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## Smokejumper Magazine, January 2002

National Smokejumper Association

Mark Matthews

Mike Blinn

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2002

# SMOKEJUMPER



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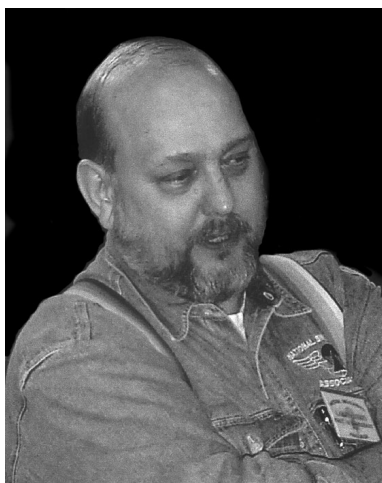
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## Observations from the Ad Shack



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

YOUR BOARD OF Directors is rapidly moving forward to preserve smokejumper history. We recently approved a memorandum of understanding with the Michael King Smith Evergreen Aviation Museum. The museum has raised more than \$20 million so far and built a “state of the art” building in McMinnville, Ore.

The museum floor is about three acres in size and the roof stands about 125 feet high—big enough to just barely fit the refurbished *Spruce Goose*. The museum also has the Ford Tri-Motor that was flown during the filming of our smokejumper video, plus many other vintage airplanes.

Since setting up our agreement, the NSA donated several artifacts to the museum. Included in the original donation were Francis Lufkin’s original 1939 jump suit, helmet, and eagle parachutes. We also have a 1958 PG Bag, donated by former

NSA President Carl Gidlund, and a 1943 snakebite kit, donated by Bob “Rigger” Snyder. The museum is currently in the process of setting up a complete smokejumper exhibit and is looking for additional artifacts and “still” photos.

If you have any artifacts or photos you would like to donate, please call me at (360) 459-2534, or send me an e-mail [jumpercj63@aol.com](mailto:jumpercj63@aol.com).

As a gesture of good will, the Board also donated \$5,000 to the Evergreen Museum that will be used to help set up the smokejumper exhibit. I encourage all jumpers to visit the museum at the McMinnville Airport. McMinnville is located about 30 miles southwest of Portland.

The NSA Board has also indicated an interest in supporting Stan Cohen’s Museum of Mountain Flying in Missoula, Mont. At our last Executive Committee meeting, the committee voted to donate \$1,000 to the museum to show our support for his museum. Stan is in the process of acquiring the Mann Gulch DC-3, and his museum already has a few smokejumper items on display.

The museum is in the process of building a new hangar at the Missoula airport. I encourage you to send a donation to Stan and visit the Museum of Mountain Flying when you visit Missoula. 🐻

# Leap of Faith

by Sherry Devlin, *Missoulian*, July 1990

The afternoon before Earl Cooley made his first jump out of an airplane, he got his first lesson in jumping out of an airplane. An instructor draped a silk chute from a ponderosa pine at the Seeley Lake ranger station and told Cooley and five other would-be jumpers to gather around. "This is the apex," the instructor said. "These are the risers. These are the guidelines. Tomorrow we jump."

"And tomorrow we jumped," said Cooley. Ten jumps later, on July 12, 1940, Cooley made history as one of the first two smokejumpers to parachute to a wildfire. His jump will be remembered Thursday at a ceremony in Grangeville, Idaho, commemorating 50 years of smokejumping.

Now 78 and semi-retired, Cooley sifted through his memorabilia in an interview this week at his real estate office in Missoula. He has written a book, *Trimotor and Trail*, on his adventures as a pioneer smokejumper.

Fifteen years after retiring from the Forest Service, Cooley still lives and breathes parachuting and fire fighting. He's never without his smokejumper belt buckle and cap. Cooley said he "wasn't thinking about history" in the spring of 1940 when he volunteered for the experimental smokejumper program. "I was thinking about doubling my salary. If I had known we were making history and would have to tell about it for 50 years, I might have thought twice."

Cooley was working on a fire crew in the East Fork of the Bitterroot when he heard about the smokejumper program. He was weary of 20-mile hikes to backcountry fires. He knew jumpers had landed safely in "all kinds of green timber" in trials on the Okanogan National Forest in 1939. What he didn't know until later was that regional forester Evan Kelley has argued against the parachute program as early as 1935, writing Forest Service brass in Washington, D.C., that "all parachute jumpers are more or less crazy, just a little bit unbalanced,



Earl Cooley 1940. (Courtesy of Earl Cooley)

otherwise they wouldn't be engaged in such a hazardous undertaking."

Cooley's own foreman, Merle Lundigan, later wrote that "it is not a good plan to tell a new jumper too much about the job of chute-jumping before he has made a few jumps." If he is too well informed, Lundigan said, "it is inclined to unnerve him." Nevertheless, Cooley and six other experienced firefighters were to try parachuting to fires during the 1940 fire season. Dry, hot weather and a record number of lightning strikes provided the targets. One of the seven didn't pass the physical exam and another quit after three jumps.

A makeshift training camp was established at Seeley Lake. Recruits hung their parachutes from two tents and gathered at the airstrip to watch a pair of barnstormers demonstrate a jump. Then came the quick lesson on parachute mechanics. "I didn't know enough to be scared," Cooley said. "I had never been in an airplane before and never landed until I'd made five jumps."

The night before the first jump, the crew drew straws to see who would be the first out of the plane. Cooley got the number five straw. The jump spot was at

Blanchard Flats 20 miles from Seeley Lake. Sitting around the campfire that night, the barnstormers started talking about jumpers who got hung up on the tail of the airplane or who were dragged across airports and a cargo dropper who had fallen out of a plane without a parachute.

Jump day dawned clear and warm, despite the recruits' prayers for fog. Jump gear consisted of a leather football helmet, a baseball catcher's mask, a back brace, ankle braces, logger boots and a heavy canvas suit with a high collar. "We were so bundled up we couldn't move once we got on the ground," Cooley said. "We landed so hard with those old Eagle parachutes. A doctor in town had told our instructor that the best way to land was stiff-legged, just the opposite of what we know is best."

Cooley and company sat on boxes inside the airplane, eyeballed their own jump spot, then stood outside on the step, signaled the pilot to cut the engine, jumped and pulled their ripcords. "It didn't seem natural to jump out into space," Cooley said. "But the jumping never really bothered me." He jumped to 46 fires in 11

## *NSA Members—Save This Information*

The Missoula office is being staffed by Chuck Fricke on a voluntary basis. Do not call or e-mail that office. Please contact the following persons directly if you have business or questions:

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## **Elections for NSA Board of Directors Chuck Sheley-Election Committee Chair**

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the NSA and meets two times a year to conduct NSA business. The meetings are held at the current smokejumper bases. The terms of four members of the BOD will expire July 1, 2002.

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

### **Election timeline and procedures:**

1. Jan.–Feb. 21st, fill out personal information sheet. Must be in my hands by Feb. 21.
2. Personal information on each candidate inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
3. Ballot sheet inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
4. Ballots must be received by May 21.
5. New board members to take office July 1st—election results published in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper*.

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

years as a smokejumper. “We would’ve jumped more if we had had more parachutes.”

Cooley and Rufus Robinson, squad leader for the smokejumper project, got the call for the first fire jump about noon on July 12. The fire was at Martin Creek, 50 air miles from Missoula. The first fire jump nearly cost Cooley his life. He bailed out of Johnson’s Travelair, pulled the ripcord and looked up to a “full streamer.” Cooley fell for 1000 feet while he tried to deploy the chute. He started to go for his reserve at 500 feet but his main opened at that time. Cooley hit a lodgepole pine and stopped dangling over 100 feet off the ground. He climbed down the tree and hiked to the fire.

He later learned that project leader Lundigan had caught his foot on a cargo rope and almost fell out of the plane. Lundigan was so shaken that he never again worked cargo on a smokejumper mission. Cooley met

up with a trail crew that told of a smokejumper free-falling to the ground. They had been dispatched to retrieve the body. “I’m your carcass,” Cooley said. “I made it.”

Cooley’s career as a smokejumper eventually included training paratroopers during WWII and conscientious objectors who worked as smokejumpers during the war. He was the spotter on the plane that dropped jumpers at the tragic Mann Gulch fire in 1949. Twelve jumpers and a fireguard died in the fire.

Two of Cooley’s five daughters eventually married smokejumpers. He went on to another first, as one of the first firefighters to travel by helicopter to a fire.

“I never cared about stripes or promotions,” Cooley said. “I just loved the work. You know, in those early days, there was never anybody above you to tell you what to do because nobody up there knew what to do.” 🔦

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## Blackwater Fire Investigation

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

As a fire management officer on the Shoshone National Forest, I have studied the tragic Blackwater fire of August 21, 1937, to learn more about local fire-behavior variables and to train firefighters on all aspects of safety during potential blow-up conditions.

Fifteen firefighters died on the Blackwater when a passing cold front turned the fire’s head a full 90 degrees, trapping groups of firefighters on various parts of the fire. Recently, we have been able to develop and present a fire-training slide show on the Blackwater fire to cover the elements of “Standards for Survival” and “Look Up, Look Down and Look Around.”

Still, there is a story on the investigation of this fire that needs to be told.

The fire investigation was conducted by David P. Godwin, the assistant chief of fire management for the U.S. Forest Service. Godwin’s report is entitled “The Handling of the Blackwater Fire.” In addition, A. A. Brown of the Rocky Mountain Region (R-2) assisted with a fire-behavior study entitled “The Factors and Circumstances That Led to the Blackwater Fire Tragedy.”

David Godwin concluded that the leadership on the fire was “intelligent and protective of the men.” The forest rangers involved with the direction of fire suppression on the Blackwater used the standard techniques of the day. Still, I believe that David Godwin struggled with this tragedy and worked within the Division of Fire Control for ways to improve fire-suppression techniques.



*Karl Brauneis. (Courtesy of Karl Brauneis)*

Godwin focused on response times to the Blackwater fire from forest officers to Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews. He developed a chart to display call and arrival times and reported, that in general, “response times were fair.” A delay in the arrival of the Tensleep CCC crew lost about two hours in effective control time on the fire. It was a “logical speculation” that if forest officers could have had the crew on site two hours earlier, the tragedy might have been averted.

Strong feelings about a traumatic incident are a “prime motivation for action” (see *Fire Management News Notes*, vol. 56, no. 4, “Use the Connections—No One is an Island” by James E. Stone). It appears that Godwin was able to work through the Blackwater disaster and initiate positive actions to develop a better and faster way to put “smokechasers” on the line.

In Stan Cohen’s book, *A Pictorial History of Smokejumping*, it is noted that David P. Godwin is “the man most instrumental in the initial development of the smokejumping concept” (p. 18). One can only imagine the effect that the Blackwater fire had on Godwin. The efforts he made to avert a future tragedy by improving fire-response times are, however, documented in forest history.

All managers in our firefighting agencies should use Godwin’s fire report and the actions he took as a model for an effective management response to an incident.

The smokejumper project was developed at Winthrop, Wash., (R-6) and in Montana at Seeley Lake and Moose Creek (R-1) in 1939 and 1940. Frank, Virgil and Chet Derry, Francis Lufkin, Glen Smith, Earl Cooley and Rufus Robinson are all recognized as pioneers of the parachute project. Still, I believe that the smokejumpers were born through Godwin’s response to tragedy on Blackwater Creek in August of 1937. 🦋

*Editor’s note: This article was first published in the “Static Line” (vol. 3, edition 4, July 1997).*

*Karl trained as a Missoula smokejumper (1977–1979) and then converted to a forester position on the Kaniksu National Forest and worked his way up to the timber management assistant position on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District. In 1988 he transferred to the Shoshone National Forest in Wyoming where he now serves as a zone fire management officer. You can reach Karl at: kbrauneis@fs.fed.us*

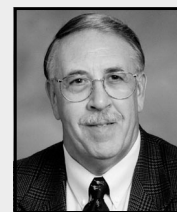
## Hollow Cedar by Steve McDonald

In late afternoon our noses  
Found the fire.  
There it was:  
Down the ridge.  
  
Tongues of ground fire  
Radiated from the center  
Where a huge  
Hollow cedar tree stood.  
  
The lightning had splintered its top.  
Javelins of newly-split wood  
Impaled the ground.  
Smoke eddied up.  
  
We scratched a line  
’Round the fire  
And knocked down the flames.  
The big cedar waited.  
  
We took it down  
In chunks.  
Piece by piece.  
The stump was six feet across.  
  
Harper did the sawing.  
Good man.  
From West Virginia.  
Happy to have work in Idaho.

By mid-night  
We had the fire out.  
Check for hot spots at dawn  
When it’s light enough.  
  
“Find a place  
Where the dirt’s  
Still warm from the fire, Boys,” I say,  
“Grab some sleep!”  
  
Harper and I go for water.  
It’s fall. It’s cold.  
Bull elk bugle around us.  
Alder brush leads to a spring.  
  
We fill up with icy water.  
I quiver all over  
As I shakily light a cigarette.  
Three hours to dawn.  
  
First light and we fondle  
All the ashes with bare hands.  
It’s out!  
I call the Station.  
  
“We’ll be at Osier Ridge  
In three hours,” I tell them.  
We shoulder our packs.  
Helluva climb to the lookout.

