trained individuals in the last 10 years. They are the best of the best and never stop training. March 19 and June 23, 2015, two SEALs were killed during parachute operations. The March 19th accident “following a hard landing.” The military builds in fatalities as part of their operations. We can’t do that with smokejumpers.

Picking A Landing Zone

From *Dropzone.com*: “There are two goals when landing your parachute: First, land safely and second, land where you want to. *Do not go below the thousand-foot mark without making a firm decision about where to land.*

“Skydivers like to set up their final approach by

using a pattern similar to the kind airplanes use approaching an airport.

“At an altitude of about 100’ you are committed; just let the parachute *fly straight ahead*.”

“To get the most out of flaring, you must be flying full speed, so *keep the toggles all the way up* until it is time to flare.

“Do not let your toggles back up once you have started to flare. This will cause your canopy to dive forward and result in a hard landing.

“*Never land in a turn*. A parachute’s rate of *descent increases* dramatically in a turn and that speed remains a few seconds *after* the turn is stopped. Low turns are usually made by people who did not pick a safe area and turned at the last moment to *avoid an obstacle*.”

Brian Germain: “Very large objects such as buildings and *tree-lines* can set up a fairly organized circular motion of airflow. As the air flows over the object, it moves downward into the dead space just past it. This deadly phenomenon is called a ‘rotor.’ *Never fly or land downwind of a large object*.” It seems like big trees, steep rocky outcroppings and ridge tops would fall within this category.

We all know that there are large temperature differences on a fire. You roast in the day and freeze on the night shift. That’s the way it goes in the mountains. More from Brian Germain: “The greater the difference in temperature in a given location, the more powerful the turbulence can be. Add to this scenario lots of wind movement and you have the makings of a very dangerous day. Turbulent air alone has the ability to drop the angle of attack (of the wing) quickly enough to cause a destabilization of the wing.”

Wind Gusts

I think we can all agree that wind gusts are commonplace and *not* unusual on any fire jump. Let’s see what the pros with the squares from the sports parachute world say on the subject.

Dropzone.com: “A flying object such as a parachute does not know which way the wind is blowing. Upwind, downwind, crosswind are all in reference to the ground below, not what the air is doing over your wing. Gusty, turbulent conditions *will cause changes in rate of descent*. Close to the ground this can be very problematic. Tough situation.

“Gusts equal turbulence. My wind limit is 24 mph. Gusts are a whole ‘nother’ story. I’m ok with 5 mph gusts if the wind stays *below* 15 mph.

“I’ll jump wind over 20 mph if they’re (gusts) steady and 6-8 mph if the top (wind) is under 20 mph, but you have to be ready. I landed, a gust picked me up and dropped me about 30’ from where I’d been

standing. Broken collar bone.”

Will The Square Evolve Into A Safer Parachute?

I don’t think so. The square parachute has evolved to increase performance. The ability to do highly skillful moves is the objective of the square parachute world. They are not concerned with the delivery of a firefighter.

The BLM has been using the square for years, but I do not see any improvements that allow the canopy to make low-level turns. You can’t make a wing not a wing.

Thoughts

Smokejumpers are highly trained firefighters who, when most effective, are delivered quickly and safely to the incident. They can handle the incident with little or no outside support.

In my opinion, the switch to ram-air in R-5 and R-6 will result in more injuries and, most importantly, more serious injuries. Injured personnel take valuable resources. Forests will get tired of using jumpers if they are considered more of a problem than worth.

The sport parachutists with thousands of jumps warn of two very important areas of concern: *Gusts and turbulent air*. *Gusts and turbulent air are common factors on fires in the mountains*. Steady wind and lack of gusts are important factors in safely flying a wing or square parachute. Pretty rare in the mountains.

The stated advantage to the square is its ability “*to jump in higher winds than round parachutes*.” In my eyes the ram-air is being touted because of its ability, according to the BLM Spotter Handbook, to “land comfortably *in open terrain* with ground winds up to 25-30 mph.” However, in the April 15th practice jumps at Black’s Creek, two jumpers were injured and the jumps stopped with winds of 15-18 mph. Two square jumpers were injured on the Sequoia with only 100 yards drift. Where did the 25-30 figure come from?

Can square jumpers land comfortably in winds of 25-30 mph? Do we have those statistics? How many jumps have been done with ground winds in that range? If there have been hundreds of jumps done with the squares in 25-30 mph, can someone document and show us, the taxpayers, those records? I’m also talking about jumps being made in conditions we experience in the lower forty-eight, not Alaska. In Regions 5 and 6, the “world is not a jump spot.”

Will we have to move to *landing zones* vs jump spots? That, in many cases, will increase the amount of unburned fuel between the jumper and the fire at a

time when we are experiencing hotter and drier climate conditions.

We have a proven and safe delivery system in the round parachute. We are firefighters. Our time should be spent in improving our qualifications as firefighters, not parachute pilots. I believe that delivering 20 smokejumpers to an urban interface fire in 25-30 mph winds will result in an unacceptable injury rate.

A delivery system is being changed to allow jumps in higher winds, and, as the Decision Memorandum says, "This supports an *earlier response* to critical wildfires, reducing the chances that they will become large, costly, and dangerous to other firefighters and the public."

Many of us, for years, have been asking for the fire agencies to make quick, prompt initial attack on wildfires. Go to government websites such as "Inci-

Web" and look at the fire information. There is a ton of information, a lot of fluff and frosting. What is missing? You do not see the time the fire was reported and the time initial attack was taken and the resources used. The key items to stop a fire!

Wouldn't it be easier, less expensive and more practical to call the jumpers earlier in the day? Let's look into when a fire was reported and how long that knowledge sat on the dispatcher's desk before jumpers were called. We can attack the problem at the origin rather than adjust to the slowness of the system.

The decision has been made. However, the USFS release says, "There will be *continual assessment* and management of the associated risks of this transition." I hope the transition is a good decision and will make smokejumpers a more valuable firefighting tool. My gut tells me different. 🐼



NSA 2007 Vietnam Trip Group at 2015 Reunion

Back L-R: Larry Lufkin (CJ-63), Guy Hurlbutt (IDC-62), Linda Hurlbutt, Fred Rohrbach (MSO-65), Bob Dayton (MSO-65), Chuck Sheley (CJ-59). Front L-R: Polly Rohrbach, Virgil Miller (MSO-45), Shari Dayton, K.G. Sheley. (Courtesy Johnny Kirkley)

White Cap Wipe-Out And A Long Hike On A Bad Ankle

by Bob Ellis (Missoula '63)

My first year of smokejumper training was in Missoula in 1963. The following account is my best recollection of my second fire jump. Over time, names and some basic facts have faded from my memory. I thank **Roger Savage** (MSO-57) for supplying that information.

Dave Klies (MSO-62) and I jumped the White Cap Fire in the Bitterroot Aug. 6, 1963. **Don Morrissey** (MSO-55) was the spotter on that flight. As we approached the fire, a whiff of smoke seemed to be rising out of a huge rock.

We went around once and Don threw out a streamer. The streamer drifted away from the rock and fire, out across 35 acres of brush toward a border of conifers on the far side. The plane went around again, pulling in so we were almost on top of the rock and smoke.

Don gave Dave the signal to go. Instead of drifting out over the meadow, Dave descended straight toward the rock. We saw Dave's chute open just over the rock. Don ordered the plane far away from the rock on the third go-around – my turn. Moments before I got the signal to jump, I saw Dave at the base of the rock, waving to indicate he was okay.

As my chute opened, I felt a strong wind current pulling me over the brushy acreage. Being a newbie, I lacked the know-how on ways to impede this drift toward the tall evergreens looming ever closer. I tried facing into the wind, but it didn't slow me much and it meant I wouldn't know when I was closing in on the trees.

I tried some 360s; those didn't slow my progress, either. I was rapidly heading toward the evergreens. But as I circled, I spotted a horse and rider. He was leading a mule and coming down a trail, threading through a landscape barren of trees, empty except for rocks. He was a mile or so higher up on the mountain with an impressive sheer cliff looming up behind him.

I also spotted an opening just beyond the trees. It came to me that if I could clear this one tall tree in front of me, I could drop into that opening. I couldn't and didn't. Moments later, I found myself crashing headfirst down through the branches of that tree.

I can vividly remember grabbing for branches – branches that whizzed by as I reached for them. With

the last branch behind me and with only a bare tree trunk below me, I felt my chute catch on a branch or tree stub, jerking my head up. I have no recollection of hitting the ground.

My next perception was of me slipping out of my body and hovering maybe a foot or so above my body – above me. I have no sense whether the “me” that slipped out of my body was looking down at me on the ground or if I was looking up at me above me!

After some time, it dissolved back into me, and I slowly became “awake” and aware of what had happened.

In my mind, I was certain I had to have broken many bones; I wiggled the fingers of one hand and then the fingers on the other hand. They seemed all right. I wiggled my toes. They wiggled just fine. I decided to sit up. No problem! Then, to stand – again, no problem!

Standing up, I found I had landed in the “V” of two large tree roots, that I was only a foot or so from the trail, and then I saw the large hunk of treetop wrapped up in my chute. Whatever my chute had caught at the last minute had saved me from a broken neck – I had landed on my shoulders.

I was stripping off my jumpsuit when I saw the rider with his mule, whom I had observed during my descent, come into sight. A year before, I had patrolled the trails in southeast Yellowstone National Park on a horse leading a mule, so I was fairly able to judge how long it takes a rider to cover the distance from where I first spotted him to where I had fallen from the tree. Based on that, I estimated that I had been unconscious for 15 minutes – maybe as long as 20 minutes.

The rider arrived minutes later but, by then, I'd untangled the treetop from my chute and hidden it, out of embarrassment. He probably hadn't observed my blunder, as he made no mention of it.

Offering to pack out any gear left by the trail, the rider went on down the trail. I took off toward the fire, trudging up through the brushy meadow but looked back halfway, trying to judge how tall the tree might have been. I couldn't pick out the exact tree from the line of evergreens, but most of them, I figured, were

80- to 100-footers. I can't say now just how correct that may have been.

A few yards later, I came upon a spring oozing forth a trickle of water. From a tiny pool, less than one-quarter inch deep, I paused to take a sip of the refreshing, cold water.

When I got to Dave, I found him incapacitated with a badly swollen ankle. The boulder turned out to be several boulders, some as large as a Volkswagen. Venting from out of the top of the rocks was a smudge of smoke. Climbing up to have a look, I found this single-stunted, two-foot-tall evergreen growing in a crack between the rocks.

The little tree hung over a five- to six-foot-deep hole, perhaps two feet in diameter. Evidently, this stunted evergreen had been dropping needles into the hole for who knows how long – and then, on this particular day, a bolt of lightning had struck the rocks to start this smoldering fire.

After a review of the situation, Dave and I decided to make use of the spring I had found. We stripped the linings out of our hard hats which I carried to the spring. At the spring, I dug out a catch basin and inserted a hard hat. For the next several hours, I carried hard hats full of water up the hill, up the pile of rocks, and dumped each pittance of water down the hole, not knowing whether it was doing any good or not.

I returned to the spring again and again to retrieve yet another hard hat full of water but, eventually, in early evening, the hole in the rock had stopped smoking. Dave and I decided to walk out rather than spend the night.

Hiking down through the brush to get to the trail was not only brutal for Dave, with his swollen ankle, but it was time-consuming. As I recall, we arrived at

the trail just before dark. We spent time searching until we found a stick that served as a crutch. We walked all night, and it wasn't until 6 o'clock the next morning that we arrived at a Forest Service cabin, the name of which I no longer remember.

For a distance of more than 20 miles, Dave had dragged his swollen foot as he hopped along on his good foot, entirely in the dark of night but under a full moon.

Even though I was embarrassed about snagging a tree, I would have told this story back then but, when we arrived back at the base, a jumper by the name of **John McIntosh** (MSO-60) had dislodged out of a tree and had broken his back and dislocated both wrists. After that happened to John, it seemed inappropriate to go around telling the story of my flawed but charmed jump.