At the summit we sprawl  
On the rocks, exhausted.  
Soon a faded, dirty crew cab  
Arrives in a cloud of dust.  
  
The Fire Control Officer  
Gets out, stiffly.  
He looks at us with disdain  
And wheezes, “Load up!”  
  
Turning to me, he says,  
“You sure took your Goddamn time, Mac,  
We got fires all over.”  
I reply, simply, “Go to Hell.”

*Dr. Steve McDonald retired in 1996 after 36 years with the U.S. Forest Service. He worked in all divisions of that agency. He is an avid writer of novels (Baker 30 and Bitterroot) and poems, usually with forestry themes. He plans to publish Echoes in the Forest: A Forester’s Collection of Poems during the winter of 2002.*



*Steve McDonald*



# We Never Did Find the Fire!

by Ted Dethlefs (Missoula '47)

We had just completed our practice jumps when a lookout spotted a small column of smoke rising in the distance. The fire was reported to be a few miles south of the Canadian border and west of Troy, Montana. It was also reported to be that it would take little effort or time to stop. It was reported to be quite small.

But at Nine Mile, veteran smokejumpers were not immediately available. The only ones left at the base were **Ozzie Bender** (Missoula '47) and me. Ordinarily two rookies would not be sent alone to a fire. But of course we were anxious to go and each of us had some prior experience in the wilderness, so we persuaded Earl Cooley that with our prior experience in the woods, the two of us could find the smoke and put out the fire.

Before we knew it we were flying in a Travelair over the spot. From the plane, we could see the smoke rising. In hindsight, we should have paid more exact attention to where it was burning.

Len Kraut, the spotter, jumped us on an adjacent ridge about a quarter to a half mile away. We retrieved our gear and then proceeded to what we believed to be the fire area. There was no fire to be seen. Not even smoke, and no indication that there had ever been a fire anywhere nearby! All day we searched, but with no luck. By late afternoon the mosquitoes were starting to drive us mad. We tied up our sleeves and pant cuffs and any other openings, but our exposed skin started to swell from so many bites. At dinnertime, so that we wouldn't swallow a mouthful of mosquitoes with each bite, we got in our sleeping bags and covered our heads.

There was so much brush that as night approached the only place we could find to sleep was right in the middle of a nearby trail. And the night was hot. We could stay covered just so long because of the unbearable heat. But if we uncovered, the mosquitoes bit us again! We slept very little.

As miserable as we were, the next morning we felt we really had to locate the fire. The second day we continued searching for a fire. We did find an ax-marked blaze on a tree. It turned out a ranger had made that mark when he ran a line on a bearing given him by one fire tower. A second lookout, however, couldn't see the smoke. We followed the blazed trees, but still couldn't find a smoke.

But we weren't giving up. We went a couple miles away to the lookout tower to see what could be seen. The lookout said the snag stopped smoking right after we jumped. He said he thought it was a half-dead ponderosa pine. That wasn't particularly helpful. Even though we were already all puffed up from mosquito bites, we spent another night.

We finally gave up on the second morning.

We packed all our gear, chutes, etc., and left them at the site because the lookout had arranged for a mule train to be sent in. We hiked to a road a few miles away where a truck picked us up and took us to Troy, Montana, where we caught a bus back to Missoula. We worried all the way home that Earl Cooley would fire us for being so incompetent.

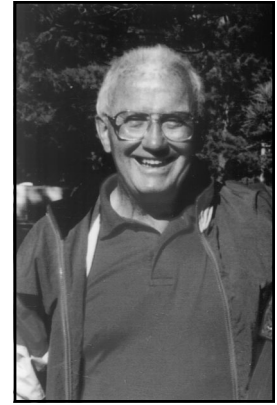
When we got back we found that two walk-in groups had preceded us and not located the fire. But the smoke kept being reported! Two more walk-ins went in with the same lack of results. This exonerated us somewhat.

But knowing there was still the potential of a fire, we pleaded with Cooley to send us out again the next time it showed up. But he made a decision: no way.

We understand that sometime later it did flare up. Some veteran jumpers found the smoke, felled the tree and put the fire out. It had been nothing but a high punky stump that would smoke awhile and then quit! This was probably the last time two rookies were sent out together, at least for a longtime. We understand the current policy is to send at least three, and one of these must be a veteran.

Maybe there's a good reason? 🦋

*Ted Dethlefs graduated from Washington State in 1949 with a bachelor's in business and in 1952 with a master's in recreation. He is retired from Oregon States Parks as a community recreation specialist/technical writer. With his wife Lu, he has five children and six grandchildren. He can be reached at [teddet@open.org](mailto:teddet@open.org)*



*Ted Dethlefs. (Courtesy of Ted Dethlefs)*

# Smokejumping and Life

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

**T**HE WIND WAS HOWLING THROUGH THE open door of the DC-3 and the engine roar was horrific. No one had told us about that noise.

Ten of my 30 classmates had gone through that door in pairs during the last 15 minutes. As each had been whipped into the slipstream I'd

thought those are the bravest people I ever met. I didn't know if I'd have the guts to follow them.

It was July 2, 1958, 42 years before **Barry Burris** (Missoula '00) of Coeur d'Alene made his maiden parachute jump as a smokejumper trainee last summer.

Our spotter—a squad leader who'd help lead our class of "new men" during our three weeks of parachute training, calisthenics and running—beckoned.

I struggled up from the floor of the DC-3 where I'd been sitting, then waddled to the rear of the plane, hunched over from the pressure of the cinched-down cotton harness over my canvas jump suit. **Lowell Hanson** (Missoula '58), who was to be my partner on this, our first parachute jump, was on my heels.

With a "hook 'em" motion of his hand, the spotter told us to snap our static lines onto the cable that stretched from floor to ceiling of the fuselage. We did; then I inched to the door, my hands braced on either side of it so that I wouldn't tumble out prematurely as the plane banked, and leveled for our jump run.

The spotter pulled our helmeted heads toward him and yelled above the roar that there was little wind, so he'd drop us directly over "the spot," an orange X made of crepe paper in the meadow that was coming up at 120 knots, 1,200 feet below.

I held back from the door as far as I could, staring at the horizon as I'd been taught, but during that last long minute, I felt tugs at my backpack parachute. At five feet, eight inches tall, little Lowell couldn't see past my six-foot-five frame to catch a glimpse of the jump spot.

"Leggo," I screamed over my shoulder, afraid he was going to push me out, but I still felt him, holding on to steady himself. Then the engines cut, a slap on my left calf, and I was out the door, an instinctive reaction born of a hundred jumps from the shock tower at the Missoula Aerial Fire Depot. Lowell was

right behind me.

"ONE THOUSAND, TWO THOUSAND, THREE THOUSAND," I yelled, then felt a great snap. My candy-striped chute was open above me. It was whole except for the two slots in the rear that would give it forward speed and enable me to turn it with steering toggles.

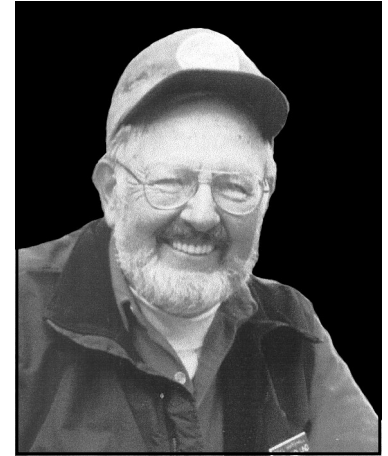
And it was quiet, so quiet after the roar of that plane.

I hollered over at Lowell—actually up at him since he was falling a lot slower than I was—asking if he was okay. All I got back from him was a loud, delighted laugh.

Of all the experiences in my 62 years, my five seasons as a Forest Service smokejumper were the most profound. I believe that will also hold true for Barry, now a 22-year-old second-season smokejumper working out of my old base, Missoula.

Lowell Hanson, my first jump partner, remains a good friend to this day, as do scores of other jumpers from those years with whom I shared exciting and occasionally dangerous adventures.

We learned to care for each other and work as a team, even to place our lives in each other's custody when flaming snags were falling around us during 24-hour stretches on the fire line. We patched up each other's burns and splinted broken legs. We carried our injured buddies out of the woods or jumped in to build helispots when injuries were so serious that



*Carl Gidlund. (Courtesy of Carl Gidlund)*

immediate evacuation was a necessity.

We bonded, even more so than I did later with my fellow soldiers in Vietnam. Although I've been active in the National Smokejumper Association since it was founded eight years ago, few of its 2,000 members are current jumpers. They're like ex-GIs, most of whom don't join the American Legion until they're old enough to get nostalgic.

Thus, I've been out of touch with how things are done now, 35 years after I last put my knees in the breeze over a forest fire.

I learned from Barry that there are some marked differences in technology, working conditions, even the kind of people who are smokejumpers today. But, if Barry is typical, there's at least one constant: the esprit of the current smokejumper corps is, by golly, as good as it's ever been.

"We're the best wildland firefighters," he tells me. "We give it our all on every fire. And we're tight. We never let down our bros."

That's an echo from years gone by.

The very first fire jump was in 1940, to a blaze on the Nez Perce National Forest in central Idaho. Thus, my classmates and I were in the second decade of the smokejumper program and Barry is in the seventh. No wonder there've been changes.

Except for the beards worn by many of today's jumpers—they were forbidden to us—a picture of Barry's graduating class would be very similar to mine. Then and now, smokejumpers wear high-collared jump jackets to prevent branches from catching the rim of our wire-masked football helmets. Those branches would rip the helmets from our heads as we fall through trees. Smokejumpers still carry hundred-foot letdown ropes in pockets sewn onto jump pants and they still wear White logger boots.

But there are marked differences. Barry tells me today's jump suit is Kevlar, the stuff of bulletproof vests. That's to keep from getting impaled on broken tree branches that a couple of my contemporaries caught with nearly fatal results while wearing their cotton jump suits.

Today's jumpers wear ankle braces, too, a sensible addition to the gear because fire jumps are in rough terrain, often strewn with leg-twisting rocks.

Beneath the jump suits, Barry and his peers wear fire-retardant clothing, something that didn't even exist in my day when "stagged" jeans and Army surplus khaki shirts were the uniforms we ourselves provided.

They carry fire shelters on their equipment belts, to duck into when a fire threatens to blow over them.

Those too didn't exist a half-century ago.

Today's smokejumpers hit their fires a lot faster, in speedy Twin Otters, Casas and turbocharged DC-3s. Those have replaced the loveable but lumbering Ford Tri-Motors, WWII-vintage twin Beeches and Grumman Goose aircraft that conveyed the jumpers of the '40s, '50s and '60s.

They get off their fires faster and thus back on the jump list faster, too. That's because, Barry says, helicopters usually sling-load their gear and even lift the jumpers themselves out of the woods.

That beats by many a country mile our cross-country packouts carrying 110 pounds of tools, parachutes, jump suits and personal gear.

Today's jumpers are paid more too because, Barry told me, they make time-and-a-half for overtime and hazard pay when they're on a going fire. In my era, it was straight time only, no matter how long you were fighting fire. And "hazard pay" was unknown.

There are opportunities now for longer spells of employment. After last year's fire season, Barry was detailed with several other jumpers to Chicago, where they climbed trees looking for wood-eating beetles.

"In six months, I made \$35,000," he recounts. "A friend of mine, a certified public accountant and ex-jumper, is probably coming back to the program. He misses the excitement and he figures he can make more money jumping than he does in his profession."

But the most profound difference, I learned, is in the smokejumper workforce. At least 85 percent of the '40s and '50s jumpers were college students or high school and college teachers. No women were allowed, and the mandatory "get out of jumping" age was 40.

Barry, who studied forestry for two semesters at Santa Rosa Junior College, is unusual in today's jumper corps. He tells me that only about 10 percent of his peers are college kids, although many have bachelors and advanced degrees. Women broke the gender barrier in the early '80s, and a series of age-discrimination lawsuits ended the out-at-40 rule many years ago.

The advent of women smokejumpers has had a small effect on the smokejumper vocabulary: first-year jumpers are no longer "new men." Now, they're "rookies."

Barry's qualifications for the smokejumping program were far better than mine and those of most of my peers. Since the job pays so well and lasts so many months of the year, competition for the program is fierce.

He attended Coeur d'Alene High School for two years, graduated from a high school in California

where his father lives, then returned to Coeur d'Alene where his mother and stepdad, Lanie and Jerry Leetch, live.

He signed up for a fire engine crew with the Idaho Department of Lands in 1998, then worked for the St. Joe Hotshots, a Coeur d'Alene-based fire crew, during the summer of 1999. Thus, he had two full seasons of firefighting experience before being accepted into the smokejumper program in the spring of 2000.

That's in contrast to my two seasons as a Forest Service surveyor with only occasional fire fighting duties prior to my acceptance into the program.

Following the western fire season, Barry plans to accept a job offer in Virginia where he'll be a hotshot squad leader trainee. He'll return to Missoula in November to take part in an emergency medical technician training course.

He's learning, like I did, to be prepared for most eventualities that might be encountered on the fire line—or in the rest of life.

He and I and every other smokejumper I've known share some other attributes. One is a sense of adventure. He says he loves the kind of a job where, when he wakes up in the morning, he doesn't know where he'll spend that night. It might be on a fire line in Alaska, Oregon, California, Utah, Colorado, Montana or Idaho—all places he's jumped during the past two seasons.

Another characteristic is a love of the outdoors and a desire to contribute to our nation's wildlands. I predict that, 40 years from now, long after he's retired, he'll be working as a volunteer a week or two each summer, clearing overgrown trails in some national forest.

That's what I do, sharing the work with fellow old-timers, most in their 50s, 60s and 70s.

Barry's also learning perseverance. Now and then, after you and your mates have worked through a long night to hack out a fire line, it's going to be consumed after the sun hits it in the morning. You don't lay down your tools and quit; you cuss a bit, then hike back up to the top of the mountain and begin cutting a new line.

That's how it is as a smokejumper. That's how it is in life. 🌲

*Carl Gidlund is past president of the National Smokejumper Association and an active member of the association. He is "retired" and writes a weekly column for the Spokesman-Review. Recently he was asked to tell about what he was doing in his 20s, then contrast it with what someone at that age is doing in their profession now. This piece is a result of his efforts. He can be reached at: gidlund1@earthlink.net*

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# Using the Lessons of Mann Gulch in Alaska

by Charley Moseley (Cave Junction '62)

**I**t was late morning in June of 1969 and the beast was stirring as there were two Fairbanks and 14 Missoula jumpers on a too-big fire northwest of Fort Yukon, Alaska. The state was hot, bone dry and burning down to the permafrost. The spruce boughs in my hands were tossing as much fire behind me as they were putting out, and we still had two miles of line ahead of us. This nasty thing was getting ready to blow, and Wag Dodge's plight at Mann Gulch kept flitting across my mind. Somebody needed to make some quick and necessary decisions.

As a retreat Region 6 jumper on only my second Alaskan fire, it was not my place to tell fire boss **Lyle Haugsven** (NCSB '60), **Frank Sanders** (Missoula '63) or the other mossy old jumpers what we needed to do. **Mike Oehlerich** (Missoula '60) and I had stayed up all night working and scouting our way completely around our starfish-shaped fire and knew it was hopeless without some help. We also knew none was coming. With no SSB radio and only one walkie-talkie (with no contact on it) for communication, we and our gear were soon to be dog meat.

"Perspicacity" is what a late astronaut friend called it. I don't know why or how, but smoke jumping always came easy to me. From steering a chute, climbing trees, spotting all 16 jumpers into our circle or quickly evaluating a fire situation, it all just seemed as natural as breathing. And, dear Buddha, I loved it so.

I dropped the spruce, hurriedly located my new/old jumper/Air America buddy and yelled in his ear, "Mike, this bastard is gone. Let's try to save the gear."

"Hell yeah, Mose," he replied, and we cut out for camp.

Now we could have all gone into the fire and been safe, but **Jim Allen** (NCSB '46), "**Pappy**" **Lufkin** (NCSB '39) and their salty old squad leaders had drummed into us that "a jumper takes care of his gear" and "a jumper without gear is a ground pounder." I had once watched **Al Boucher** (Cave Junction '49) give a pretty good man a one-way bus ticket for failing to bring out his chute from a fire. Not this old man!

We quickly gathered everyone's gear into a pile in a small meadow and were beginning to trench a small

circle down to permafrost when the fire roared into a crown and went crazy.

Bigger than regulation, Frank Sanders, leading 13 very agitated jumpers, came racing through the trees, yelling: "Grab your gear and head for the river."

That was something I could not let happen, and it was time to put up or shut up. The river was at least two miles away across the tundra. No way! Not even this world-class track athlete could make it—even without gear. Running from this fire was not an option.

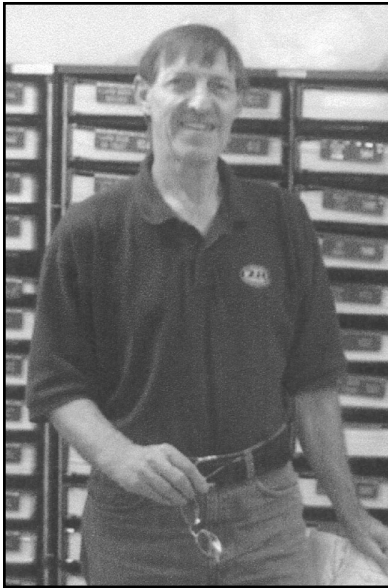
The memory of Wag's hauntingly too-late decision bolstered my nerves as Frank and I stood, nose to nose, cussing, arguing, threatening and pleading our cases as the other guys located their gear bags and briefly (very briefly) waited for us two uglies to agree on some course of action.

None of the guys knew much about me, and Frank was a known and respected quantity. Red-faced, mean bug eyes, bushy mustache, quick tempered, with seven seasons of jumping and as one of Missoula's best squad leaders, Frank was totally used to being in charge. Even with a law degree and some 20 years of overall fire experience under my belt, an almost-rookie GS-6er from Cave Junction didn't carry much clout today. They wanted to run.

The fire was crowning in sheets in several directions and screaming like mad as Frank brushed by me and yelled, "Where's my gear?" The argument was over, and some of the jumpers were already moving off when I knelt down to the edge of the partly completed trench and struck my lighter. The grass literally exploded into flame, and we now had no choice but to complete the circle and beat back the blazing grass fire. Nearly all of us packed at least a .357 in this bear country, and I knew that some would have loved to shoot me. There was no time.

It was assholes, elbows, hot blinding smoke, coughing and cussing Moseley for a few brief moments, and then the show was over except for the smoke and waiting for a chopper out.

My fire met the gobbler within seconds and the hellish creature raced around us and on to its million-acre destiny so quickly that it was hard to believe. Sixteen loud-mouthed and arrogant jumpers stood



Charley Moseley. (Courtesy of Charley Moseley)

since to my knowledge.

Lyle called on the radio for anybody throughout the day, with no response. We all wanted out of there, and the group attitude headed downhill in sullen anger and frustration.

About midnight Lyle let me borrow his radio, and I set out looking for a tall tree. My butt and a knotty limb had gone to war by the time some faint traffic stirred the receiver. Time for action. Dot-dash-dot on the transmit button several times followed by “Mayday, mayday. This is the gray ghost calling anybody.” Garbled static came back.

By climbing and stretching just a little higher into the limber treetop, two distinct and lovable voices came in 10 by 10. **Cliff Hamilton** (Cave Junction ’62) and that little redheaded “organizer” from CJ, **Chuck Sheley** (Cave Junction ’59), in the flesh, in Alaska. This must be some fire bust to scrape the bottom of the barrel.

They were quite puzzled and concerned by the radio garble and were trying to figure it out. With a big grin and happy heart, I patiently waited for an opening and horned in. A long time passed for this Cave Junction reunion on the Yukon Flats. Not bad! Cliff and I had rookied and worked Air America together. Chuck’s first spotting job was my first fire jump. Blind leading the blind!

“Moseley? Mose, is that you? You’re sitting in a tree? Hell, we had this neat little OT machine working until a monster came over the hill and gobbled it up. Was that your fire? Yeah, we’ve got contact with Fairbanks. We’ll let them know and you owe us a beer.

and watched in awe from inside the most explosive fire I have ever seen. Not one sprig of green left on any tree. The cumulus-like clouds towered toward the heavens in a 360-degree panorama around our little island. Shock! Relief? Ticked off? Who knows? We didn’t talk about it that day and never have

A cold beer!”

Aw, man, the good life. Can’t be beat.

Of course Chuck chewed my butt for losing a fire, but a few hours later **Greg “The Politician” West** (Fairbanks ’64) showed up in an Aero Commander. He found great humor in our ridiculous little brown island in the middle of a black ocean. The chopper soon arrived, and it was back to the jump list and another fire soon we hoped. We wanted to put this one behind us.

Was I right? What drove me to put my judgmental decision ahead of 15 other sharp young minds? Heck, I don’t fully know now and didn’t know then. They were my people and it was the right thing to do. No one thanked me, but no one shot me. No report. No postmortem. It was over, and we were alive. But I do believe that each of us in hindsight knew too well that not even one of us would have made it to the Chandalar River.

With three heart attacks under my belt and little time left, I often gaze back over a quite varied and adventurous life and the fine people encountered. From Coach Bryant at Alabama to an Eskimo lady on a fire line near Huslia, there came some very gracious and appreciated compliments. But, none ever compared to that night in ’71 when bald-headed Curly Brandt brought by my case of Heineken—a reward for finding a lost dough load of Missoula jumpers over in Canada.

“Mose, you are a smokejumper’s smokejumper,” Curly said.

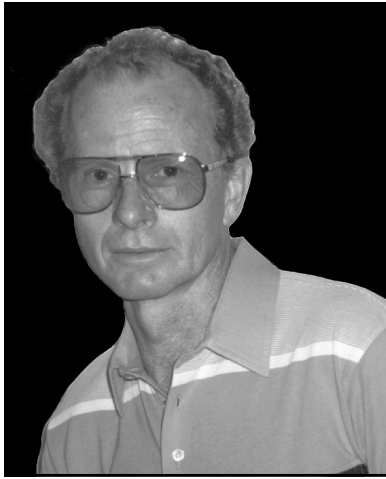
Life just can’t get better than that. 🍺

*Charley grew up in Washington County, Alabama, the son of “very mentally and physically strong sharecropper parents.” To work was not an issue as the days started early and ran into the darkness. Charley’s first-grade peers selected him as the leader of the “barefoot without choice” group. A track scholarship took him to the University of Alabama in later years. There he set nine indoor/outdoor Southeastern Conference records and placed in the National Collegiate Track & Field Championships in the high hurdles and long jump.*

*After a few seasons at Cave Junction, Charley spent time with Air America. Upon returning from Laos, he went to law school during the “off season.” He started four years in Alaska as a jumper and Initial Attack Officer at Galena in 1969. In the late 70s, a title insurance business went down the drain. Today, Charley is still “living on the edge” in the oil business, handling the position of manager for Patton Petroleum. He can be contacted at: ghos2000us@yahoo.com*



# Sounding Off from the Editor



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

I USUALLY WAIT UNTIL a week or so before the magazine deadline to write this column. Tonight I'm sitting in a motel in Elko, NV, halfway on my two-day drive to the NSA Executive Board Meeting in West Yellowstone, Montana. The October issue is just being printed and I'm writing for the January issue.

What gives? It's two days after the terrorist attack on the United States. I can't think of anything else since that day. I've just experienced eight hours of talk radio while driving today. The majority of the callers and the people behind the mikes want to immediately launch the missiles—"blow those rag-heads back to the Stone Age!" We don't really know who they are—have a pretty good idea—but let's nuke a couple million people and we would have a pretty good chance in getting the terrorists among them.

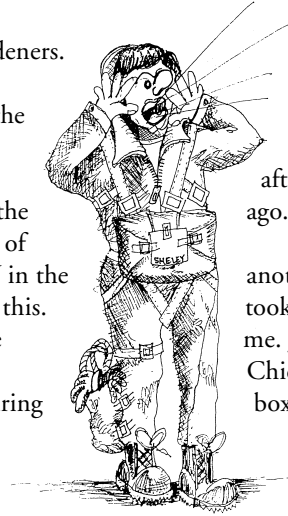
I've never fought in a war. Don't know whether or not that helped or hindered my development to adulthood. Growing up on a military base during WW II, I remember the Italian prisoners of war who worked around the base as

garbage collectors and gardeners. I used to watch them play soccer behind the wire in the evenings. I always thought that if I were an Italian soldier, I would throw up the white flag in the first hour of battle if I could be a POW in the United States and live like this. We should have spread the word to the Germans.

It was a snowy day during my freshman year in high school when the first kid from our town got killed in Korea. Everyone was trying to remember who he was and what he looked like—"Remember the tall redheaded kid?"

Must have missed Vietnam by the grace of God. Was taking my physical for OCS at Quantico when a corpsman told the doctor, "This guy has one leg shorter than the other." So what! The doc replied, "You won't be able to take long hikes and haul heavy packs." I had just completed my third season as a smokejumper and was real proud of making 26 fire jumps and some long hikes with heavy packs. I was pissed to say the least. Now I was in the draft lottery. One time I was glad my number didn't come up.

What were you doing when you heard about the assassination of JFK? Hardly anyone can forget that. I have that same kind of memory of the day when I first heard that one of my former students had been killed in Vietnam. We were at wrestling practice after school when the school secretary called me off the mat where I was working with some of the kids. She wanted me to have "Brad" dress and go home immediately. The telegram has just arrived that his brother was killed in action. I couldn't tell Brad anything other than he needed to meet his mom in front of the school in 15



minutes. His brother Todd had played football for us about five years earlier. Still remember that afternoon and it was 34 years ago.

I was the master teacher for another great young man as he took his teacher training from me. Jerry was a boxer from Chico State. He wanted to try a boxing unit with the kids, which I knew the administration would not allow. It was OK if they knifed each other after school,

but we couldn't have a contact sport like boxing at school. We did it anyway and got away with it. The kids had a great time. I told Jerry he'd be a great teacher when he got back from his two years in the service. Jerry was killed in his first few months in Nam and we never got to see him become that great teacher.

The Gulf War didn't take any of our students. The special thing I remember about this war was the seniors racing around campus just wanting their chance to "kick some Arab ass." It was as if they were off to the next football game, just a bit bigger. Didn't they realize that this might not be fun?