It was surprising to hear from Roger that Dave had five more jumps, later on, during the 1963 season. If I had a contact for Dave Klies, I would have liked to run this story by him for further details or corrections. I couldn't find a contact for Dave, so I only have my own recollections in the recounting of the White Cap Fire.

After the '63 season with the Forest Service, I spent the '64 season at West Yellowstone. I spent the winter in Mammoth with the Park Service and then, for the rest of my jumping seasons, I joined the BLM jumpers in Fairbanks.

More than a decade later, I had surgery for a brain tumor – result of trauma from my second fire jump? Who knows? – which left me with paralysis on the left side of my face. My dear wife (of 46 years) and I lived 20 years in Oregon, 12 years in Indonesia, and now we reside in Billings, Mont. 🇺🇸





BLAST FROM THE PAST



Chutist Cracks Vertebra After 2,000-Foot Jump

by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)
The Daily Missoulian, JUNE 25, 1942

A SEVERE BACK injury suffered in a jump from an airplane brought Walter (Bud) Crain, a former Missoula County High School athlete, now a Forest Service parachute jumper, to St. Patrick's Hospital with a fractured vertebra.

Crain told a reporter Wednesday night that he did not know how the accident occurred, but said, "The ground came up faster than I figured on." He will be placed in a plaster cast and will remain in the hospital for a few weeks, after which he will return home.

The jumper landed in an open field on his first jump. His landing was made on the Six Mile field west of here, used for the training of the parachute jumpers. He had gone through a full course of physical conditioning with the hardening exercises required of all jumpers.

Crain played fullback for the Spartan squad for two years and was also a boxer. He had received a football scholarship from the State University upon his high school graduation.

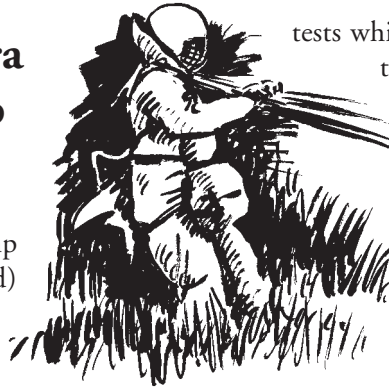
Note: Bud Crain went on to serve with the amphibious engineers during WWII. After the war he returned to Missoula and joined the Fire Department. Tragically, he was killed in the line of duty on December 30, 1951. He was one of three firemen who died when a wall collapsed in the fire at Omeshers' Grocery Store on Main Street.

Victim Of Air Crash Visitor Here

by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)
The Daily Missoulian, OCTOBER 3, 1940

CAPTAIN CHARLES ROSS, Army Air officer, reported killed in a crash at Waltersboro, SC, late Monday night, was one of the Air Corps officers who was detailed to Western Montana last summer to study the work of the Forest Service parachute jumpers.

Forest Service officials who accompanied Captain Ross to the Blackfoot Valley for the series of parachute



tests which were conducted there during the week that the Army observers were present, spoke highly of his character, interest and friendliness.

He was detailed here from the office of the chief of the Air Corps last summer to observe the Forest Service parachute program in action.

Expertness With Parachute Only One Of Many Skills Required of Smokejumpers

The Daily Missoulian JULY 1945

LIKE QUICK PUFFS of smoke against the blue sky, two parachutes open, then start to float gracefully downward. A voice immediately fills the air giving instructions as, "Turn around, pull your right guideline." Overhead, the plane flies away over the surrounding forest, then circles back for another flight over the clearing.

It is an enchanted moment; long to be treasured in memory. Yet, it is only one step in becoming a smoke-jumper and the jumping itself is only a means to an end.

The Missoulian reporter visited Camp Menard not long ago. Ralph Hand was the guide for the expedition which included Dave Godwin, the man who persuaded the Chief Forester to authorize experimentation with parachute jumping six years ago. It was with a small merging of funds that the first experiments with professional parachute jumpers were financed in 1939.

Firefighting is not a simple matter of intestinal fortitude and good intentions. It is science, and though its strategy is dictated by the Forest Service official in charge of the fire, the individual firefighter must know how to follow instructions without delay.

Smokejumper trainees always spend alternate days in some kind of fire control training, and more of the course is devoted to this than to the work with parachutes. That is why half of the class was sweating on a burning hillside, shovel in hand, that afternoon.

It wasn't a big fire. This group had not been on an actual fire before. It was a steep hillside and the visitors found

the going hard enough to sympathize with the men who were putting the fire out. A man understands by the time he has finished the grueling 10 days or more of preliminary work on the ground that a smokejumper is first and foremost a particularly skilled and responsible firefighter.

Air Infantry and Smoke Jumpers—from Fred Cooper (NCSB-62):

“I FINISHED READING the April Magazine. Got to the last page regarding the article on page 50 about the ‘Parachute Center of Nation Established Here.’ I came across the attached brief in the *Forest Service April 1941 Fire Control Notes* publication.”

The following piece from the “Infantry Journal” 1941 is more factual background for those in the USFS who think that smokejumping originated after WWII as a result of the US Army Airborne program. (Ed.)

AIR INFANTRY AND Smoke Jumpers – Development of air infantry is the subject of discussion in an article by Lt. Col. William C. Lee in the *January 1941* issue of the *Infantry Journal*.

Air infantry must receive parachute training similar to

that given to men of the Air Corps for use in emergencies, although the training does not proceed to the point that it does with the parachute troops. Commenting upon the work of the Forest Service in Region I, Colonel Lee says:

“Our new aerial development has naturally called for considerable study in order to find out what kind of equipment will serve best, especially for the parachute troops. In the course of this study, it was found that the Forest Service was using, out in the mountains of Montana, especially-developed equipment for dropping groups of as many as six or eight men in isolated roadless, forest areas to fight forest fires. *Five officers representing the Office of the Chief of Infantry, the Air Corps, and the Infantry Board went to Montana for a week to study the equipment and methods of the Forest Service.* This visit and the enthusiastic cooperation of the Forest Service enabled us to gain the full benefit of their experience and *saved many weeks of experiment in the development of parachute troops.*”

This documentation is important as we attempt to preserve the place of smokejumping in our nation’s history. We need to pass this knowledge and these facts on to the next generation. Our history is being re-written by those without any background in smokejumping. We need to set the record straight. (Ed.) 📌



Three of the four remaining crewmembers of the 1962 CIA “Operation Coldfeet” at Missoula Reunion.

L-R: Toby Scott (MYC-57), Bob Nicol (MSO-52) and Len Leschack (USNR). Navy Lt. Leschack was one of two men who parachuted on to an abandoned Soviet drift station in the Arctic Ocean. He was later picked up by a B-17 using the Fulton Skyhook system developed in Marana, Arizona. The other smokejumper B-17 crew consisted of Jerry Daniels (MSO-58), Jack Wall (MSO-48), Miles Johnson (MYC-53) and Gar Thorsrud (MSO-46). (Courtesy Bob Nicol)

Archie Keith's Long Journey

by James R. Brunk (Missoula '45)

This is the first in a series former CPS-103 smokejumper James Brunk has named "Five Smokejumpers' Rescue Stories." Brunk was a conscientious objector during World War II. Jim earned his M.D. from the University of Virginia in 1954 and specialized in internal medicine.

In the October 2014 *Smokejumper*, the article "The Longest Rescue?" by Carl Gidlund (MSO-58) had a photo of me posed in our old "training mockup." (I was surprised because I didn't know that

Smokejumper had that photograph.) Editor Chuck Sheley (CJ-59) suggested that there was confusion in the "Missoula [Montana] Jumper Log" as to who did what during that rescue there in 1945.

Thus, since I participated in several of those rescues, I thought I should try to remedy that situation. In fact, I am the only one from that particular "rescue" still living.

As we flew over the Cooper's Ridge Fire at possibly 2,000 feet altitude looking for a jump spot, we saw



June 1945. Standing L-R: Ivan Holdeman, Norman Kauffman, Jim Brunk, Ned Arnett, Wesley Matson. Bottom L-R: Wayne Kurtz, Ray Funk, Don Unruh, Vic Peters. (NSA file)

that the narrow valley or gulch below us was filled with 80- to 90-foot-tall “snags,” looking like spikes on one of those old Hindu self-torture beds. Large boulders were scattered throughout the bottom, and the ground was full of deadfalls (criss-crossed fallen trees). This became our jump spot.

Our crew included **Johnny Johnson** (MSO-44), **Jim Mattocks** (MSO-45), **Carey “Tiny” Evans** (MSO-45), **Wayne “Toughie” Kurtz** (MSO-45), **Gerhard Smeiska** (MSO-45), **Alfred Thiessen** (MSO-44), **Archie Keith** (MSO-45), and me.

Of the eight of us who jumped there, I was the only one who managed to hit the ground, collapsing down between three deep criss-crossed deadfalls. As I began getting out of my harness and gear, Archie Keith jumped in the plane’s final pass over the area. As I watched him floating down, I realized that he was heading toward the 80-foot-tall snag that I had been “sitting over” just a few minutes before.

Unfortunately for him, his parachute draped over that snag. As he swung past the snag, it broke off at the ground and slung him – without hitting him – into a pile of rocks behind tall (6-8 feet) bushes and brush.

As I told about his rough landing years later at a smokejumpers reunion, I said that Archie immediately “called out.” He, however, corrected me: “You should have said I *screamed!*”

Of course I got out of my harness and suit as quickly as possible and went to Archie.

When I got to him, he said, “I’m done for, I guess!”

“No,” I assured him. “We are going to take care of you and get you out of here!”

When the rest of our crew had gotten down from where they’d hung up in those snags, they hurried over to us. Fortunately, Jim Mattocks had been a medical corpsman in a hospital before joining the smokejumpers, so he was ready to splint up Archie’s fractures while the rest of us cut poles and made a makeshift stretcher, using our jump jackets.

Since Gerhard Smeiska was a skinny, possibly 130-pound jumper, we left him to stay on the fire while the rest of us began carrying Archie down that rough gulch. It was becoming dark as we walked.

Wayne “Toughie” Kurtz carried the front or foot of the stretcher while Carey “Tiny” Evans carried the back or head end of the thing. Since he had been a wrestler before he joined CPS and the smokejumpers, “Tiny” was heavily muscled, built like the metaphorical “brick outhouse.” He was not very tall but squarely shaped and weighed about 220 pounds, so he was able to carry that position of the stretcher.

Al Thiessen and I went ahead with pulaskis to find and cut a way for Archie to be carried through the

dense, head-high brush between the boulders, stumps and deadfalls.

Archie, being very tough, never complained.

Soon after the next jump crew was able to get down into that narrow gulch – when we were possibly a half-mile on our way – it became dark.

Gidlund’s article suggests that a standard Forest Service stretcher was dropped with the second crew, and two of our six-man group hiked “a half-mile back to fetch it.” I don’t remember that part. I do recall that the second crew stayed “on the fire” with Gerhard Smeiska. **Jim Waite** (MSO-40), **Greg Phifer** (MSO-44), **Ralph Spicer** (MSO-44), **Dick Lehman** (MSO-45), **Virgil Miller** (MSO-45) and **Ed Vail** (MSO-44) were probably in that group.

Al and I would let the others rest while we would go ahead, cutting brush and deadfall to find a way among the boulders, an especially difficult task in the dark.

We would go perhaps 100 yards and then return to the others and help carry Archie to the end of the path we had cleared. Al and I then slashed our way ahead again with our pulaskis to find a way to carry Archie further.

In the now-pitch dark, it was almost unbelievably difficult going.

Finally at about 7 o’clock, as morning dawned, we could see that we were beginning to get down out of the gulch. We figured that we were about two miles from where we had started.

Now moving into a more open valley, we found an unmaintained trail that was full of deep criss-crossed deadfalls, 6-10 inches in diameter.

Around 10 a.m. we met a pair of Forest Service men coming to meet us. They were clearing the trail with crosscut saws, which we called “misery whips.” Of course our going was much easier after that.