Then came the Hmong. After fourteen years of being killed by everyone with a gun in Southeast Asia, they started arriving in Chico. The United States had trained them to fight the "secret war" in Laos and then abandoned them when we pulled out. Somewhere along the line we realized that we owed the Hmong and about 125,000 of them were brought to the U.S. They had been in existence for centuries and had lived in the hills in China and Southeast Asia. The Hmong were farmers and soldiers. That is what they knew. Instead of giving them

some land, we relocated them in Minneapolis and Fresno, and 99+ percent of them immediately were added to our welfare rolls.

I loved the Hmong students and they became my “secret service” around the school. I was always given advance notice of any trouble about to happen on campus. Once the Mexican gangs and the Asians got into it and one of my Hmong was threatened to the point where he was going to bring a .38 to school and “take ’em out.” I talked him out of that. Said something like, “Choua, don’t you know that getting mixed up with guns can get you killed?” I was chilled by his response. Choua replied, “Don’t worry, I’ll be back.” That’s the same attitude we see in the terrorists of September 11th. Choua went down in a drive-by a couple years later in Stockton. If he’s back, I haven’t recognized him.

Eventually we got several thousand Hmong living in Chico and the surrounding area. Somewhere along the line they got involved in the Type II fire crew program that I ran in the Mendocino N.F. and I had four Hmong fire crews for several years. It was an interesting experience

teaching people to fight fire one sentence at a time through an interpreter. It was rewarding, though. At the end of each class period all the students thanked me for teaching them. Never had that happened in the public schools. Beyond that, they were great firefighters. The Forest Service just couldn’t handle people who wanted to eat rice instead of steak and potatoes. After all, the government knew just how much protein and carbohydrates each fire fighter should have in that sack lunch. No room for these “special needs” people!

That’s my experience with war. That’s how I’ve developed my opinion and feeling about the present situation in which we find ourselves. No combat experiences or brushes with death on the battlefield.

Our country has been attacked at home by a foreign enemy for the first time in over a 150 years. The enemy is dedicated to destroying us and the way of life for which we stand. They will not quit. We are going to have to identify, target and engage them everywhere on the face of the earth until they are eliminated or controlled.

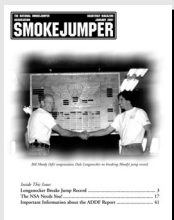
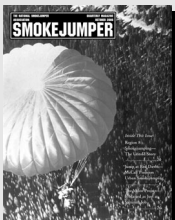
However, there is not a time limit on this action. It will take years. My hope is that we will identify the individuals involved and eliminate them. We do not need to kill everyone who is the same race or religion, regardless of whether or not they are involved. We know that we can erase a country from the face of the earth. I hope cooler heads prevail by the time this issue is in your hands. How much time do you spend before you buy a house or select a college for your kids? Shouldn’t we spend that much time planning an effective course of action rather than engage in the “nuke ’em now” attitude which seems to be prevailing at this point? I’ll probably delete this column when I read it over next month. If not, you’ve just read it! 🙏

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

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# SMOKEJUMPER

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There is a limited number of copies available of the July 2000—October 2001 editions of *Smokejumper* magazine. Each copy is \$3.50 S/H included. Use the merchandise order form or write it out.



# Mouse Attack on the Fireline

by Robert Schumaker (Missoula '59)

On the 9th of August in the middle of a very active 1961 fire season, a Ford Tri-Motor, piloted by Frank Borgeson, took off from Grangeville, Idaho. On board were Chuck Fricke (Missoula '61), Reed Harrison (Missoula '60), Bob Massey (Missoula '61), Ralph Mellin (Missoula '60), Jim Peterson (Missoula '60), Roy Williams (Missoula '60), and myself. The 32-mile flight to the Island Creek fire took 35 minutes. (I said it was a Ford Tri-Motor.)

From the air, spotter Jim Lehfeltdt (Missoula '56) determined that this was going to be a routine jump with no wind on a slow moving fire in gentle terrain. It looked almost as good as that proverbial "weekend two-manner way back in your favorite wilderness deal." Jim spotted us all perfectly (with no wind, what did you expect?), and we all landed in the spot in the trees without incident.

I had just removed my jump gear and was standing alone among the bear grass and lodgepole pine when something tickled the outside of my lower right leg. It was up inside my fashionably staggged-off wide-leg "can't bust 'em" black jeans. At first I thought it was a bear grass stub sticking up inside my pant leg. However, when I shook my leg the tickling moved farther up the leg. Slapping at the outside of my pant leg caused it to move even farther up inside my pant leg.

I began to slap at my pant leg even harder and more vigorously because I thought that it might be a big bee or a hornet that was going to sting the bejeezus out of me. Increased slapping caused it to go even farther up my leg into the seat of my pants, and it definitely felt bigger than a bee. Now I was jumping up and down and yelling while frantically grabbing at the seat of my pants. I finally grabbed what ever it was through the seat of my pants and squeezed it very hard so that it couldn't move. It was a lot bigger than a bee.

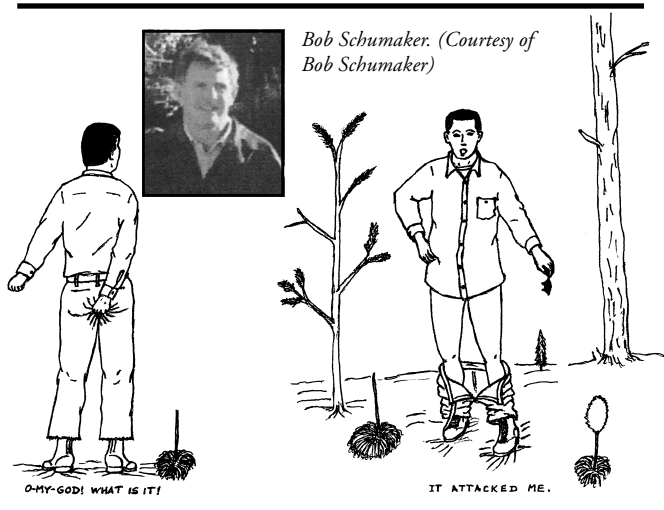
While continuing to squeeze very hard, I frantically unbuckled my belt and unbuttoned my pants. With my left hand, I reached down inside the seat of my pants which I was still very tightly squeezing with my right hand. I finally relaxed my grip with my right hand so that I could remove what ever it was and there was a small deer mouse that I had unfortunately crushed to death in my mad panic.

I picked the mouse up by its tail and was standing there with my pants down around my knees when the

rest of the crew came out of the surrounding trees to see what the commotion was about. They all had looks of astonishment on their faces which were quickly replaced with unending laughter when I attempted to explain. After they caught their collective breath, they opined that maybe I had been out in the woods too much this summer and perhaps I should spend more time in town.

We finally got calmed down and tooled-up to attack the fire. It was quiet as we were digging fire line until someone would start snickering uncontrollably and set off everyone, except me, into rounds of laughter and comments about my ancestry and libido. It was a long summer! 🐿

*Bob Schumacher grew up in the Bitterroot Valley and spent summers at his father's remote Magruder Ranger Station. He put himself through the engineering school at the University of Idaho by jumping out of Missoula from 1959 to 1962. After graduation, he spent four years as a field artillery officer in the U.S. Army. From there three more years were spent at the Sandia Laboratories in Livermore, Calif., working on the design of nuclear weapons. Bob jumped again in 1970 before starting work as a mechanical/nuclear engineer at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Wash., where he spent the next 26 years. He retired in 1997 and moved back to the Bitterroot Valley where he designed and built his own home. Bob currently spends his time skiing, hiking, climbing and flying gliders and small power planes. You can contact Bob at: 1304 Westwood Dr., Hamilton, MT 59840.*



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# LETTERS

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Dear Editor:

I read with interest the story by Don Mathis “The Night Pierce Burned.” During that summer of 1955, I was on a slash disposal crew on the Clearwater N.F. just outside of Pierce, Idaho.

The night of the fire I was in the movie house next door to the Pierce Hotel. The house lights came on and we were asked to evacuate post-haste. Street-side it was evident that the Pierce Hotel was fully ablaze with flames coming out of the roof 50 feet high. My keepsake '53 Ford Victoria was parked immediately in front of the hotel.

I quickly drove my car away before the entire building-front crashed to the street. Next, grabbing my camera, I took two quick color shots. One is excellent, showing the neon-lighted Mint Bar as a foreground to the blazing Pierce Hotel. I then helped with the fire which was being quickly localized with the efforts of the smokejumpers.

An important task was to remove the furnishings and beer cases from the adjacent threatened Mint Bar so that the next day Pierce could suffer its sorrow in a proper manner. Most of the town, including the Mint Bar, was saved due to a heroic effort. I'm not aware of anyone killed or injured.

It was a terrible shame to lose the Pierce Hotel which was, in my mind, a remnant of Idaho's frontier past. I had partaken in the libations at the Pierce so I can speak with some authority. There was a rumor among the slash disposal crew that the smokejumpers had a weekly lottery with the winner being awarded a night's stay at the hotel. This had some influence in my joining the smokejumpers the following year.

—Herb Hidu (North Cascades '56)  
Alna, Maine

Dear Editor:

Part way through the article “Kickin' Cargo with a Bum Pilot” (*Smokejumper*, July 2001) the events seemed familiar. I glanced back and saw 1961 and Shear Airstrip in Idaho. I was on that flight!

I had rookied at Missoula in 1960. In the fall I returned to my regular job as an engineer on the Gallatin National Forest. In those days, there was a program called “career development” whereby jumpers working in full-time career positions could return to Missoula each spring for refresher training. Then we would return to our regular jobs and be “on call.” All of this was dependent upon one's boss. My boss on the Gallatin would not let me take refresher training during 1961,

and I was pissed, to say the least.

I languished on the Gallatin that June as the supply of jumpers dwindled. In early July I did get called to a fire on the Salmon N.F. as a ground-pounder. During this time, Earl Cooley contacted the Gallatin Forest Supervisor and got me released to the jumpers. When I arrived at Missoula, Cooley gave me a practice jump and assigned me to the warehouse, where I worked with Jeff Davis as squad leader. The events of the day were told by Jeff in his article.

I was working in the front end of the plane when I realized the ship was in trouble—real trouble! We were not gaining altitude after the drop, and following the Selway River to keep airborne. I heard someone yell that we had a chute caught in the tail. I had a spotter chute on, but it was too low to jump.

I remember Jeff and George Cross at the door. Jeff was hanging outside trying to cut the entangled parachute and being held by his belt by George. Suddenly the plane began to pull up. What a relief! After a “conversation” up front between Jeff and the pilot, we dumped the rest of the freight and returned to Missoula.

The next day I got a fire jump on Dead Elk Creek with Joe Gutkoski as squad leader. I remember it was a snag-infested rock pile.

There is no question that we would have all bought the farm had it not been for the heroic actions of Jeff Davis and George Cross. Young adventurers as we were at the time, close calls were quickly forgotten. Now, after 40 years, I want to express my thanks to these men for saving all our lives. As I look back, I would have missed so much had we gone down that day.

—Ben Mitchell (Missoula '60)  
Sitka, Alaska

Dear Editor:

In my paper “Environmental Factors in the Cerro Grande Fire—A Smokejumper's Perspective,” I concentrated on the outbreak of the fire on May 7 and May 8, 2000. An illustration of the effect of the control of the fire by roads, logging, thinning and previous (25–30 years earlier) fires has now been published on my web site at <http://www.CoyoteAerospace.com>.

The fire did burn with extreme intensity on May 10, but it was driven by 50-mph winds with gusts to 75 mph on May 10. The only factor that drove the fire on May 10 was the wind (which died down somewhat during the night of May 10, 11) and the increased humidity in the nighttime hours.

—Chuck Mansfield (Cave Junction '59)  
Los Alamos, N.M.

# “Paradoctor” Jumped to Help Crash Victims

by Mark Matthews for the Great Falls *Tribune*

*The following article is reprinted, with permission, from the Great Falls Tribune September 1999. Thanks to Jack Dunne (Missoula '46) for passing it along.*

HELENA—On June 15, 1944, Dr. Amos Little stood at the open door of the UC-54, contemplating the Rocky Mountains below. He made 22 practice jumps before, but this was to be his first rescue attempt. Shortly after midnight the day before, a B-17 Flying Fortress out of Rapid City, S.D. bound for Greeley, Colo., had crashed on the north side of Crown Peak in the Roosevelt National Forest. Three crew members died in the crash, seven survived, with various injuries. At daybreak, two survivors hiked out to summon help. Little got the call in Casper, Wyo., about 2 A.M.

Little, who now lives in Helena, was a lieutenant with the U.S. Air Force. Nine months before, he had gone through smokejumper parachute training at Seeley Lake with a dozen other military doctors and a French Arctic explorer. Little became one of six paradoctors assigned to the Second Air Force Search and Rescue, the forerunner of today's Air Rescue Service. In later years, he would make another half dozen jumps into the wilderness to assist injured firefighters and hunters, as well as other downed pilots and crewmen.

“There were no helicopters in those days,” Little says. “Parachuting was the quickest way to get MDs to people in the woods. We were like the Coast Guard. The fact that we were there reassured people. The Air Force told their personnel we would be there if they got in trouble.”

While stationed at Casper, Wyo., Little's territory ranged from the Canadian border to Denver. Little made 52 jumps in his career. “It's not very much these days, but back then it was a fair amount,” he said.