By noon we had arrived at a small Forest Service building surrounded by a small clearing called “Cooper’s Flat.” A crew of 10 smokejumpers – **Luke Birky** (MSO-45) was in this group but after 70 years, I don’t remember the others – jumped there to carry Archie the last 8-9 miles to the end of the trail and the waiting ambulance.

Archie was carried from about approximately 7 p.m. July 31, 1945, to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 1. His ambulance trip to St. Patrick’s Hospital in Missoula took another five hours. There he was placed in a Hip Spica cast to immobilize the multiple fractures of his right femur and his smashed left foot and ankle.

After Archie’s slow recovery, he worked on the railroad for many years. He was definitely not “done for”! 🍄

A Smokejumper's Rescue Story

by Dick Hensel (Idaho City '53)

I especially enjoyed the articles about rescue missions in the October 2014 issue of our quarterly magazine.

After reading *The Longest Rescue* by Carl Gidlund (MSO-58), then perusing the *Off the List* section – not to mention the gallery of youthful, long-deceased jumpers somberly portrayed as the “ghosts” of Mann Gulch – I was set to thinking that one veteran jumper or another has a hair-raising tale or two to tell. Unless they're documented or somehow recorded, such stories are regretfully apt to die with them.

I jumped 23 times out of McCall and Idaho City in 1953 and again in '55. Most of these events were mundane except for a few fire jumps and a notable rescue jump made during my last summer of service.

In retrospect, the latter was more of a gut-wrenching ordeal rather than routine, and the details of which are foggy since the rescue incident happened more than 60 years ago; I beg the reader's indulgence.

The type of plane jumpers used out of Idaho City was a Canadian-built Noorduyn, a World War II artifact and prototype of the contemporary Beaver used in bush flying. I vaguely recall only the first name of our pilot, Clair, a former retired Air Force pilot who, during his military career, supposedly logged thousands of hours chauffeuring VIPs around the country.

Our spotter was Bob Caldwell (MYC-46), a humble guy with a weightlifter's hulk and an intellect to match, who was close, I think at the time, to getting a doctorate in English Literature.

This is about how the story unfolded to the best of my recollection. Fate found me second on the jump list to Clyde Hawley (IDC-48), a pre-dental major at the University of Idaho, who was a very capable squadleader. I can't recall the names of the other two jumpers, but four of us were alerted one evening that we had been scheduled to jump at daybreak for the purpose of rescuing a spray-plane pilot who had crashed in the Boise National Forest.

The incident predated the advent or availability of helicopters capable of operating at high elevations; hence, no other option for making such a rescue operation existed at the time.

The next day found a full, four-man complement airborne, meticulously circling the area where the plane had crashed. It was lodged between two yellow pine trees at the very cusp of a steep, tree-covered

ridge.

This ridge separated tributary valleys that in turn descended into a main valley where a large river was bordered on its opposite side by a secondary road. This road was to be our destination, where ground responders would be staged to complete the last leg of the rescue operation.

It was roughly three miles as the crow flies but more than twice that distance considering the circuitous route we'd be forced to take to avoid steep, treacherous, and brushy terrain of the lower part of the tributary we had no choice but to traverse. In short, there wasn't an easy way to carry him out.

Caldwell dropped several drift chutes to gain some insight as to when and where each of us, in a timely order, could best exit the plane so as to land nearest the crash site. The early-morning air was cool and still, as I remember.

Clyde was the first to bail out. Seconds later Caldwell motioned me to the opened doorway while he watched Clyde's descent to a successful landing slightly down slope of the downed plane.

We kept circling repeatedly as I sat motionless – I recall feeling chilled, of all things – in the oversized door watching the rugged terrain scroll by for what seemed an eternity. I strained to hear Bob's directions over the engine noise and a noisy slipstream as we finally neared the point where I'd be airborne.

If my memory could allow me to paraphrase what he told me at the time, it would be something to the effect that there wasn't any specific landing spot, *per se*; I should use the wrecked plane as a target and steer my descent accordingly; I should expect a rough landing; and, probably more importantly, if the ridge was mistakenly overshoot, I'd find myself out of range – *adios, amigo* – in the wrong drainage.

In hindsight, I was at an age when insouciant guys like me considered themselves indestructible, so when I did finally leap into the air, it could be described as being in a smokejumper's normal state of bliss.

I hit the ground close to where Clyde did, while the other two jumpers landed further down the ridge to our right with one guy, unable to roll properly, having injured his leg from landing directly on a huge trunk of a downed tree. His injury wasn't disabling, however.

Although I can't recall the details, Caldwell evidently made a cargo drop because medical supplies – in-



1953 Packout (Courtesy Dick Hensel)

cluding a lightweight stretcher – were available by the time I had arrived at the crash. I found the pilot lying on his back outside the plane's open cockpit with one bent knee up in the air and a forearm positioned across the lower part of his face.

Someone reacted immediately by raising the pilot's arm from over his face, leaving us astounded to see that his complete upper lip hung as a strand of flesh from the opposite corner of his mouth. It had long stopped bleeding and had turned a bluish-green along the margin of the exposed tear. One of us held the lip in place with a compress while another applied a bandage across and around his head.

Under Hawley's directions we assessed and treated other injuries with the stark reality that, since the previous evening, he'd been suffering painfully and likely was in severe shock. If untreated, that in and of itself could be lethal.

Repeatedly referring to the first aid kit, someone discovered a pharmaceutical packet containing a drug (trade name of *Demerol*, I believe) for treating pain and shock with a caveat that it couldn't be administered if a victim had sustained a concussion. We testily debated whether or not to use it since there wasn't any way of determining the full extent of his head injuries.

We decided in short order to use it, rather than risk subjecting him to greater shock, given the uncertainties of having to carry him far and across inhospitable

terrain for over an extended period of time.

Early in the course of rendering aid, we determined that he had a chest injury – gasping for breath in between labored breathing – and discovered that it could be alleviated by keeping his knees raised and bent and, better yet, keep the lower part of each leg elevated above the level of his head.

We used seat cushions taken from the plane as props for this purpose and later decided to continue using them after he had been placed on the stretcher. This proved to be a mistake because it changed the center of gravity, thus making it all the more difficult to keep him securely contained in the strapless stretcher.

In retrospect, I believe with all due respect that **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46), a great chute packer and expert with the sewing machine, probably manufactured the stretcher, for it was lightweight, narrow, and more transportable compared to conventionally configured models.

We began the descent late that morning. I recall having to walk around wind-felled trees occasionally, but we made good time until the slope steepened, brush cover worsened, and footing became more treacherous. Taking short breaks became more frequent.

We decided beforehand to stay high in elevation as much as possible by traversing at an angle, not directly into the dense brush and tree covered, V-shaped drainage that we'd have to eventually cross to reach the other side. Because of its steepness, it was more practical to often walk sideways, or at an angle, as a means of keeping the victim as level as we could. This often meant moving sideways or forcing the upslope stretcher bearers to inconveniently bend low at the waist, while the other two had to simultaneously raise their ends well above their waists in order to keep the stretcher on as near a level plane as best we could.

We struggled downslope, skirting obstacles and making good time until disaster struck. Finding ourselves in an awkward position, we over adjusted the stretcher's pitch and, by so doing, his body slid from the lower end of the stretcher like a torpedo launched from a tube. We likely stood there helpless, aghast as he rolled and rolled down the steep-graded slope – I'd guess some 30 feet – until his limp body came to rest either against a huge upright slab of dirt-clad roots or the cavity formed by the same uprooted pine tree.

It must have entered my mind that if he survived that plane crash, his next challenge would be to survive the crass handling of his numbskull rescuers.

We were no doubt horrified and shaken as we hurried to his side. I think, much to our relief, his pulse

and breathing rates were unchanged. I can't recall if we injected another dose of Demerol, but I think we did out of concern that the incident could cause greater shock. I do recall that we happily discarded the seat cushions, making it easier to strap him onto the stretcher as well as to carry. At this point in the ordeal, it was sometime in the early afternoon, as I recall.

I remember crossing to the other side of the drainage and from there on, we likely made good progress going downhill, although stops to rest, quench our thirst and swap carrying positions to ease muscle fatigue probably occurred with increasing frequency as the day continued to wane.

Early that evening we finally reached our destination, to our emotional and physical relief. A towrope, attached to one end, ran across the deep, not-so-fast-flowing river to its opposite side which, at this point, was abuzz with activity. Someone, I guess, hollered directions as we loaded the still unconscious pilot.

The stretcher's length was a bit longer than the small raft. Once it had been secured, two jumpers hung on each side as a horse pulled the whole shebang across to safety. And with that, our part in the rescue came to an abrupt but happy ending.

Another day in the life of a smokejumper – except that this day was special, for it had an unforgettable twist to it.

As a postscript, several days after the pilot was out of intensive care in a Boise hospital, we were notified

that he wanted to meet and thank us out of gratitude for our accomplishment. We willingly complied. I, for one, was moved by his thankfulness and cheerfulness as well as being impressed by the restoration of his upper lip, completely reattached by neatly placed stitches, but swollen to the size of a sausage.

I was tempted to ask him if the crashing incident was a matter of happenstance or a controlled event, but I didn't because I deemed it inappropriate at the time. This intriguing question still lingers in my mind to this day.

I favor the conjecture that it was indeed a controlled crash based on the expertise of an experienced spray plane pilot, a true survivor, and several nuances surrounding the wrecked aircraft itself. The plane appeared to be gliding at airspeed when it came to a sudden stop, stuck between two giant pine trees; it was lodged at a slightly nose-down attitude above the ground surface; the fuselage was still intact to include the tail assembly; wings were separated from the fuselage; the engine, sheared free of its mounting, was nowhere in sight on the ridge's crash side; and lastly, the ground surface aft of the fuselage was undisturbed exhibiting no evidence of skid marks.

I surmise that the engine shut down because of a mechanical failure or the plane ran out of fuel. Either way the pilot maintained enough airspeed to avoid stalling and had the presence of mind to select the point of impact and the wherewithal to reach it. 🐼

Fire Drones

by Michael Scott Hill (West Yellowstone '95)

Early in 2015 I was asked by a leading Australian fire agency to discuss with their aviation planners issues related to the fire drone options they were evaluating. This is my third major airborne fire surveillance effort I've been selected to have a role in. I also recently had the fortune (or misfortune) of being passed a hot potato project to set up an experimental UAS/UAV project in Alaska, which I quickly became aware was a highly politicized subject. However, I learned a lot about this emerging technology from these projects. And so, after my recent conversations in Australia, I feel it's important to share a few of my general observations because it is imminently possible that many of us out in the fire field will soon also be passed other plates of hot potatoes when dealing with drones.



Mike Hill with Drone Team (Courtesy M. Hill)

I first became exposed to airborne surveillance systems during my years in Afghanistan, and then later while still there, I was selected as a leader of a related fire project.

The rapid developments I witnessed, across this short time, showed me how fast this technology evolutionary process will move, especially as companies and Universities now attempt to enter the international wildfire support industry. This hi-tech industry is a frontier and, as I've witnessed firsthand, many of its players are self-interested parties advertising much bigger abilities than they now have, while jockeying for their places to the starting line.

I've seen also in Afghanistan, that there's no way to stop these drone systems, as they now begin to appear throughout various non-military industries. I can see that they will one day be used in our daily lives, as they are by-products of the technological advances tied to our latest wars; just like helicopters, airtankers, and so many of the other tools we have all come to use in our various roles on fires.

Just as around us, other examples are beginning to appear, such as Amazon talking about using drones to deliver items. In Australia agricultural professionals are already using them for identifying weed locations, then spraying their exact locations with tanker drones. Meteorologists are using other drones for measuring climatic conditions, and still different devices are already being used as airborne radio repeaters. Recently, there was even news of a drone that deploys a defibrillator when emergency services are called in. International fish and game authorities are also using them to find poachers on protected coral reefs, while other countries are using others to detect landmines, and the list goes on.