Little trained in 1943 with master parachutist, **Frank Derry** (North Cascades '40), who developed a steerable, slotted chute for smokejumpers. Derry also came up with the idea for the static line. Rather than free fall and pull a rip chord, a parachutist would attach his rip chord to the static line, a wire that ran the length of the plane's ceiling. The line would automatically activate the chute as a jumper dropped out of the plane. The military took many of Derry's



*Dr. Amos Little was one of paradoctors assigned to the Second Air Force Search and Rescue, forerunner of today's Air Rescue Service. Fifty years ago, he jumped to the aid of injured firefighters and hunters in the wilderness. (Courtesy of Amos R. Little III)*

innovations and techniques and incorporated them into the paratrooper brigades.

“Frank was the salt of the earth,” Little says. “He grew up in the rough and tumble world of parachuting. He knew and understood the parachute and was a great instructor.”

When Little finally got to jump, he enjoyed the experience at first. “I liked my first jump. But before my fifth jump I sort of sat in the doorway of the plane and said ‘what am I doing here?’ But once called to action, the short, stocky man didn't hesitate.

## The First Rescue

Shortly after midnight, on June 14, 1944, Lester Place, the left waist gunner on the B-17, brought maps to the cockpit so the pilot could help the navigator pinpoint their position. A crewmember reported seeing lights from the ground, suggesting nearby mountains. Place later told a reporter that while he was in the cockpit he “looked out through the windshield and saw something black coming at us. I asked (the pilot) what we were flying into.”

After turning on the landing lights, the men saw the tops of pine trees coming at them. “I think if we

had another two or three seconds we might have cleared the whole thing,” Place said. But the huge plane plowed into the side of the mountain. Without their seatbelts attached, the pilot, co-pilot and navigator died in the crash. Place, who had jammed himself behind the pilot’s seat, suffered a fractured spine and dislocated shoulder. He and five other survivors escaped the wreckage before it exploded. They managed to start a fire and take inventory of their injuries.

Later, they heard sounds coming from the wreckage and freed another crewman who had been trapped in the tail of the plane. The next day Leroy Faigin and Don Jacobs hiked 14 hours down the mountainside to the South Fork of the Poudre River where they bumped into two fishermen on who drove them to a phone.

When Little’s plane reached the area the next day, the crew quickly spotted a wreck—the wrong one. “At first, from the air, it was impossible to tell that this was an old crash,” Little said. “The plane’s serial number on the tail fin was sufficient to identify it as other than the object of our search” When they located the newly downed plane, Little kicked out the

medical kit from about 150 feet above the crash site. “The 85-pound kit contained equipment for treatment of shock burns, fractures, lacerations and other emergencies associated with aircraft accidents,” Little said.

About 7:45 a.m., Little jumped, landing in a snag at an estimated 11,000-foot true altitude. “The snag cushioned my rate of descent but snapped off, leaving me a free drop of approximately 20 feet into a deep snowdrift,” Little said “The top of the snag broke off and landed a few feet from my head.

“At the time, I think that was the unofficial record for the highest altitude for a parachute landing.”

Little introduced himself to the men who “were glad to see me.” Except for Placer’s back, the injuries were minor. The man who had been trapped in the tail died before Little arrived. About four hours after Little’s jump, the ground rescue team arrived on foot.

Little’s rescue soon elevated him to celebrity status as *Time*, *Coronet* and *Reader’s Digest* wrote stories about “the jumping medic.” But Little’s pararescue career faded into memory as helicopters came upon the scene.

“Not too many people remember now,” he said. 🐼



# Rookie Training, 2001—Day by Day

by Michael Blinn (Redding '01)

## April 23, 2001. Day 1—*All business, all PT*

I woke up this morning at 6:30, looking forward to my first day of rookie training at the California smokejumper base in Redding, Calif. I didn't get much in the way of sleep last night, mostly tossing, turning and second-guessing. We walked over to the base at 0800. For those of us who didn't show up early, this was our first introduction to the base. The first order of business was our introduction to the base manager, Arlen Cravens. He seems like a no-nonsense sort of guy, intense and businesslike. Josh Mathiesen, the trainer who called me at home to check on my physical training (PT) progress was introduced to us as well. He seems like a straightforward character. Talking to the guys who came down earlier, I got a pretty good idea of what he's about. All business, all PT. He said the same thing to us as a group that he had told me on the phone. "This is not a mistake. You guys are here for a reason." After all the questions were answered, we went to do our PT test at Shasta College. It went well, with the exception of my pull-ups. When they say go all the way down, they mean all the way down!

We were issued our gear this afternoon. It was a strange feeling putting on jump gear. It started to sink in that I'm about to begin something I've dreamed about for a long time. No matter how much trash people talk about jumpers when we were in different capacities as firefighters, this is the pinnacle, the place most of us wanted to get. It is hot down here, a factor that Montana did not prepare me for. It was in the 30 to 40 degree range and snowing when I left Bozeman. It's 80 to 90 degrees down here. The heat is going to add difficulty to this training. The rookie class seems strong and there are a couple of guys from the Idaho-Montana area. I'm glad that Kyle Dornberger is here with me; it's good to have a partner from my old crew. It's only going to get harder and hotter, and I think camaraderie will be an asset that will become indispensable.

## Day 2—*I tried to throw in the towel!*

Today we put our issued gear into use for the first time as we were introduced to the "units" and the obstacle course. This is the training ground for smokejumpers. Each facet of the units prepares you for a different aspect of the job. The Mutilator works on PLFs (parachute landing falls), the tower works on your exits, and there is a letdown station where you learn how to rappel out of trees if you happen to "tree up" on a jump. The O-course is a series of exercises consisting of a gravel pit, PLF ramps, exit ramps, rope climb and monkey bars. Agility, strength and repetition are stressed in order to further prepare us for smokejumping. We thought we were pretty cool yesterday

when we first put on our jumpsuits. Today we were HOT when we suited up outside. The units went all right. I hope to excel in this area. I am not the strongest guy here, so the technical aspect is very important.

We went for an afternoon run of five miles after the units. When I got back to the base, I felt dizzy and disoriented. When I tried to walk back to the barracks I was staggering and felt like I was going to pass out. In the locker room I tried to throw in the towel, but my rookie bros wouldn't let me. They gave me water and Gookin-Aid until I got my wits about me. Afterward I felt I had let the guys down, but they assured me we'd make it through.

I probably singled myself out a bit by tipping over on the second day so I'll have to get on top of my game tomorrow. I can't imagine going home and telling people I couldn't hack it. We've already lost one guy to blisters on the bottoms of his feet. This is definitely going to be a war of attrition, requiring as much mental toughness as physical exertion.

## Day 3—*My body hasn't acclimated to the heat here*

This morning on the units I overheated again. I'm still behind the hydration curve and my body hasn't acclimated to the heat here. If I can't get it together soon, I'm sure they'll wash me out. On the O-course this morning I ripped three calluses off each hand on the monkey bars. They didn't seem to hurt that bad on the next couple of trips through the course. Others did the same thing, so we are going to tape our hands up tomorrow. Two more guys dropped out today during the units. I'm not sure if it was because of injury or other reasons, but whatever the case, it was their decision. Although I don't feel 100 percent, I will not quit.

I felt better on the afternoon run today, and I'm drinking water constantly. Hydration is the key to making it through this training. After work most of us went to Olive Garden for dinner. The intensity of this experience forms fast friendships. We all look a bit haggard, but people still joke around a lot.

## Day 4—*I feel like they're expecting me to throw in the towel*

The heat wasn't as much of a factor today. I had to take my helmet off for a bit during exits but I made it through all the phases. At the pace I've been drinking water, I think I'm finally rehydrated. My body is starting to realize that I'm not just here for a couple of days. If I so much as step outside, I start sweating. I cannot believe how hot it is! My trouble with the heat has caused me to focus mentally. I feel like people are watching me, expecting me to throw in the towel. That adds to my resolve and makes me push myself a

little harder. The trainers act disappointed in our performance, and I can't tell whether it is an act or not. Regardless, I'll give it all I have. It's their job to train us and our job to learn. You can't dislike someone for doing his or her job.

The double PT sessions are tough. Sometimes it seems like I'm getting stronger, other times I feel weak. We run in the morning and do calisthenics in the afternoon, or vice versa, depending on which group you are in. We are split into two groups due to the large size of our class. One group does units in the morning and classroom in the afternoon, the other half does the opposite.

#### **Day 5—*Tree-climbing is another challenge***

I have completed the first week of rookie training, an accomplishment in itself. Today was our introduction to tree climbing. We arrived at work an hour early to take the classroom portion of the course. Then we went to Crystal Creek to test out our new-found knowledge. In theory it doesn't seem like a difficult concept. It turned out to be a totally different story when I put on the spurs. To make a long, sad story short, I am less than proficient at the western roll, I am not fond of heights when relying on a seemingly unsecured rope for safety and I am slower than death when climbing. Yet another challenge in the road to becoming a smokejumper.

Our run was at the project site today which was a nice change of pace. It was much cooler in the hills and we were running on dirt. It actually began to rain a little bit while we were running. Although I might complain if that happens in July, it was a godsend today. Tonight all the rooks are headed out together to get a steak somewhere and maybe, just maybe, a beer.

#### **Day 6—*Redding seems like a Southern town***

The weekend of rest helped out a lot. I drank water and rested. Dornberger and I went and checked out Redding. It's not exactly your stereotypical California town. It seems almost Southern. Not Southern California southern. More like Alabama, south of the Mason-Dixon Line southern. The units and PT both went well today. I felt a little more confident in all areas. The only problem of the day was when Tim Lum noticed that I had a shroud-line necklace holding my cross. Apparently it was a safety hazard which he suggested I remove post haste. The urgency of the situation was reinforced with a round of flutter kicks. It would be easier to dislike somebody if they

### **Did You Lose Your Rookie Jump Pin?**

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

asked you to do flutter kicks, push-ups or leg lifts and stood over you, but these guys do them with you. And they smile while they do them.

This afternoon we had a class on parachute manipulation and also got our first turns on the simulator. It seemed awkward and touchy, much the same as learning to drive or fly a plane. I asked the instructor if the resistance on the toggles were similar to that of a real parachute. He smiled and replied, "Gentleman, it doesn't matter. When you jump out of that airplane, you will have the strength borne of desperation." I suppose he was right.

#### **Day 7—*Three times around the O***

Another good day today. We did three laps on the O-course this morning, followed by a five-mile run. Amongst the rookies our energy seems to ebb and flow. Each day there are a few folks who are down and a few folks who excel. Mentally everyone is on the same page and remaining strong.

I had been having trouble with backwards PLFs until today. It seems I had been throwing my legs the wrong way. That was corrected and now I feel very confident in all aspects of unit training. My hands have healed up so I no longer have to tape them. The heat isn't much of a factor anymore and I am better able to focus on task. We are tentatively scheduled to jump on Thursday. This afternoon Mathiesen gave us a little talk about coming together as a team. He said we still have a million miles to go. I hope we don't have to run all of those.

#### **Day 8—*We still have a million miles to go***

Today was the last day on the units. In order to jump tomorrow, we had to be all but perfect on the units. Everyone came through all right so it looks like tomorrow will be the big day. I came in early this morning with a couple of other guys to get some extra time on the simulator. That went pretty well. In the afternoon session on the simulator, we had a jump partner which added an element of difficulty. I still felt pretty confident. Looking on the bright side, gravity dictates that if I jump out of the airplane, sooner or later I'll hit earth. Where is still a question. During one of the simulator sessions, one of the rookie bros was having trouble manipulating. When the instructor asked him what the problem was, he replied, "I had a few drinks on the plane ride." His fellow classmates were asked to leave the room while the instructor had a chat with him.

We're all a little nervous and excited about tomorrow, but everyone is looking forward to jumping. Josh Mathiesen gave us a talk after our run this afternoon. He told us that maintaining a positive attitude was important in the coming weeks, as it was inevitable we would screw up and that the training would continue to get harder. He told us we still have a million miles to go. Apparently we haven't gained much ground in the last week.

#### **Day 9—*First jump postponed***

We awoke this morning to what seemed like gale-force

winds. There was not a cool breeze to be found when we were on the units, but on the day of our first jump it appeared miraculously. Everyone was a little bummed out that our jump was canceled, but we took it in stride. Instead of our first jump, we practiced fire shelter deployment and also discussed different ways to utilize jumpers in fire situations. I am just now realizing how self-sufficient a smokejumper unit is. The varied skills and qualifications that the different personnel in the organization possess make them very useful in a multitude of situations.

The wind didn't subside at all during the day so I hope tomorrow the conditions will improve. We are at the mercy of the wind so I hope Big Ernie reins it in a little tomorrow.