Working on that project in Alaska, I found that firefighters in the US seem to have extreme polar reactions to accessing innovations in fire drone capabilities. On the one hand, some out there appear to see the possibilities drones can offer, yet on the other hand, a lot of others are passionately against their integration above the fire ground.

While working in Afghanistan, I witnessed both the benefits and negatives these machines can offer. The negatives were personal - I was on-board a helicopter that just narrowly escaped a mid-air collision with an out of control machine which its operator had lost control of because its flight computers had been wiped clean and afterwards the machine had been automatically placed into emergency landing mode.

Last summer I was exposed to the raw end of the emotional reactions of many firefighters' fears of drones being used in the fire context. There was a fear of future mid-air collisions with fire aircrafts, fears of drones moving rapidly up and down with thermals while operating in the stack, fears of drones taking away jobs that people enjoy, and yet other fears of drones being used by fire managers to micromanage and spy on firefighters as to how they are

working in the field. Opinions and emotions sure, run strong on the fire drone subject.

As my understanding of the technology grows, my own apprehension is changing to curiosity and acceptance, and so I have a message to send out to our jumper community and my former jumper bros.

Although drone technology is in its early stages in terms of what could be achieved, there is no way to stop a technological innovation such as this. We can try to ignore it, but it is here to stay. As with any new technology, the potential benefits need to be counterbalanced with the risks. I know collision avoidance and other issues are challenges for all of us, along with the real concern that the devices will need to be able to actually collect and disperse useable firefighter data. But we can't turn our backs on this because this technological wave is rising, and we have the opportunity to sink or swim with these tides of change. If we decide to embrace them and become a partner to assist in their development, we have the opportunity to help shape it and make it the most beneficial for all of us.

Fire drones are in their infancy and are being created by various entities that see this field as a huge potential money maker, thus largely approaching this new industry from a number of self-serving directions. Why not embrace the technological advances and help shape the young technology to help make our jobs safer and more efficient? The drones can add to all of our safety, and with an open mind, we will be able to come up with plenty of opportunities to use them to gain better situational awareness, to greatly improve our GIS capabilities and to provide much greater depths and quality of intel for our planning as we respond to incidents. They also have uses in training and risk management in situations with fire-ground unexploded ordnance, dangerous terrain, or maybe even in dealing with aggressive wildlife. They will have uses in numerous support roles as well, but surely, if we continue to discount them by refusing to assist in or politicize their development, then we could all end up with other drones that could be far from as safe as possible, and far from the best new tools we could possibly have to add into our firefighting tool box. 🚒

New Addition To The NSA Website

Fire and Jump Records for Region One and Three (New Mexico) are now accessible online by going to "Jumper Records" located at the bottom right hand corner of the NSA website. Other region's records will be added as they are digitized and made available to NSA.



Jerry Ogawa (MYC-67)



Mike McCracken (CJ-60)



Doug Houston (RAC-73)



Greg West



Guy Hurlbutt (IDC-62) & Roland Stoleson (MSO-56)



Missoula NSA

Photos & Layout: John



Fred Rohrbach (MSO-65)



David Lancaster (GAC-63), Gary Dalen



Bob Beckley (RAC-83)



Bob Betts (RDD-64)



Rod Mciver (MSO-64)



Chuck Flach



(FBX-64)



Jerry Schmidt (CJ-62)



Murry Taylor (RDD-65)



Larry Welch (CJ-61)

Reunion 2015

Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



(MSO-67) & Gerald Stolte (MSO-66)



Ted Putnam (MSO-66)



Audrey Banfill (RAC-06), Harold Hartman (CJ-65) & Charles Savoia (MSO-01)



(MSO-68)



Ben Musquez (MSO-56)



Salvador Garnica (MSO-82)



Jon Klingel (CJ-65)



SOUNDING OFF from the editor



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

75th Anniversary Reunion Was Great!

A FEW YEARS ago I did not attend the Alaska Smokejumper Reunion. I've been kicking myself ever since, but it was a good lesson learned. Never miss a smokejumper reunion.

It's taking a week to recover, but the "high" of this year's 75th Anniversary Reunion is still there. Missoula is about a 1,000 mile drive from Chico which, now days, is a two-day drive each way. I no longer do those 30-hour stints we used to do coming back from Alaska at the end of the season.

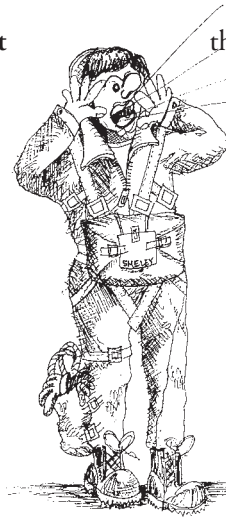
Looking at registrar Sandy Evenson's figures, it shows we had over 800 in attendance. Outstanding! We all need to give a lot of thanks for the hard work that **Jim Phillips** (MSO-67) and his crew (**Jim Scofield**/MSO-66, **Geno Bassette**/MSO-80, **Jim**

Sweaney/MSO-67, **Dwight Chambers**/MSO-66 and **Sandy Evenson**) put in over the past year and more. These numbers certainly determine that there will be another National Reunion in the future. That possibility was questionable before the success of this event.

I started to Missoula with my little Tacoma so loaded with merchandise that I had to fly my wife to the event. It was a scene right out of the "Beverly Hillbillies." **Harold Hartman** (CJ-65) met me in Eugene with a big brand new Dodge pickup. Along with **Dave Laws** (RAC-66) we made the drive north.

After the Thursday NSA board meeting, we hit the Adams Center about 1000 on Friday and worked the merchandise tables through to the Sunday memorial service. Many thanks to **John McDaniel** (CJ-57) and his wife, **Marceil**, **Judy Cherry**, **Denis Symes** (MYC-63), **Harold Hartman**, **Dr. Bob Bartlett**, and my wife, **K.G.**, for putting in those long hours at the tables. It was a pleasure talking to many of you and putting a face with a name, however brief the conversation. I type so many of your names in the database that I almost know your hometowns.

Doug Houston (RAC) has to be the master of the "Silent Auction." Along with his long-time friend **Gary "Gramps" Johnson** (RDD-69), they put out a display that will be hard to equal in any future event. The earnings from



the auction will go a long way in helping our organization.

I've been working with **Dr. Bob Bartlett** for about a year now on **Triple Nickle** history. When **Bob** first contacted me, I told him that the story had some warts. That didn't slow him down and he has researched the **TN** for over a year. We continue to share information.

I asked the reunion committee for an hour and a half on Saturday afternoon for **Bob** to make a presentation. My mistake was that I underestimated the audience. **Bob** made a level,

Looking at registrar Sandy Evenson's figures, it shows we had over 800 in attendance.

excellent presentation before a standing-room-only crowd - will double the size of the room next time, **Bob**. It was one of the highlights of the reunion.

I want to convince any of you who are on the fence about attending a reunion that you need to make the decision to come. If you do not attend, you are missing an opportunity that probably will not be repeated. Make a note to get to the next one! 🍄



Wall Poster from Reunion (Courtesy Bob Beckley)

RECORDING MORE SMOKEJUMPER HISTORY

A Smokejumper Crew At Work

By P.A. Thompson, Chief Division of Fire Control, Washington Office, USFS

The following comes from a July 1946 periodical titled "Fire Control Notes," published by the USFS, and has been condensed to save space. The 1945 season was critical because of a lack of manpower due to WWII. Note what can be done with only 36 jumpers and prompt, quick, initial attack. I have underlined some points of emphasis. Please note the last sentence of this report. (Ed.)

The following is a brief account of the experiences and accomplishments of the 36-man smokejumper crew stationed at McCall, Idaho, during the 1945 season. (They were members of the CPS-103 conscientious objectors smoke-jumper unit. Ed.)

These 36 flying firemen were trained to parachute to fires in the forested mountains of the Northwest. There is no more rugged terrain in the US.

Lightning fires started on July 11, and the season ended on September 16 when the last jumpers walked out from the Fritzer Creek Fire on the Payette N.F. Between these dates, the 36 jumpers made 231 fire jumps on 66 fires. Of these fires, 46 were suppressed by two jumpers; 12 fires required from three to five jumpers,

and five fires required from six to ten jumpers. Three fires required from 11 to 29 jumpers.

On August 2, 1945, 21 jumpers from McCall and eight from Missoula parachuted to the Acorn Fire. On this day the burning index was 73 (extremely high), and winds varied from 10 to 30 miles per hour. The report states, "It was on this fire that the ground winds re-inflated cargo chutes and dragged 125-pound cargo up 100 percent slopes." *Nevertheless, this fire was promptly controlled at less than 100 acres.*

On September 2 on the Fritzer Creek Fire, the burning index was 85 and winds from 15 to 25 mph. Six men jumped the first evening. On September 3, the *burning index was 92* with increased winds. Nineteen additional men were jumped in one sector. The report states, "They alone stopped this fire on a critical 1-mile flank that was sweeping into adjacent drainages. The saving over ground crews here was probably 1,000 acres. *The 25 smokejumpers handled the most difficult one-third of this fire at one-eighth the cost.*"

This was a busy crew. The 36 jumpers spent 830 days on fires and put in 5,025 overtime hours. This means that for the nine-week fire season, these 36 men

worked at fire suppression the equivalent of 60 percent of the total man-days available.

The cost section of the report is of particular interest. For purposes of comparison, reports of fires which occurred in former years in fire weather, topography, and fuel conditions comparable to the 1945 fires were studied. A total of 33 comparable fires were found that the region describes conditions as "identical" with 33 of the 1945 fires. FF costs of the comparable fires suppressed by ground forces were \$92,393 more than the

cost of fighting the 1945 fires with smokejumpers.

The total cost of the 1945 smokejumper operation was \$23,112. The men were C.O.'s, so were not paid wages. A comparable crew will cost about \$60,000 at present wage scales.

These figures are quite significant and afford pretty convincing evidence that the aerial method of transporting men to fires in remote country is good business.

There were no lost-time accidents. 🐼

The 2015 Reunion Silent Auction A Huge Success

by Doug Houston (Redmond '73)

The totals for the Silent Auction are not final; however, it will be over \$16,000 when we are all done. Nota bad.

This total relates to all of you who donated. Just a lot of people stepped up and kept bringing stuff, even on Sunday. For me, pulling this all together, the highlight was being able to talk to jumpers from the 40s, 50s, 60s and up to present day.

You don't get the opportunity to talk to guys the likes of Wally Henderson (MYC-46), Ron Swensson (MSO-57), Ron Stoleson (MSO-56), Dick Behan (MSO-55), Fred Rohrbach (MSO-65), Lee Gossett (RDD-57), Mike Leisz (MSO-82), Bill Duffey (MSO-71), Bob Miller (MSO-61), Larry Nelsen (MSO-56), Bruce Marshall (BOI-71), Nate Nygaard (MSO-65), Don Baker (MSO-65), John Helmer (RDD-59), and the list goes on and on.

And, how often do you see a cardboard Ford Trimotor for sale? It was really coool stuff, and people really felt good about bidding because of the quality of items and

the "unique" side of some of those.

I owe a lot of thanks to my hunting buddy and long-time friend Gary Johnson (RDD-69), Bear Stauss (MSO-82), Bruce Ford (MSO-75), Bob Beckley (RAC-83) & wife, Tom Boatner (FBX-80), Sandy Evenson, Jack Kirkendall (MSO-74) and others who chipped in to help out with setup and takedown. Great work.

We also owe a lot of thanks to

Adrienne, from the University, and her crew who just kept bringing out more tables. At one time, mentioning tables was not a good thing with Adrienne, but it all pulled together as more and more people kept coming in with stuff.

So, as this is written, I am still trying to mail items to people who were the winners and hope to have that done in a week or so. Great job to all and thanks. 🐼

75 Years of Smokejumpers 1940-2014

This spiral-bound directory contains the names of all 5,884 smokejumpers who completed training during the first 75 years of smokejumping.

The alphabetical list contains the names of all smokejumpers. The book also features each base with their rookies listed chronologically by year trained.

The last time this listing was done by Roger Savage (MSO-56) was for the 2000 National Reunion in Redding and it sold out in a short amount of time.

All-Time Smokejumpers listing \$20/\$4 Shipping. Use the order form on the merchandise insert. 🐼



Karl Seethaler (MSO-55)



John Manley (CJ-62)



Jack Cahill (MSO-58)



Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



Missoula NSA Reunion 2015

Photos & Layout: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



T.J. Thompson (MSO-55)



Phisit Indradat



Barry Reed (MSO-60)



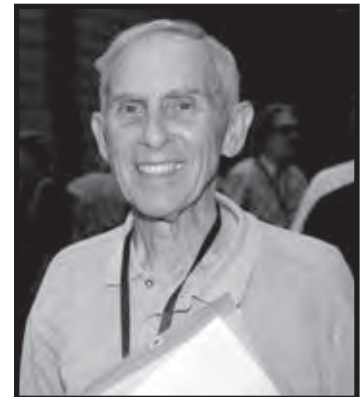
Lee Gossett (RDD-57)



Ken Hessel (MYC-58)



Gary Hannon (MSO-60)



Tom Butler (MSO-61)

To Bid Or Not To Bid – A Tale Of Brotherly Love

by Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

There were many fine moments at the 75th Year Celebration of Smokejumping in Missoula. Seeing so many fellow jumpers and friends was the heart of it. We all knew we were—and still are—part of something that had profoundly influenced our lives, making them special in a way that only a jumper can know. For those who may not have heard, I'd like to relate one happening in particular. It has to do with the beautiful, commemorative painting done by fine artist **Davis Perkins** (NCSB-72). When the bidding began on Friday, a minimum of \$3000 was written on the bid sheet. Some Alaska jumpers—I say Alaska because most of their years jumping were spent in the “Big A” - got together and decided to start the process and so upped the bid to \$3500. The initial group (14 of jumpings' best) decided that, if they got the painting, they'd hold a big flip and heads out for it later. Thinking they'd surely not get it for such a low figure, the gesture was made mainly to excite the bidding.

Sometime between Friday and Saturday afternoon, someone raised the bid to \$3600. Just before the Saturday evening banquet, thinking that amount too low, our jumper group upped it to \$4000. Shortly thereafter the bid was upped to \$4100. The jumpers held a conference discussing what to do next. Rumor was the bidding was to end at 6:00 PM, so time was running out. In the meantime, Chuck Sheley's wife, K.G., knew he wanted the painting but was hesitant to make a bid. She said she needed time to think. Moments later K.G. tapped Chuck on the shoulder and agreed that they should go up to \$5000. Chuck met with **Rod Dow** (MYC-68) and explained their intentions and that they would not bid further if our group wanted to take the painting for \$5100. Rod returned to our group to discuss whether or not to bid against Chuck? **Tom Boatner** (FBX-80) was emphatic, “No!” he asserted, “Chuck Sheley has done more for this outfit than any jumper I know, and we should not go against him.” Our group immediately agreed. But what to do about the fact that the NSA had paid Davis \$7000 for the painting and now stood to lose \$2000 if it was purchased for \$5000. Then, Rod said, “Hey guys, what about we each put in \$150 and cover the loss. It would also make sure that Chuck gets the painting.” Again, the group instantly agreed.

A couple members of our group went upstairs happy that Chuck and K.G. had the high bid. Due to some confusion that the bid on the painting ended at 6:00 p.m., another jumper thought that he had purchased that item. The ex-jumper was justifiably upset. He was a longtime consistent and hearty supporter of the NSA. Chuck respected him very much. This was a potentially difficult situation.

After some tense moments the situation was resolved, thanks to the understanding and generosity of this good fellow. Chuck and K.G. got the painting, and we all rode off into the sunset singing Kumbaya.

This tale goes to the heart of smokejumping: Bros coming together, doing the right thing, for the right reasons, in the spirit of brotherhood.

Members of the jumper group: (Turned out to be 18 at the end)

Jeff Bass (MYC-77), **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65), **Jeff Fereday** (MYC-70), **Bob Mauck** (FBX-79), **Evan Simmons** (IDC-68), **Andy Anderson** (MYC-74), **Davis Perkins** (NCSB-72), **Rod Dow** (MYC-68), **Allen Biller** (FBX-82), **Tom Boatner** (FBX-80), **Kent Harper** (RDD-75), **Jon Larson** (FBX-89), **Tom Romanello** (FBX-88), **Dave Stephens** (FBX-76), **Bob Collins** (RAC-69), **Jerry Timmons** (MSO-62), **Rodger Vorce** (FBX-82) and **George Steele** (NCSB-72) 🍷

Are You Going To Be “Temporarily Away”?

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

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

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

A FRIEND AND I went to Greybull, Wyo., in June for the grand opening of the Greybull Museum of Flight and Aerial Firefighting. The museum currently has five aircraft on display: a Beech D-18 former smokejumper ship; two C-119 Flying Box Cars; and two Consolidated PB4Y-2s, tankers 126 and 127.

If you were around before 2002, you certainly remember tankers 126 and 127. The fuselages on the Y-2s are still stained with retardant.

Parking for the museum is at the state rest area on U.S. Highway 20 West. The museum has a large footprint and there are plans to add aircraft. There is a bone yard – closed to the public – on the airport property, and there were approximately 30 large airplanes there the day we visited, waiting to be scrapped – including about 25 C-130s.

Visit the museum on the web at www.museumofflight.us.

Over the last couple of years I have seen a lot of crew photos

from Type I and Type II crews on social media. What I don't see are very many women. The photos generally show no women, with occasionally one or two at the most.

It seems the number of women on hand crews is decreasing. I mentioned this to **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) and he agreed that this is indeed the case.

I refer you to Chuck's very good article on upper-body strength from a few issues ago that is also posted on the NSA website.

To quote Chuck: "During the last 17 years of my 32-year firefighting career, I ran the Type II Crew program on the Mendocino National Forest. We put out 10-13 crews a summer and trained over 3,500 rookie wildland firefighters during that time. We drew heavily on Chico State and UC Davis students, as well as some of the best graduating seniors in the Chico area.

"At a time when the USFS was strapped with the Consent Decree, we had 33 percent women and minorities in the program and produced some outstanding firefighters. Twenty-three went on to become smokejumpers and some are still at it today. One became a smokejumper base manager. I mention this to emphasize the quality of people we were able to put into the field."

I am reminded that 25 percent of the 1994 Prineville Hotshots members were women. The numbers seem to concur with Chuck's conclusions. We are losing good candidates to an

outdated requirement that really isn't job-related.

A tip of the hard hat to **Eric Hipke** (NCSB-90), who received the 2014 Paul Gleason Lead By Example Award, joining

I have seen a lot of photos from crews on social media. What I don't see are very many women.

recipients Kevin Donham, Kip Gray, Alex Robertson and Bryan Scholz, all former Prineville Hotshots. The award honored them for their work on the now internationally-recognized South Canyon Staff Ride.

The nomination is too long to be reprinted here, but one paragraph reads: "The most appreciated accomplishment contributed by this outstanding group of wildland fire leaders is their commitment to setting the example of what a 'learning organization' should reflect, their dedication to sharing their story with others and most importantly the dedication in honoring their fallen comrades."

The full text of the nomination can be found on the *Wildfire Today* website.

At deadline we have not heard anything new on the status of the West Yellowstone base. Breaking news is always available on the NSA website and on the NSA Facebook page. 📱

Ram-Air Provides Considerably More Control, Confidence

by Travis Clark (West Yellowstone '13)

As a second-year smokejumper, the thought of learning a new parachute system was intimidating, to say the least. I had heard the rumors and read articles portraying the Ram-Air canopy as a dangerous and unpredictable system.

As nervous as I was, I was excited when I learned of being selected for the training. I knew the expectations would be set high for me as a less-experienced jumper. The fear of failing the training resonated deeply and my desire to perform well would be very stressful for me.

The first week of training consisted of packing the DC-7 (*square built by Airborne Systems-Ed.*) parachute, which I thought was very beneficial. It gave me a thorough understanding of how the parachute flies, and a working knowledge of its components.

The following two weeks were filled with hundreds of repetitions of parachute hookups, buddy checks, malfunction procedures, flight theory and aircraft procedures. After successfully completing the units test, we were ready for our first jump. The pre-jump nerves were soon replaced with excitement and adrenaline as I exited the Twin Otter.

The jump went well for all of the students, and I knew that I was going to enjoy jumping the system. The

amount of control that I felt was exponential to that of the FS-14. The training progressed in a way that each jump presented a new objective, flight theory, and/or terrain challenge.

Each jump instilled confidence with the system and with my piloting skills, while teaching me valuable lessons on how the parachute handled and reacted to the environment in which it was operating.

Upon completion of the new Ram-Air training, I felt more assured in my ability to land safely in the jump spot than I did after rookie training on the FS-14. The Ram-Air canopy may not be right for every situation, but I believe it is a great tool. It gives you the ability to control your flight path as well as your landing.

The trainers gave us the appropriate skills needed to fly and land the canopy in a safe manner. If we follow that training, the probability of suffering an injury will greatly diminish.

Smokejumping is a dynamic environment, the conditions and missions change constantly, and I believe that the Ram-Air canopy and the Ram-Air training is more than capable of meeting these challenges and the demands that will be placed on the program in the future. 🍄

A Seasonal Snookie's Ram-Air Ruminations

by Tyler Keith (West Yellowstone '13)

“What did I get myself into?”

That was my first reflection upon accepting a position to the 2014 Region 1 Ram-Air training program on behalf of the West Yellowstone Smokejumper Base. I had reason to be wary: 2013 was my rookie season for West. We trained on the FS-14; and it was challenging and stressful, yet very rewarding.

It's easy to reflect on rookie training with such brevity now. I've purged the sleepless nights, terrible days, and fear of washing from my memory. Therefore, the thought of going through that one more time on a different canopy was ... somewhat daunting.

There were other reasons for apprehension. It's no secret there has been a lot of discussion

regarding the proposed Ram-Air transition within the Region 1 smokejumper bases. “Discussion” is a bit of an understatement. I can't recall the amount of conversations (during my rookie season and the long winter afterward) in which the effectiveness of the canopy was discussed.

At work, on fires, in the airplane en route to a fire, on

blogs, during refresher training – let’s face it, smokejumpers love to talk, to challenge, to debate. We’re generally opinionated type-A personalities, and love a good, heated discussion. Therefore, the apprehension came as no surprise to me.

However, I attempted to take no part in the ongoing discussion. I wanted to go through the training with my own opinion, hopefully make it through all of the phases, and formulate my own experience-based judgments.

It turned out the training was very rigorous and demanding. Big surprise there. Jump counts, flight patterns, malfunction procedures, emergency procedures, flight characteristics of the DC-7 (*square built by Airborne Systems-Ed.*) ... repetition, repetition, repetition. It felt like a different dialect of the same language. And I felt the same amount of stress as during rookie training, if not more so.

The cadre of trainers was well-prepared. They demanded results, if the students were to keep ahead of the training curve. And I experienced the same sleepless nights. Big surprise there.

But as we trudged along, some bizarre part of my consciousness began to enjoy the training process. It was rigorous, but required. When we came to the jump phase, I experienced the same mixed feelings of tension and excitement as during rookie training.

Jumping a DC-7 was ridiculously fun. Fact. Bomb turns – well, they’re hard to describe. Of course, during the course of the 23 jumps of new-man training, I worried constantly about poor performance, poor exits, poor patterns, tight jump spots ... but I slowly began to develop the beginnings of a sound understand-

ing of the canopy.

I learned how to sink it; not very well, initially. I learned what it felt like to “get it flying again.” I learned about the similar principles of jumping an FS-14: get to the spot, land into the wind. That simplified maxim, espoused by one of my trainers, may be on the abbreviated side – but it was extremely effective. This isn’t rocket science.