#### **Day 10—*I was ready!***

We made our first and second jumps today, and it was everything I had expected. On our first jump everything was going according to plan until I got into the door. My stomach was all butterflies as I listened to the briefing from the spotter. The spotter shouted "ON FINAL" and I was totally focused. Just as I anticipated the get-ready call, I was pushed back. Apparently we weren't lined up quite right and were off too much to correct. We went through this scenario twice more, each time my knees grew weaker from the adrenaline pumping through me. As we were getting ready for the fourth pass, Bob Bente tapped me on the shoulder. When I looked at him, he smiled and said, "You know what everyone on the ground is thinking?" I realized that all my rookie bros probably thought I had frozen in the door. For a brief instant I was extremely dissatisfied with the fellas in the front of the plane. On the fourth trip "On final" was followed by "Get ready" and then a sharp slap on my shoulder. As I exited the door, I watched my feet rise toward the horizon and felt the snap of the parachute deploying. The sudden total silence and extreme clarity of the canopy against blue sky above me was an unparalleled experience. I'll never forget it. I landed about 30 yards from the panel and had a good PLF. Everyone was hooting and hollering. Those few minutes in the air were worth any amount of PT and units. I caught a little razzing for circling for what seemed like hours, but it didn't matter.

The second jump went well until I prepared to land. I failed to turn into the wind and was running hell bent-for-leather when I hit the ground. I plowed a furrow through the grass and dirt for about 30 feet before I came to a halt. I was told later that it was evident I was not going to land nicely both by my direction of flight and the sheer volume of profanities I was yelling as I shot past the peanut gallery standing on the panel. At least I hit the ground unhurt. Very grass-stained, but unhurt. My dad once told me that when landing a plane, any landing you can walk away from is a good one. The California smokejumpers don't subscribe to that school of thought.

#### **Day 11—*There are several phrases I never want to hear again, and that is one of them***

After the three-day weekend I felt well rested, but my scores on the PT test did not reflect this feeling of refreshment. I increased my time on the mile and a half by 10 seconds. I'll have to work harder on my running in order to reach my goals by the end of rookie training. Mathiesen reiterated that we should be "as fresh as daisies after the weekend." There are several phrases I never want to hear again after this is over and that is one of them. We jumped a different spot today with a defined tree line perimeter. The tree line seemed to help me focus on the panel and I landed within about 10 feet of it. We did another jump this afternoon with two-man sticks. It is easier to actually do a two-man stick than to try it on the simulator.

We have come together as a team. Although we are still reminded to stick together by the trainers, I think we are doing well. There are really no cliques, just one cohesive unit. One of the rookies came up with the theory of the "four-second anxiety" this weekend. This deals with the four seconds between exiting the aircraft and the opening of your parachute when you contemplate if proper attention to detail was maintained by the rigger, if you have done right by others in your life, and if not, what exactly you will do to mitigate the ensuing predicament. I prefer to not think about it.

#### **Day 12—*The structure is much the same as a hotshot crew***

Started work at 0630 today so we could jump before we did some classroom work. The drift was too great when the spotters threw the streamers so we didn't jump. When we returned to the base, we were shown what goes into the saw boxes, one- and two-man boxes and how to pack them.

We also discussed some of the Region 5 policies that differ from other regions' jump programs. Although our policies are basically the same, some small differences are evident. All of the jumpers here are required to wear California smokejumper shirts, much the same as a hotshot crew. Other procedural differences make this base a bit more regimented than some other programs. The structure is much the same as a hotshot crew. These differences are to benefit the program in appearance and function. We send more crews out to pounder fires than other bases, so the format helps to retain consistency during those actions.

#### **Day 13—*Vigor will be a priority***

Today I started at 0630, revisiting the exit tower. Apparently I lacked vigor on my last exit, so the trainers wished to correct this before it became habit. After two exits I was released to return to PT. Personally, I don't think that the problem is a lack of understanding. My guess is that I have not totally overcome the apprehension one experiences when asked to jump out of an inspected and air-worthy airplane. Regardless of the cause for the lack of vigor, I do not want to visit the units again. Vigor will be a priority.

We had an abbreviated S-290 course this morning put on by a gentleman from the weather service upstairs. We also had a leadership course instructed by Base Manager



*Historic photo. Jerry Ellefson, Glenn Smith (North Cascades '40), Allen Moyer (Missoula '43), Joe Osborn (Missoula '43) and Harry Mishler (Missoula '43) before a practice jump in 1943. (Courtesy of Earl Schmidt)*

Arlen Cravens. Arlen still seems to be a bit distant. I don't think he has really warmed up to us yet. We'll grow on him, though.

*Day 14—My body has acclimated, making the heat bearable*

We jumped again this morning into the same spot we've used for our last couple of jumps. I am becoming comfortable manipulating my chute and I feel ready to try a smaller spot. After our jump, we had a map and compass class taught by Mr. Lum. This course not only covered a lot of the basics, it brought home a very important point: I am not working in familiar country anymore. Before this year, I've been stationed in country that was familiar to me. I had grown up hunting, fishing and flying in the same country. Northern California is a totally new area for me. Map and compass skills will be very handy tools to possess.

The double PT sessions are not dreaded so much now. They have become routine, just another part of the job. My body has acclimated, making the heat bearable. I am grateful for the intensity of the training as it keeps me focused on the task at hand. I don't think about home as much as I would if we had a lot of down time, but I still miss my dog.

*Day 15—Who gets married on a Friday?*

I woke up this morning a bit early and called my sister. She is getting married today and I was supposed to be the best man in the wedding. I'm glad that I have a family that is supportive and understanding. I am flying up to Seattle to see her tomorrow. It will be nice to see family and friends, but I don't want to lose my focus on the task at hand. I suppose it is kind of selfish to view her wedding as a distraction, but who gets married on a Friday?

We jumped twice today and both went very well. I think our next jump will be into a smaller spot, a challenge I look forward to. When we went over the film of the exits there was one exceptionally dismal example. One of the trainers made the comment that the only way it could have been any worse was if the individual exiting the aircraft would have been sucked back into the plane. Everyone but the guy in question thought the comment very witty.

After our second debriefing, we got into our PT gear for an afternoon run. When we got out to the ramp one of the trainers was holding a large watermelon. We were told we would have to carry the watermelon on our run out to the gate and back, a distance of about five miles. We could choose how we got it there, but it had to be intact when we returned. We chose to do an Indian run, with the front guy carrying the melon. As the guy from the back sprinted up, the melon would be handed off. When we started the run,



the melon weighed about 15 pounds. At the turn-around point, it seemed to have gained about five pounds. To complicate matters, the friction coefficient had been affected dramatically by the sweat pouring off us. When we returned to the base, we were presented with the melon and told it was ours to keep. At this juncture the melon had nearly doubled in weight.

One of the rookie bros didn't participate in the "fun run" today. He was instructed to start running before we left and we passed him on the way back. There is some speculation that he had been sand bagging a bit. When we returned to the base for a meeting, he wasn't apologetic or in low spirits. This kind of struck a nerve with a few of the rooks.

**Day 16—*Small spots, big timber, steep, rocky ... poison oak everywhere***

We jumped twice today. The first jump was at a new spot, the focus of the exercise being hillside landings. It seemed easier to get off of your feet on the hillside and I had a good exit and PLF. The second jump was a much smaller spot with tall timber surrounding it. The meadow was wet in spots with a small stream bisecting it. I landed in a muddy area, but at least it was on the ground. Three rookies treed up but everyone made it down safe. One guy was suspended about 30 feet off the ground by a stob that looked none too stable. We ran over to help him out, all noticing at once that he wasn't hung up securely. Everyone began discussing the dire situation, reminding our dangling rookie bro that he could burn out any minute. This conversation apparently became unnerving during the individual's letdown procedure and he rather impolitely asked us to leave. Predicaments of that nature always seem a little more humorous when you are the spectator.

We did our run at the jump spot; a good hill run was a nice break from the drag strip at the base. When we were finished running, Josh had a chat with us. Apparently he had heard some rookies talking about the watermelon run on Friday and how one of our bros hadn't even attempted to participate. Josh said he was furious that we would engage in that type of behavior, reiterating that we had "a million miles to go" to become a team. Although I see where he is coming from, the complaints were not unfounded. I think we are becoming a team, but we need all of our members to participate in order to be our best as a unit.

As we rode home, Josh told us some jump stories. As we rounded a bend in the road, he said "This will be your jump country guys, if you make it. Small spots, big timber, steep, rocky, poison oak everywhere. Every base has its rough jump country, but I'd say overall we have the roughest. I think that's something to be proud of." It was kind of weird, Josh almost appeared human for that instant. It was over in a flash, but I think I saw it.

**Day 17—*We may have broken the million-mile mark today***

We jumped twice again today. The first spot was another hillside landing. PLFs work best if you try to roll

downhill. I learned that the hard way. The second jump was our first three-man stick. I was first out of the door, so the exit was the same as always. Our manipulations went well and the three of us landed where we had planned. After debriefing, we went for an eight-mile run. With a mile left, we stopped. Bob Bente and Josh Mathiesen challenged us to make the last stretch in less than seven minutes. All of us had to finish together. We made it in 6:53. We may have broken the million-mile mark today.

**Day 18—*I don't trust Mathiesen and Bente as far as I could throw them***

We jumped on the Lassen National Forest today, the highest elevation spot yet. I hit near the panel and had a good ride but the elevation definitely makes the ground come up a lot faster. The spot had a layer of volcanic sand over it, so it wasn't as hard. In the afternoon, we jumped the small timbered spot from yesterday. It was a two-person stick affair, which went well.

The routine of rookie training has become like any other job now. When we first started jumping, after the adrenaline wore off, I was beat. I wondered how we were supposed to concentrate on fighting fire after a ride like that. Now, the adrenaline has lessened to a manageable level. I'm getting used to exiting and am better able to concentrate on my counts going out, tightening my body position and doing my manipulation procedures.

Next week is rookie camp. I don't exactly know what to make of the information we're getting. We made our menu this week and they've told us to bring fishing poles. I don't trust Mathiesen and Bente as far as I could throw them, but they seem fairly sincere about the fun we'll have next week. I'm bringing my rod but I still don't know whether we'll use it or not.

**Day 19—*People are starting to become disgruntled with his performance***

Today we jumped the small timbered spot we've been jumping for the last couple of times. After we hit the ground, they did a cargo drop so we could practice cargo retrieval. Although the spot was small, the spotters shouldn't have missed the spot with the boxes they kicked. I don't know how those guys keep their jobs, they didn't make the spot with a single piece. In retrospect, I believe they may have actually been trying to miss.

I volunteered to climb for cargo, as I needed the practice in the tree. I was painfully slow in reaching the cargo although I felt more comfortable than the last time we climbed. The cargo was hung out on a limb a ways from the trunk and I had some trouble retrieving it. By the time I got it and myself down, everyone had gone for a run. Two rooks were left behind with me as they had been in trees as well. We changed into shorts and ran down the road. The others were going to pick us up in the rigs on their way down after the run. The same guy that didn't do the watermelon run opted to just run in his boots rather than change into PT gear. He only ran about 300 yards and then stopped and started walking. I want all of us to make it

through this, but I don't know if he'll stick it out. We support him as much as possible but people are starting to become disgruntled with his performance. You can lead a horse to water ... I thought that I might get a talking to for leaving him behind but I'd rather take the consequences than stay with someone who doesn't care about the team.

#### Day 20—*The pines below me were a blur*

We made our next to last practice jump today, number 14. It was out in the Lassen at the same spot we jumped on Wednesday. It was a high wind endeavor and almost everybody ended up going into an alternate spot adjacent to the smaller primary. When we got in the door the spotter was calling 650 yards of drift and smiling. He told us that if we didn't feel like we'd make the little spot, go for the alternate. I took this as a sign that it would be difficult. I was right. Later in debriefing, the spotters told us that there had been more drift than they told us, but they didn't want to scare us. I thought the same as the pines below me were a blur when I headed to the spot. The time elapsed between the "on final" and exiting the aircraft seemed about equal to the time it took us to get from Redding to the spot. Needless to say upon exiting we were hauling ass. It was a good experience as we haven't had a real windy jump before today. One stick made the small spot and both guys had come from the same shot crew. It was mumbled that kind of teamwork could only be achieved by two fellas that knew each other well.

We did an eight-mile run this afternoon. The whole distance I contemplated next week's rookie camp. The snookies (second-year rookies) assure us that it will be a blast. I don't trust those bastards either. Whatever the challenges, the last four weeks have prepared us mentally and physically. There is a mixture of nerves and anticipation amongst the 17 of us. Although it is all conjecture at this point, there are quite a few theories about the week ahead.

Next week my roommate starts his rookie training at Boise and two members of my old hotshot crew start at Redmond and Missoula. I hope all goes well for them. I'm sure they'll do fine. If all goes as planned, maybe we'll see them on a fire this year.

#### Days 21–25—*A special week in this arduous process of becoming a smokejumper*

On Monday we jumped our last practice jump into rookie camp. The following five days were challenging and rewarding. The old guys instructed us on the finer points of tree climbing, land navigation and introduced us to crosscut felling and bucking. This week was a good introduction in the nuts and bolts of the ground operations of smokejumping. The training we received in the four weeks leading up to the camp all came together and made a little more sense.

Although training was the emphasis for the five days out in the woods, the most memorable aspects are the traditions of initiation that take place in rookie camp. It isn't a series of harrowing ordeals of physical and mental

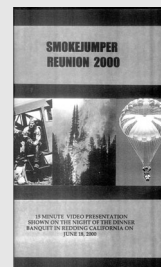
torture that one might imagine. Each of the traditions is geared toward reflection on the history of this program and the sacrifices each individual has made to become a member of this fraternity. I use that term loosely, recognizing that there are women that are "bros" also. It is a special week in this arduous process of becoming a smokejumper and an experience that we will remember for years to come.