I mentioned how a Ram-Air canopy is extremely fun. It is also extremely high-performance. This is a two-way street. With this performance comes the (obvious) responsibility. You can hurt yourself on this canopy. I’ve witnessed this firsthand.

But, from my limited frame of reference, I’ve realized how effective a Ram-Air canopy can be to getting to the ground safely, in many different conditions. I feel

much more comfortable in higher winds. I understand the challenge of tight timber spots, and plan accordingly.

Unlike my jumps on a FS-14, I no longer get out of the plane and beg for drive. I no longer get out of the plane and agonize over splitting the spot with my JP. I no longer hammer to the ground with bone-jarring PLFs (most of the time).

A challenging jump spot is a challenging jump spot, regardless of the canopy. I realize my experience is limited, and I most certainly have no “salt.” But I wanted the training, I wanted the challenge, and I really enjoy the canopy. I think it is extremely effective. I see no point in the partisan squabbling, and will continue to stay out of it. I will continue to jump and continue to learn. 🦋

CIA Trailblazer Award

By Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

The following information is taken from the CIA website

Established in 1997, the Trailblazer Award recognizes CIA officers whose leadership, achievements, and dedication to mission had a significant impact on the Agency’s history and legacy. The CIA presents the Trailblazer Medallion annually on the Agency’s birthday.

Trailblazers’ accomplishments range from laying the groundwork for remarkable clandestine collection achievements to analyzing weapons intelligence that has contributed significantly to national arms control policies.

“The Trailblazer Award was proposed by the CIA50 Steering Committee, comprised of officers from across the Agency, as a way to recognize CIA officers, from the Office of Strategic Services days to present, who by their actions, example, and innovations or initiative have taken the CIA in important new directions and helped shape the Agency’s history.”

Wouldn’t it be a great honor for one or more former smokejumpers to receive such a prestigious award? Who knows? It might happen one day! Or, it might have already happened, but we can’t print the name and honor that person at this time.

Order using the form on the insert!

SMOKEJUMPER MERCHANDISE



With these fine caps, style is now your game

Choose from the smooth nylon of the **navy blue SMOKEJUMPERS cap** (top), the dignified **khaki twill U.S. Forest Service Smokejumpers** (right) or the unique design on soft **cotton rich royal blue logo cap of the history-packed Siskiyou Smokejumper Base** from Cave Junction, Ore. All feature attention-grabbing style and long-lasting construction! The SMOKEJUMPERS cap offers gold embroidery and trim with a velcro strap. The U.S. Forest Service cap has a brass buckle and green-and-white "sandwich"-style bill, while the Siskiyou's cap is a rich royal blue with khaki bill and brass headband buckle. Why not order one of each?

• SMOKEJUMPERS cap \$20 • USFS Smokejumpers cap \$16 • Siskiyou Smokejumper Base cap \$16



Compact technology: Your all-time NSA record

This handy thumb drive contains every edition of *The Static Line* (1993-99) and *Smokejumper* magazine (1999-present) ever published. Looking for an article about the early days of jumping? Trying to find a name of a smokejumper once featured in a story? Now you have total access. Makes an excellent, environmentally friendly gift! **\$24**

Pin up this great new style

Stylish SMOKEJUMPERS logo pin with our new logo looks fantastic on a cap or lapel. Stays secure with double-post fasteners. Shiny chrome finish. *Order several ... you get FREE shipping!* **\$3**



You've been framed!

Top of this license plate frame reads "Jumpin' Fires" while the bottom reads "Smokejumpers." White letters on a black background. Buy one for each of your vehicles, and save!



\$3 each, or two for \$5

Polo shirt that brings you style and comfort! How will you wear it?

Honeycomb pique ... it offers breathability and outright comfort – combined with sharp, crisp looks – better than anything on the market. You get it all with this outstanding polo-style shirt ... with the SMOKEJUMPERS logo embroidered on the chest in gold.

Thanks to its outstanding style, this shirt looks great on the golf course, tennis court or with a pair of cotton slacks. Wear it to "dress up" a pair of jeans. You can't go wrong! M, L, XL and XXL. **Navy blue only.** **\$32**



Are you still hangin' around?

These high-quality t-shirts feature spectacular artwork of an "old" smokejumper dangling from a tree. Ash-gray t-shirt will withstand many years of washing. Perfect for the gym, around the house or around town! M, L, XL and XXL. **\$17**



Our most popular t-shirt!

People love this shirt ... and the quantity we've sold proves it! Shirt features stylized "SMOKEJUMPERS" on the front with fabulous artwork of jumping action on back. Hazy light blue (M, L, XL, XXL) with short sleeves. **\$17**



Movie inspired many dreams of smokejumping for young men

Loosely based on the Mann Gulch Fire in which 12 jumpers and a firefighter died, "Red Skies of Montana" fascinated many young men about life "out West." Released in 1952. **\$15**



Exhaustive DVD tells the story of smokejumping from beginning

"Smokejumpers: Firefighters From the Sky" is a definitive record of smokejumping, featuring 120 minutes of history from 1939 to 2000. Footage filmed at current bases and in the field. **\$15**



ODDS AND ENDS



by **Chuck Sheley**

Congratulations and thanks to **Mike Apicello** (CJ-78), **Zuri Betz** (NIFC-02), **Jeff R. Davis** (MSO-57), **William Schroeder** (MSO-61), **Nate Nygaard** (MSO-65), **Bob Aliber** (MSO-51), **Neil Rylander** (MSO-61), **Dave Shultz** (MSO-61) and **Lee Gossett** (RDD-57) who just became our latest Life Members.

Jerry E. Schmidt (CJ-62): "Chuck, I want you to know that I very much appreciate the NSA Magazine, the information included, and all that you do to keep it going. I only jumped two years, but being a smokejumper is one of my points of pride in my life and I appreciate that.

"I enjoyed the April 2015 edition the most because of all the organization and "Pioneer" history discussed one place."

Terry Egan (CJ-65): "Chuck, I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the history issue (April) of *Smokejumper* magazine. As a smokejumper and former college history professor, I believe it is important that we ensure that WE tell our history and not some outside 'experts.' Good job!"

From NSA Website: "My name is Annie Calloway. I am the daughter of Pfc Cornelius Washington. He was with the Co. C, 555th Parachute Inf. Bn (Triple Nickles). He took his training at Fort Benning, Ga. He became a parachutist on March 16, 1945. He was called to go to Pendleton, OR. as a military smokejumper. He often talks about the tall timber in Oregon. He was one of the jumpers with **Malvin L. Brown**, who lost his life in the jump. I don't know if he witnessed his jump, but my dad was one of the troopers who carried his body to the road. Pfc. Cornelius Washington is still alive. He is now 96 years old and very alert."

Jim Clatworthy (MSO-56): "Wow! Fantastic work on 'The Pioneers' issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. This one issue will become the benchmark history on the beginning of the Smokejumpers. Hopefully, the US Forest Service will now understand the true origin of the Smokejumpers and see to it that their public relations people have copies so they don't derail a national treasure."



Davis Perkins (NCSB-72) is on a medical relief team that travels internationally to disasters to administer aid and help. He recently sent me this email from Katmandu, Nepal: "Back in Katmandu. Our team was up in the mountains. Never before seen such destruction Chuck.

Entire villages in rubble. Many fatalities. Ours was the first western team up there, and we were able to accomplish a lot."

Dick Flaharty (MSO-44): "Hi, Chuck. I decided to do a phone-around on our old mailing list to see how many of the CPS Smokejumpers were still alive. I was able to reach the following: **Ned Arnett**-age 92+ (MSO-45), **Warren Downs**-age 91 (MSO-45), **Erling Gamble** age-90 (MSO-44), **Louis Goossen** age-96 (MSO-43), and **Weir Stone** age-93 (MSO-43)."

*Add **Luke Birky** (MSO-45), **Donald Hostetler** (CJ-45), and **Jim Brunk** (MSO-45) to that list. (Ed.)*

Judy Meyer (Associate-daughter of **Lloyd Johnson** MYC-43): "Chuck, Sorry Dad cannot attend the reunion in July. He will be 99 on June 2nd and will be in Missoula in Spirit."

Lloyd was the first Base Manager at McCall (Ed.)

Larry Loritz (MSO-60): "**Hal Samsel's** (MSO-49) passing gave me cause to reflect on the Kelly Mountain Fire, Nez Perce NF. I was one of 16 to make an easy jump into a meadow of tall, dry grass. Hal was the foreman. We lost several lines as the fire moved up the ridge. Hal was denied permission to backfire at the top, although I don't think it would have been successful. Within about 50 yards of our ridge line, the fire was spotting on the other side. We retreated to a rock pile and watched it roll over the top. It burned up all our jump gear.

"Numbers for individual fire jumps for one season were set in 1961 that haven't been exceeded. I think **Bruce Yergenson** (MYC-54) had the most at 28."

In a June 2, 2015, USFS news release titled "Smoke Jumping Into History, *the USFS continues to flow forth with inaccurate information on the Triple Nickles*. This misinformation seems to originate from Deidra McGee, a USFS employee "who has been promoting the Triple Nickles since 1994." The article calls the Triple

Nickles “some of the most lionized smokejumpers in Forest Service history.”

Obviously it will never end as long as the USFS continues to rewrite history. It seems that anyone can make up their own set of facts as long as they are politically correct.

Tom Butler (MSO-61): “I sure enjoyed the July 2015 magazine. You’ve done a great job editing it, and your article about ex-smokejumpers who worked in Laos was well-written and quite informative. I do have a couple more names to put on the list.

“**Claude Greiner** (MSO-54) worked in Vientiane as a kicker for Continental Air Services. His brother, **Sam** (MSO-54), worked for USAID in Sam Tong (LS-20), just over the hill from Long Cheng. Sam was later killed in a helicopter crash (*Alaska-Ed.*). All three, great people who would give you the shirt off their back if you needed it.”

Eugene, Oregon, Register-Guard (June 17, 2015): “A former executive was sentenced to nearly 13 years in prison after admitting that he provided false performance specifications to win a firefighting contract for a helicopter that crashed on a 2008 fire in California, killing seven firefighters and two pilots. The deaths rank as the worst toll of working firefighters in a helicopter crash in US history.

“The helicopter crashed while taking off with members of a Grayback Forestry crew from Merlin, Oregon, who were being pulled off the line on the Iron 44 Fire outside Weaverville, California.”

Several members have called in informing me that **Fritz Wolfrum** (MSO-53) needs to be added to “The List” of smokejumpers working for the CIA. The list of jumpers working for the agency outside of the U.S. now stands at 99.

Jumpers working on agency projects inside the U.S. include: **Doug Bell** (MSO-58), **Jim Black** (MSO-58), **Leonard Krout** (MSO-46), **Bill Murphy** (MSO-56), **Roger Savage** (MSO-57) and **Dick Tracy** (MSO-53).

Todd Jinkins (NIFC-98): “The Boise Smokejumpers will be celebrating their 30-year reunion May 27-29th, 2016. The base was established Aug. 3, 1986, when seventeen Alaska jumpers transferred to Boise. We will get you more details to publish as we get them. We will also have two retirements coming up this fall. **Dennis Geving** (MYC-89) and **Frank Clements** (NCSB-88) will both be retiring at the end of this year.”

Mitch Brauneis, youngest son of **Karl Brauneis** (MSO-77), was recently awarded the Wyoming State Citizen Soldier of the Year by the American Legion. Mitch is also a member of the Wyoming Hotshots. Congratulations to Mitch and Karl.

Fred Donner (MSO-59): “Was indeed sorry to read of the passing of old friend **Fred Rungee** (MSO-45), a CPS-103 jumper. We met at an airline check-in counter in Seattle in March 1956, spent a day in Seattle waiting for the flight, and flew to Alaska together to be BLM fire guards. I was at Tanacross/Tok and Fred was at Glenallen so we saw each other on occasion. We reconnected at 1995 Missoula reunion. Fred told me he had a choice in 1945 of working in a mental hospital or going to the smokejumper crew. It could be argued there isn’t much difference, then or now, with some crazy people in both.”