No amount of description can tell what rookie camp means to a prospective jumper.

At one point in rookie camp, I experienced the first glimmer of actual dislike for a trainer. I had climbed about three quarters of the way up an oak when I encountered a swarm of ants making their way up the tree. Several members of the clan made their way into my trousers, shirt, ears and under my hard hat. I decided to descend rather than brave the insects. During my descent, I got stuck about 40 feet off the ground unable to get my lanyard around the tree. I was suspended by my limb-over trying to puzzle my way out of the dilemma when Bob Bente climbed up the tree beneath me. He paused when he reached my elevation just long enough to inquire about my predicament and ask whether I'd like him to notify the fire department in order to extricate me from the tree. He then continued climbing to investigate the infestation of insects

## NSA Member Offers You a Chance to See Reunion 2000— All of It!

You probably saw **Bob Webber** (Missoula '62) everywhere at Reunion 2000 with his camera. Well, maybe you didn't since there was a lot of mental firefighting and exercising going on for three days straight. Most of the firefighting was trying to invent the forgotten details and the exercising involved lifting 16 ounces.



Bob has put together a 5-hour plus video which covers all phases of the reunion:

1. Introduction-Friday
2. Registration
3. BBQ & group pictures
4. Base tours
5. Music on the Green
6. Banquet
7. Dance
8. Sun. Memorial Svc.

This video can be an important remembrance of a great reunion. The cost for the video including postage is \$15.00. Order from:  
Bob Webber, PO Box 15931, Boise ID 83715

I had discovered at the top. Bob didn't see the ants and climbed back down. Shortly thereafter, I was able to get out of the tree. When I hit the ground, I was not happy with the ants, the instructors, or my situation in general. I sort of wished Bob would effect a disappearance in the same fashion as the ants. While climbing the next tree, I was just glad we had put together such a fine menu and that I had brought my fishing pole.

#### Day 26—*The rookie team prevailed over the instructors*

After PT this morning, we had IV training. Each of us had to insert an IV into someone else and in turn have one inserted into us. The course was a total success. No one perforated a vein and no one passed out. One of the rookie bros threatened to pass out or puke but the situation never came to a head. He turned green, then a shade of off-white I've never seen before. His eyes glazed over and became shifty. We thought, and maybe hoped that he would vomit or swoon, but to no avail. He held himself together admirably.

After lunch, we went to do water landing training at Shasta College. Only one fellow had a problem with pool training, becoming a bit claustrophobic when the parachute was placed over him. When he was asked if he was all right, he emitted a nasally whine, followed by a high pitched "nooooo." This fellow had laughed at me several times when I was shaken up climbing trees. I laughed long and loud once he was dragged out of the pool.

At the end of the pool training, we divided up into teams and had a relay race. The winning team was challenged to race against the instructors. With their bros cheering them on, the rookie team prevailed over the instructors.

We drew out for spots on the jump list when we returned home from the pool. I drew number one. If all goes well, I could be the first rookie to jump in 2001.

#### Day 27—*Every sacrifice we've made has been worth it*

The bulk of the rookie class went on the list today. We started with 22 in the class, 16 of us are on the list now with one still on hold. Throughout the last five weeks there were times when I thought I would never see this day. Now I just have to get a fire jump and I will be a Region 5 smokejumper. Every sacrifice we've made up to this point has been worth it.

On Father's Day, June 17, 2001, I followed Bob Bente out the door over the Siskiyou wilderness as the first of the 2001 Region 5 rookie class to jump a fire. That instant validated the five weeks of rookie training that had proved to be among the most challenging endeavors of my life. On July 10, the last member of our rookie class jumped his first fire. Sixteen of us made it from the beginning of rookie training to our first fire jump. The last to quit did so in early June, apparently finding a better job somewhere else. It must have been one hell of an employment opportunity to surpass this line of work. Very few people are fortunate enough to join the ranks of a brotherhood that possesses such a rich history as does this organization. I thank the

Region 5 smokejumpers for granting me this opportunity and my rookie bros for their support in this undertaking. 🦅

*Michael Blinn is currently a rookie at Redding. He spent three years on the Bitterroot Inter-regional Hotshot Crew and two years on the Sula Ranger District. This winter he will be finishing an English education degree at Montana State University.*

## **SMOKEJUMPER MILESTONES**

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

### **Milestones Submitted Since Last Issue**

*Fire jumps in one season:*

**29-Bill Murphy** (Missoula '56) 1961

*Highest elevation landing:*

**12,600 feet**, Custer N.F., Montana, 1947. **Wally Henderson** (Missoula '46), jump partner unknown.

*Oldest first year jumper:*

**Age 50-Jason Greenlee** (Redding '99)

**Age 49-George Cross** (Missoula '74)

*Oldest active jumper:*

**Age 59-Murry Taylor** (Redding '65)

**Age 58-Walt Currie** (Missoula '75)

**Age 57-Bob Reid** (Missoula '57)

**Age 52-Jason Greenlee** (Redding '99)

*Longest break in service between fire jumps:*

**35 years-Bob Reid** (Missoula '57), 1960 to 1995.

### **Milestones Requested For Next Issue**

Northern most fire jump (latitude):

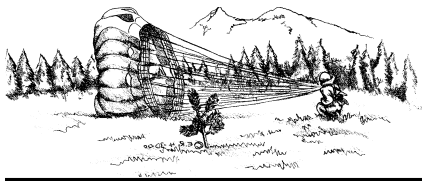
Number of states jumped (practice and/or fire):

Number of aircraft types jumped as Smokejumper:

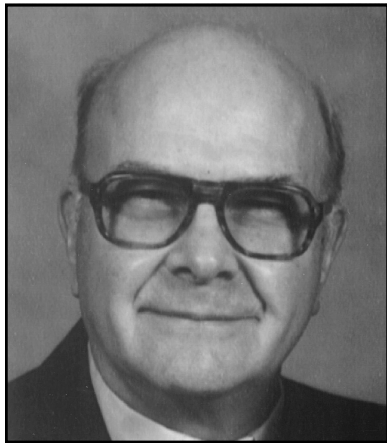
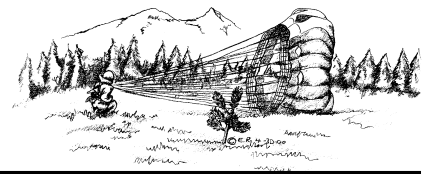
Number of different bases employed at:

Please send your information and marks to: Milestones@smokejumpers.com or mail to: Mark Corbet, 1740 SE Ochoco Way, Redmond, OR 97756.





# Checking the Canopy



by H. Lee Hebel  
(Missoula '44)

THE GREAT CHRISTIAN, Martin Luther, explained that we learn about GOD in several, of many, ways; suppose we deal with the first in this writing. GOD shows something of HIMSELF to us in CREATION.

Smokejumpers are in a unique position to live and work in the fabulous natural world. Wasn't this what Murry Taylor in *Jumping Fire* was feeling when he wrote "I sat for awhile beside the RIVER, enjoying the SUN, part of a scene that suggested that I could be the last person on earth, perhaps even the first. In the sweep of human activity—only SNOWY PEAKS, gray stone RIDGES, and a RIVER filled with SUNLIGHT racing before me—as far as I could see, green and purple MEADOWS ran to the foot of distant MOUNTAINS, the CANYONS of which lay choked in the frozen blue remains of the last ICE AGE."

Moses wrote "In the beginning GOD created the HEAVENS and the EARTH." Let's take that as a given; let's assume that Moses was a very wise, insightful person!

Some of the drawing power to travel to Montana from Pennsylvania a number of times, has been the majesty, the spectacular nature of GOD'S world—in every state, culminating in the Rocky Mountains—Wow! David was a great guy who certainly made some pathetic mistakes

(sins), but most of the time he was close to the LORD of life; he shares some penetrating insights with us when he writes in Psalm 8:

"When I look at YOUR HEAVENS, the work of YOUR fingers, the MOON and the STARS that YOU have established; what are human beings that YOU are mindful of them, mortals that YOU care for them? YOU have made them a little lower than the angels, and crowned them with glory and honor. ... You have put all things under their feet, all SHEEP and OXEN and also the BEASTS of the field, the BIRDS of the AIR, and the FISH of the SEA. ... O Lord, our SOVEREIGN, how majestic is YOUR name in all the EARTH." (Psalm 8.3-9)

Delbert Barley and I related to that while extinguishing a snag west of Big Prairie one Sunday afternoon—a nanny goat and her two kids appeared close to us in that wilderness area of God's earth. We stood in awe!

JESUS CHRIST lived his youth and short adulthood in what



we might term desolate, harsh, god-forsaken country; but even then HE had tremendous insights into GOD's creative nature.

"Look at the BIRDS of the AIR; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your H E A V E N L Y FATHER feeds them. Are you not of more value than

they?... and why do you worry about clothing? Consider the LILIES of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, Solomon and his Glory was not clothed like one of these. But if GOD so clothes the GRASS of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow and is thrown into the oven, will HE not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry saying, 'what shall we wear?' ... Your HEAVENLY FATHER knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of GOD and HIS righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matt. 6:26-33)

I believe that THE LORD GOD is continually trying to get our attention - to reveal HIMSELF and to help us know where we are meant to fit into HIS plans. 🔦

*H. Lee Hebel is a retired Lutheran pastor and lives in Karthaus, PA. Lee trained and jumped for two seasons at Missoula. He can be reached at HC1, Karthaus, PA 16845.*

# Missoula Smokejumpers Search for Ernest Bruffey

by Joe Gutkoski (Missoula '50)

**T**he 7.1 Montana earthquake of Aug. 16, 1959, centered in the upper Madison River Basin, killed more than two dozen people by burying them under the massive Madison River slide. This became the dam for Quake Lake.

Missoula smokejumpers were involved in the rescue efforts and in the search for a lost mountain climber, Ernest E. Bruffey, 38, from Havre, Mont., who disappeared on Granite Peak the day of the earthquake.

A five-person search party was formed in Missoula shortly after the earthquake. It consisted of **Thad Lowery** (Forest Service regional budgeting officer), **Ed Slusher** (ex-Myers Creek district ranger, Custer National Forest), **Hugh Fowler** (Missoula '47) a smokejumper foreman and emergency medical technician, **Lloyd Reesman** (Missoula '58) a smokejumper squad leader, and myself.

We drove east to Alpine on the East Rosebud River in the Custer National Forest. On the way we checked in with the sheriffs of Park, Sweet Grass and Stillwater counties to learn about their search and rescue efforts. We learned that Bruffey was a true wilderness traveler. At six feet with dark hair, he dressed in buckskins for weight and warmth and never left a footprint in mud or soil if he could help it, so there would be no trace of his passing. He parked his car at the Mystic Lake Power Station on the West Rosebud River and told Montana Power Co. employees he would be crossing Froze-to-Death Plateau to hike over Tempest Mountain. He would then climb Granite Peak. The powerful earthquake struck at 11 P.M. Sunday. When Bruffey hadn't returned to his car by Thursday the power station employees grew concerned and sent out the alarm.

Bruffey was from a well-known family that had settled around the Livingston and Big Timber area in the 1880s. Born in 1921 he was an only child. He attended Montana State University at Bozeman, majoring in engineering; in 1941 he became a state wrestling champion. In addition to his bachelor of science degree in engineering, he later earned a bachelor of science and a master's degree in physics plus a doctorate in education. He was a decorated veteran serving in World War II in Europe as a member of a Special Forces division. It was in Leeds, England, that he met Audrey, bringing her home as a "war bride." They returned to Havre where Ernest worked as an engineer developing subdivisions.



*L-R: Dick Carpenter (Missoula '49), Al Casieri (Missoula '52), Joe Gutkoski (Missoula '50) and Norm Allen (Missoula '46) at the 9-Mile Airstrip in 1952. (Courtesy of Joe*

When we arrived at East Rosebud Lake, near the small community of Alpine, we talked and coordinated with the Carbon Country sheriff. We assembled our equipment and talked to young Johnny Bronger, a local outfitter who agreed to horse pack our gear up to Froze-to-Death, the 10,000-foot plateau. Autumn was quickly setting in and it was very windy and cold. On the way up we cut three lodgepoles for our small canvas sheepherder teepee. Bronger wanted to take our supplies as close to Granite Peak as he could. He headed the loaded horses up the plateau towards 12,478-foot Mt. Tempest. Eventually, with the horses' pasterns and fetlocks cut up and bleeding from stepping over sharp rocks, I told Johnny to stop and unload them and go back before they became worse.

We found good water and some wind protection at the head of a side drainage into Phantom Creek near the 11,754-foot Froze-to-Death Plateau. We erected our teepee in the cold and wind. Fortunately, by leaving our gear outside, there was room for all five of us to sleep in the teepee. We slept soundly that first night.

Despite the cold wind in the morning, we proceeded on foot and up the plateau, passing Mt. Tempest, and going into the low saddle between Mt. Tempest and Granite Peak. We searched the climbing route to the snow bridge and agreed this was the most probable route that Ernest would have taken to the summit. Thad Lowery and Ed Slusher with Jim Stevenson had climbed Granite by this route in August of 1952. We split up and searched over the east and north slopes of the mountain but found no trace of Ernest.