Chuck Sheley (CJ-59): “Some people were confused by the cover with **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49) standing at the top of Mann Gulch in the rimrock. The photo is a compilation of a shot that *Smokejumper* magazine editor **Johnny Kirkley** (CJ-64) took and a Life Magazine photo of Sallee. Johnny shot the photo of the rimrock a couple years ago when he went to the Mann Gulch site. I thought the cover was a great job showing a young jumper near the spot where he escaped from the fire. I had no idea anyone would think it was an original photo. My “big” as an amateur editor trying to do his best. Apologies to all who thought this was an original shot. I’ll try to do better next time.”

Chuck Sheley (CJ-59): “Several NSA Life Members told me their Life Member caps were worn out and they wanted to replace them. Any Life Members wanting to do so need to send me \$20 and I’ll have a replacement on the way. My contact info is on page three.”

Chuck Sheley (CJ-59): “Alaska Smokejumper Base Manager **Bill Cramer** (NIFC-90) alerted us (NSA) to some needs of one of his jumpers. **Billy McCall** (FBX-12) and his wife, Patty, are the proud parents of a son, Loudon, born 7/15/2015. Loudon has some medical problems which are being treated. Thanks to your giving as members of the NSA, I was able to quickly send them a check from our Good Samaritan Fund to provide some help to the McCall family. Thoughts and prayers for the McCall family and many thanks to you, the NSA family for making this possible.”

MacAlan Thompson (NSA website): “Chuck, Greetings from Bangkok. Liked your writeup of the Lao trip, good one. I’ll be passing it along to various friends. And no, I was never a smokejumper. I met **Fred** (Rohrbach) a couple years back prior to his first Lao run. Interesting guy for sure. I also knew **Jerry “Hog” Daniels** (MSO-58), mainly through our joint work here in Thailand on the refugee program.” Mac, USAID/Laos 1966-75, retired in Thailand. 🐼

Clarification



Smokejumper Cover October 2014



Life Magazine Photo 1949

The tree stump is no longer in the crevice, however another crevice photo i shot at the same time from a different angle matches an earlier photo taken by Dick Mangan.

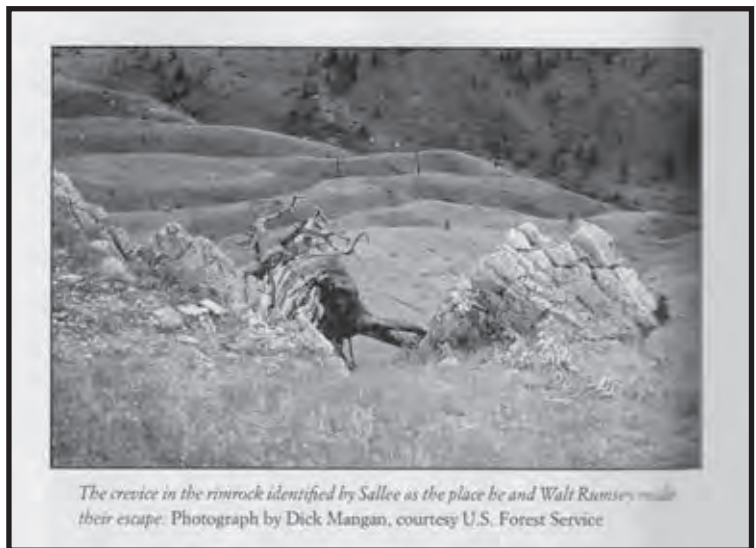
The right side of the crevice and the lower terrain are identical.

If there are any other questions concerning the October 2014 issue or any other photos printed in Smokejumper Magazine please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,
Johnny Kirkley, Photo Editor
johnny@alohafirst.com



Photograph by Johnny Kirkley 2013



The crevice in the rimrock identified by Sallee as the place he and Walt Ramsey made their escape. Photograph by Dick Mangan, courtesy U.S. Forest Service

More Changes in Smokejumper History It Never Ends

From 2014 *Quadrennial Fire Review*, developed by Booz Allen Hamilton on behalf of: USDA Forest Service Fire & Aviation Management “After the war (WWII), the establishment of cadres of parachute-trained firefighters known as smokejumpers and the acquisition of surplus military aircraft and ground vehicles used in suppression efforts further ingrained the militarization of wildland fire management.”

The myth continues that smokejumping was a result of the use of paratroopers during WWII. This continues to be reflected by USFS documents and comments by USFS personnel.

The Daily Missoulian, September 2, 1943

Major General William Lee, of the U.S. Army Air Force, recently told the world that the Forest Service parachute training assignments and experiments had stepped up or speeded Army parachute development by six months.

He is an officer who knows more than most about it, as in 1940 he was in Missoula and in Nine Mile with the original parachute jumping squadron experiments in this region, which have since been adapted generally.

(Lee used his observations to establish the first paratrooper facility at Fort Benning, Georgia. He became known as the “father of the airborne paratroopers,” and commanded the 101st Airborne Division, the “Screaming Eagles,” during WWII.)

Missoulian July 9, 2015, article by Kim Briggeman on the 75th anniversary of the first fire jumps quotes a current smokejumper in reference to the 1940s smokejumpers: “They had these primitive jumpsuits and they didn’t have facemasks.”

The two-piece jumpsuit with high collar and suspenders was

developed in 1939. Wire facemasks were added to the football type helmets in 1939. Note the 1939 photo. The same basic design that is currently used by smokejumpers was very similar to the 1939 original design. Materials have changed from the original canvas and felt padding to current-day materials and pads.

In the recent book “Operation Firefly” by Liane Young, the Triple Nickles are credited with coming up with the idea to wear football helmets. From the book: “Your idea to wear football helmets was brilliant. And Forest Service headquarters has taken it on. They’re working with a Montana company to redesign the front guard piece, and when they’re finished we’re going to issue them as part of the smokejumper’s standard equipment.”

The book is a novel but later in the “Author’s Notes” is the statement, “The following are just some of the truths that were woven into the story. The Triple Nickles did use football helmets to jump, and the Forest Service adopted the practice.”

Please keep searching the Internet and news outlets for articles on smokejumping. Catch the statements that are not based on accurate history. Let’s do our best to set the record straight before it all vanishes into the past. 🇺🇸



Frank and Virgil Derry Display Jumpsuit Pants Unzipped with Helmet on Ground 1939. (NSA Files)

BOOK REVIEW

Author Announces New Book On D.B. Cooper Mystery

Author Bruce A. Smith has recently published *D.B. Cooper and the FBI – A Case Study of America's Only Unsolved Skyjacking*.

This work, the first encyclopedic treatment of this iconic crime, is replete with analyses of the primary suspects and the more than 900 confessions, along with dozens of interviews with FBI agents, flight crew and passengers.

However, *D.B. Cooper and the FBI* is more than just a true-crime thriller – it is also an examination of the FBI's investigation itself.

This book reveals many missteps by the FBI, such as the disappearance of their most critical piece of evidence – the eight cigarette butts the skyjacker left aboard the aircraft. Sadly, these were the best source for D.B. Cooper's DNA.

More troubling, though, the case is filled with sloppy record keeping, poor police work, and inexplicable decisions – such as postponing the ground search for five months – or the Bureau's inability to pinpoint exactly where the plane was when D.B. Cooper parachuted.

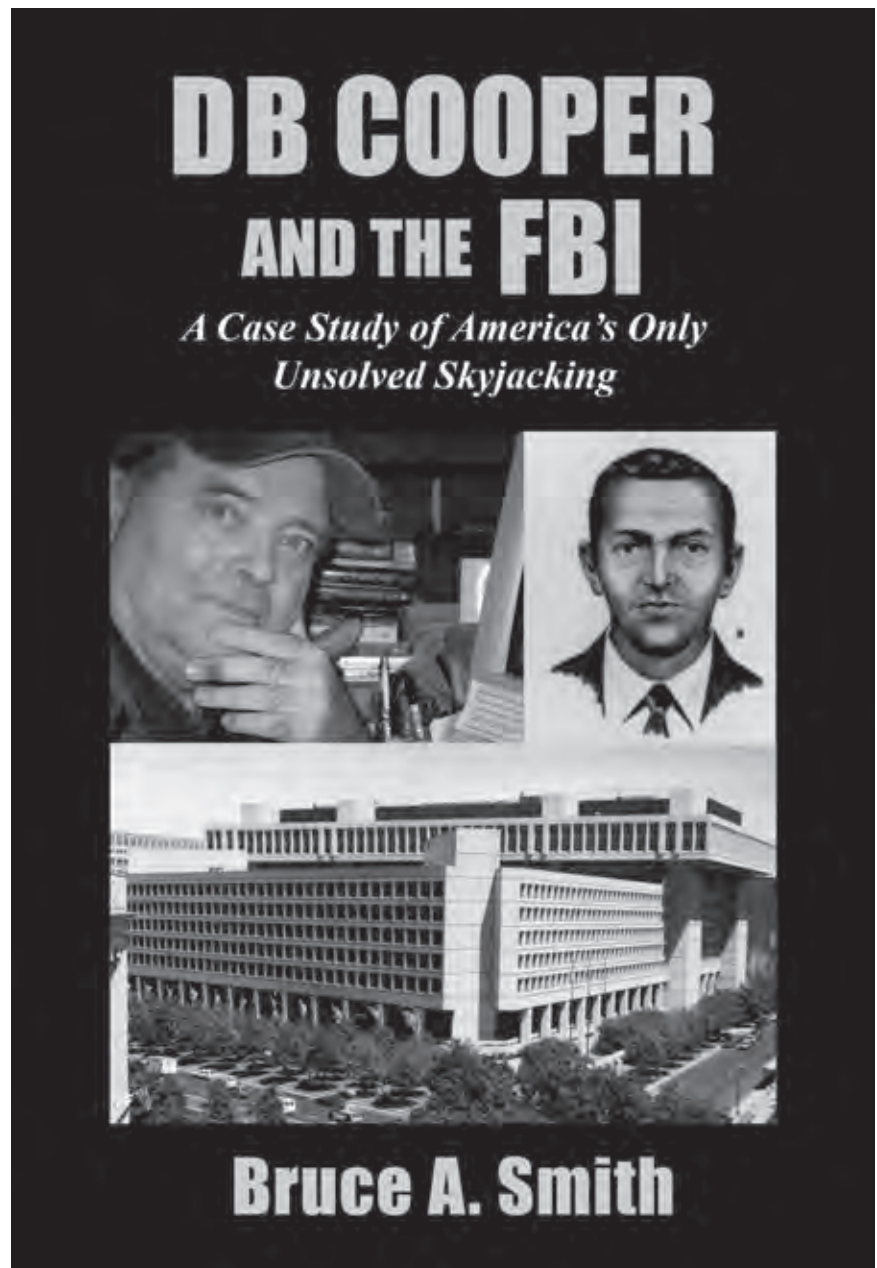
In addition, the D.B. Cooper case has a missing FBI agent, and the FBI's de facto technical expert was murdered in 2013!

But more importantly, this book is a clarion call for justice at a time when police forces nationwide come under increasing scrutiny and criticism, such as in the aftermath of recent shootings of unarmed black men by white cops. In that light, *D.B. Cooper and the FBI* adds a sharp illumination of how law enforcement

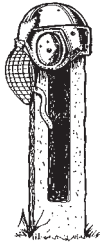
actually works in our world.

Smith, the author, is a long-time resident of western Washington – “Cooper Country” – and is a former investigative reporter with the Pierce County *Dispatch*. He currently manages

the Mountain News-WA, an online news magazine reporting on the social and political issues of the Cascade region. He speaks nationally on the case and has appeared on radio and television. 📻



D.B. Cooper and the FBI – A Case Study of America's Only Unsolved Skyjacking
by Bruce A. Smith.



Off The List

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

Chuck Sheley
10 Judy Lane
Chico, CA 95926

Roger R. Bay (Missoula '52)

Roger, 83, died April 3, 2015, from complications of Alzheimer's Disease. He graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in Forest Management in 1953. He earned his masters and doctorate in Forestry and Watershed Management from University of Minnesota. Roger served in the US Army for two years, stationed in Alaska.

Roger worked for the US Forest Service for 34 years. He started as a smokejumper in Idaho and retired as Forest Service Director of the Pacific Southwest Research Station in Berkley CA. After retiring, he

worked as a consultant with Univ. of Hawaii College of Agriculture.

Del F. Catlin (McCall '47)

Del died April 17, 2015. He graduated from high school in Oakley, Idaho, and went into the US Army as a paratrooper in the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment. Their successful combat jump on Corregidor February 16, 1945, earned the unit a Presidential Unit Citation for the liberation of "The Rock."

After the war Del attended the University of Idaho for a short time before joining the McCall Smoke-

NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

Contributions since the previous publication of donors July 2015

<u>Donor</u>	<u>In Memory/Honor of</u>
Bill Mills (MSO-65).....	Hal Samsel (MSO-49)
Dick Lynch (MYC-64).....	Del Catlin (MYC-47)
Ronald Pearce (MSO-65).....	Hal Samsel (MSO-49)
Jim Clatworthy (MSO-56).....	Skip Stratton (MSO-47)
Peter Carpenter (RDD-59)	Roary Murchison (RDD-57)
Zuri Betz (NIFC-02).....	Mark Urban (NIFC-03)
Spud DeJarnette (MSO-49)	Hal Samsel (MSO-49)
Jack Atkins (MSO-68)	SSG Travis W. Atkins
Bill Edlund (MSO-48)	Hal Samsel (MSO-49)
Gene Hamner (MSO-67)	Ken Sisler (NCSB-57)
	Jerry Daniels (MSO-58)

Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004 - \$59,340

Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:

Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico, CA 95926

jumpers in 1947. He became project leader at McCall in 1957 and continued at that position until 1977, when he was forced to stop jumping by the "40-years-old" policy that was in effect at the time. Del ended up with 179 jumps of which 107 were fire jumps.

After retirement from the USFS, he went to work managing the Hollenbeak Ranch for another 30 years. Del's wife of 66 plus years, Joye, passed away on April 14, just three days before Del.

Albin C. Hammond (Missoula '46)

Al died March 29, 2015, in Missoula, Montana. Following graduation from Miles City High School, he worked as an ironworker for several years in his hometown. After the start of WWII, he volunteered as an army paratrooper and became part of the 11th Airborne Division sent to the Pacific, first to New Guinea and then to the Philippines. In 1945 he became part of the occupying force in Japan.

Upon his return to the United States, Al attended the university in Missoula for two years. He was one of the many returning WWII veterans that hired on as smokejumpers in the summer of 1946.

Al had a great and memorable 31-year career with the USFS, during which time he made 98 parachute jumps. Because of his background in first aid, he was assigned to many rescue jumps, most notable, the 1959 Yellowstone earthquake that took 28 lives.

In 1961 Al was placed in charge of the Region 1 helicopter program becoming a helicopter pilot himself.

Dallard V. Johnson (Missoula '55)

Dal died April 29, 2015, at his home in Missoula. He grew up in Wisconsin and received a swimming scholarship to Montana State University, where he majored in forestry graduating in 1956. Dal jumped at Missoula during the 1955 season.

Dal was drafted into the Army and spent two years in San Antonio, Texas, on the Army's modern pentathlon team. After being discharged, he returned to the Forest Service ending his career in Sandpoint, Idaho, before moving to Montana. Dal took up bike riding doing 17 Scioto River Valley tours and ran in many races during his retirement.

David E. Clippinger (Missoula '51)

David died March 3, 2015, in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the age of 83. He was a graduate of the University of Miami and served in the Air Force. David had a career in Real Estate and was a tennis player, backpacker and skier. He served on the City Council in Mariemont, Ohio, and was successful in obtaining lands for parks and green space. David jumped at Missoula during the

1951 and 1952 seasons and was a NSA Life Member.

Dennis E. McCoy (McCall '83)

Dennis, 57, died June 25, 2015, at his home in McCall. He graduated from Sierra College with a degree in forestry in 1982, worked with the Del Rosa Hotshots and jumped at McCall from 1983-2003 and 2005-2012. He retired in 2013 with over 500 jumps.

In the off-season, Dennis was a world traveler with Nepal holding a special place in his heart. His interests were Taekwondo, skiing, kayaking, rock-climbing, running marathons and motorcycle riding.

Dayton Grover (Missoula '55)

Dayton, 81, died July 23, 2015. He graduated from the University of Missouri with a degree in Agriculture in 1956 and served in the Army from 1956-58. Dayton jumped at Missoula 55, 56, 62-65 and out of Grangeville during the 1958 season.

Barry Lee Stranahan (Redmond '70)

Barry, 65, died May 9, 2015, at his home in Crooked River Ranch, Oregon. During high school he taught himself to play guitar and writing, and performing music became a lifetime passion.

Barry ran his own music store, worked in construction, painting and cabinet making. He graduated with a journalism degree from the University of Oregon in 1981. His last career was with the Redmond School District where he taught computer skills and worked with special needs students. He wrote more than 120 copyrighted songs and recorded about a dozen CDs.

Barry jumped at Redmond 70-73, 77 and 78.

Craig R. Rockwell (North Cascades '68)

Craig, 62, died January 9, 2011, of a cardiac event. After attending Chico State University he graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1970. He moved to Salem, Oregon, and attended law school at Willamette University, graduating in 1973. During his college years he jumped at North Cascades 1968-72. He spent over 30 years in the legal community of Salem. Craig loved riding his bike and participated in nearly 25 Cycle Oregon events.

Norman C. Swihart (Missoula '45)

Norman died July 26, 2015, at his home in Goshen, Indiana. He was a member of the CPS-103 jumpers and was at Missoula during the 1945 season.

A longtime area resident, Norm worked in transportation and custodial areas for the Jefferson and Middlebury school systems, retiring in 1988 as transportation and custodial coordinator from Gos-

hen Community Schools. He was a member of the Dunkard Brethren Church, Goshen.

Dayton Grover (Missoula '55)

Dayton died July 23, 2015, at Knox County Nursing Home in Missouri. He graduated from the University of Missouri with a degree in Agriculture in 1956 and joined the Army where he was a Sergeant in the 101st Airborne from 1956-58.

Dayton jumped at Missoula 55, 56, 62-65 and at Grangeville in 1958. His obit says he, like many of us, forged lifelong friendships with men whom he considered his brothers. Smokejumping represented a vital link to awe-inspiring adventure.

From 1963-65 he taught elementary science in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. He worked for the State Department in Vietnam from 1967-69 and was awarded the Medal for Civilian Service in 1969. Dayton later taught school and was a Principal at schools in New Mexico from 1970-92. 🍄



Dayton Grover (MSO-55) (NSA Files)

Spilt Beans

by LeRoy Cook (Cave Junction '64)

Rivers always ransom their fish, so we planned for two nights tomorrow going up stream to where two tributaries come together – a place where fish always hold. There we would compete with the locals, the eagles, and purge the river of its ghastly nomads. Unlike us, they often fought over the decaying fish offal that hung along the river's thin icy edge. We were more civilized taking turns on the best water, men of business; our business was fishing.

Forest Service cabins rented for five dollars a day back then and ours came with those typical homey touches – a bench for the table, a shelf, two wooden sleeping platforms, and one window that looked out onto the river. A large Sitka spruce had fallen, disfiguring one corner; still it would do and keep the rain out. But what was up with the table? Dark stains discolored its surface; perhaps fish had been cleaned on it or some vermin laid there. Sullen and soiled, it hinted of something.

Far off in the distance, the gray peaks seemed to come and go in a pearly mist; with the changing weather this place was sure welcome. As we arrived the door swayed in the wind letting forest creatures quietly come and go. Old forest cabins have a taint of commonness; this one, because of its location on the river, was well-used like the door-less outhouse in the back. An old calendar, out of

date except for its female figure, hung on the wall. Only memories were left in the cracked and dusty wooden logs, but the faded visitors ledger was intact where past occupants sometimes registered their stays.

Popular during fish runs, these places fill a social niche drawing hunters and anglers – outdoor types, those hacked chips from the same hardihood of outdoor life. They are good places for a few of us who can sometimes find parts of civilization unfulfilling.

Being isolated and faraway in such rustic accommodations made us rely on each other, but we needed to watch our manners; moods are more easily caught than fish, and friendships can be at the mercy of the wind in our voices.

The crisp tang of the mountains braced us for the new day, a November chill that offered up a grayish wind carrying phantoms of white cold. The low foggy clouds buoyed downstream past a shoreline of vines and creepers full of devils club; eventually the river spilled out into Prince William Sound.

Since we were of common means, not keen on style or fashion, I donned canvas pants over the outside of my waders; they would help keep those “chicken skins,” known as Seal Dries, from tearing or developing pinhole leaks.

This water course ran north under a line of trees

against the rising land, making a tangle of wood and water. Logjams, everywhere in the channel's narrow passage, required our chopping through numerous tree limbs that blocked the flat-bottomed boat. It wasn't long before the ax head began to chip away, made jagged by cold knotty wood; in no time it was useless.

With our backs to the wind, we were fishless through the day; finally, in the fading light woodland whispers told us it was past time to leave, so we drifted back down the narrow water trail looking hard into a darkening Egyptian night.

The pinto beans we had precooked would soon put some color back in us. They were always part of our arsenal for keeping warm. We had soaked them overnight, then boiled them the next morning so they would be ready to heat up.

Cooking supper that evening was easy and my mouth watered for their warmth: Too bad we don't have any cornbread, I thought, after adding the hamburger.

It's sometimes not thought through, but one always needs a good foundation when it comes to moving food around. Like flipping pancakes, once you commit it's steady and smooth, not fast, but food needs to go where you aim it.

Watching my companion lift the pail from the burner, I casually remarked, "Careful – those single-looped wire pots tip easy." He never replied, but went ahead carrying the pot to the table by the bail. Young cocksureness made him do it; that was his way.

I had stated my piece!

There must have been some invisible force inside the

cabin for on the way to the table the pot tipped, swiftly picking up speed and with uncontrollable momentum over it went. Warm food spread across the floor mixing with our tracked-in muck. Instantly pipe swirls of bean mist eddied up from the floor.

For a second the cabin was quiet as my brain strained; keeping my own counsel I said nothing. Steam had filled the cabin and our senses. Hard-wired to eat and never peevish about food, we spooned up as much cold stew the floor could offer. Later, my partner remarked about his bumbling, complimenting me on my high standard of quiet manliness. I had the right to say "I told you so," but declined to not wrestle for the credit I thought I was due.

As we packed to leave, I looked more closely through the visitors log, a history of the cabin's use. It sometimes contained notes on the fishing, and I planned to log our fishless stay. After a more thorough look, I understood about the table. High drama. It was here a previous party had laid their friend; the blotches of dark stain, some of which had dripped onto the floor, drew out a flourish of new emotions. You sometimes heard about attacks around the state, but I hadn't realized one occurred here.

Our day-to-day lives are not always a gentle ride on a pink duck; it can get a little messy at times. Words can burn; those spoken out of pride or anger are hard to retrieve. When it comes to dancing to a strange song in the shadows of a cloudy moon, it helps to have an easy heart.

When things don't go as planned, sometimes you don't need to say much, beyond the unsaid. What matters is to get busy cleaning up or fixing what's broke.

There is a time to keep quiet, and a time to talk. 🦋



Redding Airtanker Base During Busy Day In July 2015 L-R: Hardy Bloemeke (MSO-77), Daniel Emry (BOI-78), Steve Reed (MSO-95), Cindy Champion (MSO-99), Charlie Caldwell (RDD-65), Scott Brockman (RDD-83), Rick Haagenson (RDD-79), Norm Baker (RDD-81) and Andy Thorne (RDD-82). Courtesy (H. Bloemeke)



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