The next day we approached the east ridge of Granite Peak carrying two 120-foot climbing ropes. We roped up at the snow-bridge and Thad began to cut steps into the face with his ice ax. We crossed safely and climbed along the ridge. We continued up to the summit, roped for safety, and found the plastic tube register. Ernest had written in the register the same day as the earthquake that he was "headed for Wolf Mtn."

From the top of Granite we searched to the west where Ernest would have probably traveled. We scanned the steep ridges and gulches of the summit with binoculars. I observed that there was not as much rock fall in evidence from the quake as I had expected. The weather was clear with a cold wind as we continued to search along the ridge. In the late afternoon we roped up again and retreated back down to the teepee using our headlamps. We spent three more days searching the peak with no sign of Ernest. The following morning we dismantled our sparse camp and packed it up for Bronger to pickup later. We headed back down the Froze-to-Death Plateau and hiked back down to Alpine on East Rosebud Lake.

Ernest's mother and father, his employer, a neighbor from Havre and Ernest's wife Audrey were at the Alpine meeting room. They were anxious to know anything about his possible whereabouts. We learned that Ernest and Audrey had recently adopted four children from a broken family. The family sensed that we were the only hope of finding him, and there were many tears and much pleading asking us to continue the search. We agreed we would continue the search from the Cooke City side of the Beartooth Mountains and they agreed to purchase the food for our extended search.

We backpacked in and began searching the southern flanks of a large area from Granite Peak to Wolf Mountain. At that time there was no register on the top of Wolf (I put one on top on Aug. 12, 1965), and we found no visible trace of Ernest. After searching the area for five hard days, we became alarmed as Thad's face had become ashen and looked rigid. It was similar to a heart attack (he died of a heart attack a few years later). We decided to return to Missoula. After an absence of

two weeks I was happy to get back to my wife and three children.

On Aug. 16, 1999, some 40 years later, Joe Kampf, a climber from Coalstrip, found the remains of a man's foot in a weathered leather boot on the north face of Granite Peak. A year later to the day, Alan Kesselhaim and a group of climbers from Bozeman found two vertebrae, the broken ends of a femur and a tibia plus the sole of a left boot in the same area. However the boots did not have the same soles.

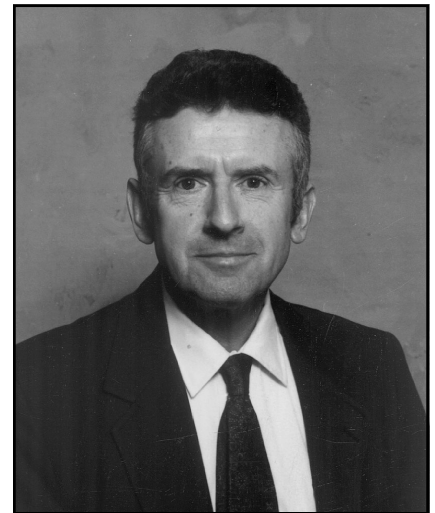
On Aug. 29, 1999, Dr. Gary Dale, the chief medical examiner for the state of Montana, confirmed that the bones found by Kesselhaim and Kampf belonged to the same person despite the fact the differences in the soles.

Park County Deputy Sheriff and Coroner Al Jenkins said, "I don't know if it's Ernest Bruffey, but somebody's on that mountain and I think they want to come down."

Ernest's father continued to search by air. At their Tenth Street house in Havre, Audrey left everything just as it had been on the day her husband left. When Ernest's mother died in 1965, she was cremated and her ashes scattered on Granite Peak, as were those of his dad in 1970. Audrey died in 1996 and her ashes were also scattered over the wild and craggy mountain. 🕯

*Joe Gutkoski graduated from Penn State University in 1951 after serving in the U.S. Navy on the destroyer Lansdowne. He worked as a ground-pounder in the late 1940s, rookied at Missoula in 1950 and jumped there until 1962. His*

*best fire season was in 1952 when he totaled 15 fire jumps. From Missoula, Joe transferred to the Division of Lands in the Region 1 office and later went to the Gallatin National Forest in Bozeman where he retired in 1982 with 32 years of service.*



*Joe and his wife, Milly, live in Bozeman where their three children all graduated from Montana State University. He can be reached at: 304 N. 18th Ave., Bozeman, MT 59715.*

# The Sheep Creek Fire Pack Out

by "Wild Bill" Yensen (McCall '53)

**O**n Aug. 25, 1955, Austin "Barney Bear" Young (McCall '54) and I were on the top of the jump list in McCall. The buzzer blew! Beep - beep - beep!! That was the signal for the first two to hustle to the fire cache and suit up. Carl Roselli (McCall '48) was the spotter. We went to the airport, loaded our gear on the Travelair and took off, heading east to Sheep Mountain on the Krassel District. The fire was right on top of Sheep Mountain at the head of Sheep Creek, which flows steeply down to the South Fork of the Salmon River. There was a nice open area right next to the fire that we used for our jump spot. We hit the ground at about 8,000 feet elevation.

Barney and I worked hard to get the fire out so we could leave the next day but we did not make it. We finished off the fire the next morning. In the afternoon we had a pleasant surprise when the Travelair flew over and dropped us a package. It contained two steaks and a six-pack of beer! Years later I discovered that Miles Johnson (McCall '53) had sent us that package, bless him. We enjoyed the steaks and beer for supper and planned to start our pack out at first light in the morning.

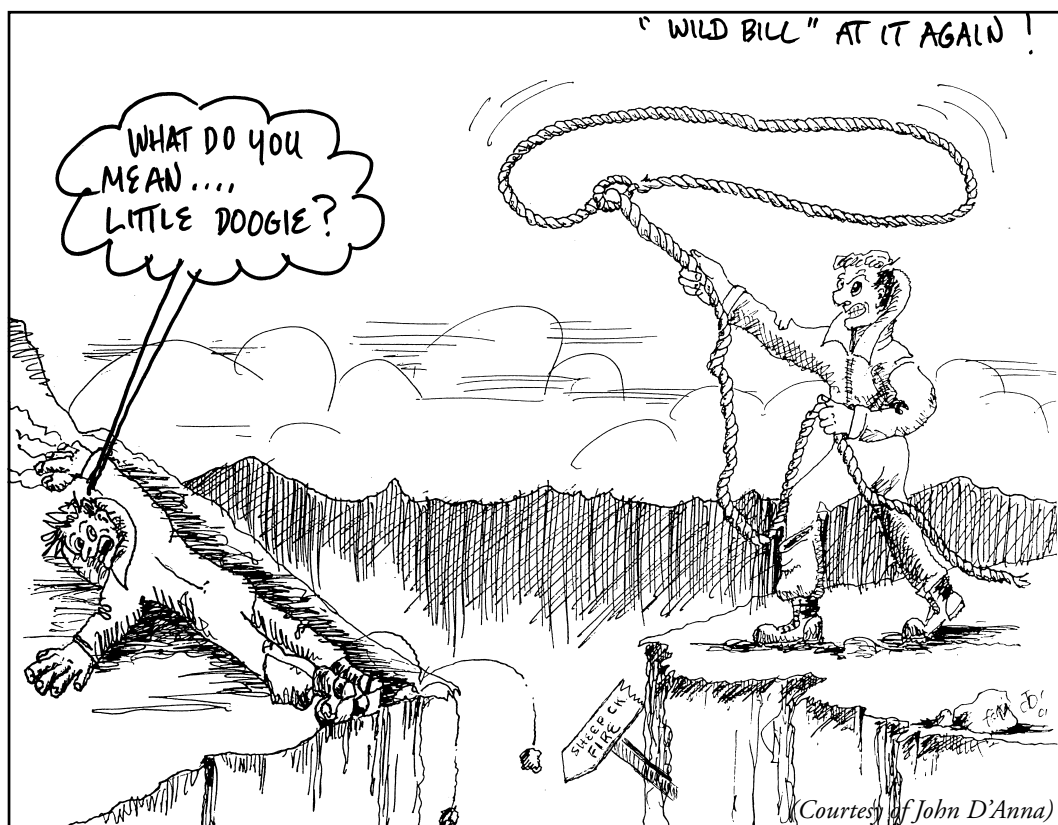
The Sheep Creek drainage was impossible to go down as it was full of dense brush and rocky bluffs. That made it necessary for us to skirt the main drainage and go down into and then up out of all the many side drainages that feed into Sheep Creek. There was no trail, and it would have been impossible to get a pack string up there so we had to just tough it out. We were carrying the old

"Elephant" bags, weighing a little over 100 pounds each. It was a real struggle—down and up, down and up.

About noon we came to an especially steep place. We found a possible crossing, but it looked very risky. It was a rocky slope 10 yards across, covered with loose, decomposed granite, and had a sheer cliff above and below. We considered the situation carefully. If we could get across, it would save us about two miles of carrying those terrible E-bags! I decided to try it. I very gingerly tiptoed across and made it! Whew!!

Then Barney started across. About halfway, the D.G. caused one of his feet to slip and he fell on his stomach and began sliding down toward the cliff! He had no way to get rid of the E-bag. In desperation, he spread-eagled, dug in with his fingers and toes and finally stopped his slide about a foot from the edge of the cliff.

I was horrified! When he stopped sliding, I said, "Barney don't move, don't even breathe!" As fast as I could, I got out my jump rope and made a lasso. I'm no cowboy, but I got that loop around Barney on the



first try. I snubbed off to a tree and then hauled Barney up to safety. We just sat there, shaking, for a couple of minutes.

We had to get out the first-aid kit and bandage all of Barney's fingertips. He had bloodied them all, stopping his slide toward oblivion. When we had that done, Barney got out a can of peaches to eat. After he finished, he threw the empty can over the cliff. We waited and waited for the can to hit bottom. When it finally did, we realized how far down that cliff was! We sat down and shook some more.

We had carried the E-bags about 16 miles in 14 hours when we dropped them on the trail at the south fork. The packer took the bags to the road for us, but we had to walk another six miles. Then we rode in the back of a pickup all the way back to McCall and arrived about 23:00.

That was the hardest, most dangerous pack out of my 30-season smokejumping career.

At the 1989 reunion in Boise, I saw Barney for the first time in many years. We sat down and matched our memories of that trip, and they were exactly the same! As we talked it over again, reliving that day 34 years ago, it gave us goose bumps and raised the hair on the backs of our necks.

Those were the days, flat-pack FS-2s, cotton harnesses, canvas jump suits, leather helmets, Elephant bags, no radios, no helicopter rides home, no time-and-a-half and all of \$1.88 an hour. 🦉

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

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# The Gift

by Darren Marshall (McCall '91)

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No shit! There I was, about to suit up for the second time after my five-year absence from jumping. Except this time, I was suiting up in the distinctive orange jump suit of the Butte County jail.

My only prior experience with this orange outfit was after I crashed my Blazer into an oak tree—as a result of my first DUI. I again reported to jail Friday. After being patted down, processed and printed, I was cavity searched. This had all the makings of a really “bad deal.”

Finally, I got into that orange suit. A minute later, a rather large and surprisingly friendly-looking female deputy came looking for me. This time I was guilty of driving under the influence with my kids in the van. That meant a felony charge of child endangerment and possibly losing my teaching credential. The felony charge was dropped, but I was sentenced to 30 days.

“Marshall? Darren Marshall?”

“Yes, ma'am.”

“How would you like to swap all of your time?”

“This is some kind of joke isn't it?”

Smiling: “No, really—do you want to swap or not?”

“God, yes!”

“Wait here.” She returned three minutes later with one form and all of my belongings.

My work release begins Monday, in easy,

manageable eight-hour shifts. SWAP stands for the Sheriff's Work Alternative Program. Eight hours of work equals 24 hours of jail time.

To make a long story short, my name is Darren and I am an alcoholic. I have been clean and sober for 80 days. To me, this thing that happened was miraculous, a gift from a Big Ernie, or some other higher power. My hope in telling this story is to help one sis or bro, who is still suffering.

Being tough enough to fight more than 300 fires did not mean that I was tough enough to fight alcoholism alone. I am part of 12-step Recovery Program. The following are suggestions if you find yourself in a similar spot.

If you feel like you have reached your end, don't do it! Call County Mental Health or Suicide Prevention—these numbers are in the front of all phone books, in the county or community services section. If you have a pastor, priest, minister or other religious mentor, call and talk with that person. Also in the phone book are the numbers for Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous.

On the computer there are unlimited resources available—the best may be at <http://www.recovery.alono.org>. If you have questions, you can e-mail me at [balance\\_now@yahoo.com](mailto:balance_now@yahoo.com). 🦉





# Touching All Bases



## ALASKA

by **Mike McMillan** (Fairbanks '96)

Alaska wildfires were sparked little by lightning in 2001, though man-caused blazes kept the crew busy until the last load went out the door July 20. Rain soon followed as fire activity in the lower 48 had the bros eagerly awaiting their chance to head south.

Several boosts to the Great Basin blessed the Alaska crew with much-needed overtime hours and fire action. In August and September the Alaskans were scattered on jump lists in Battle Mountain, Carson City, Ely, Cedar City, Grand Junction, Twin Falls, with a few calls to West Yellowstone, McCall and Redmond when the woods heated up. At season's end, co-jump kings **Joe Don Morton** (Redding '95) and **Mike McMillan** (Fairbanks '96) each recorded 14 fire jumps. For a visual account of the Alaska smokejumpers in action, please visit [spotfireimages.com](http://spotfireimages.com) on the World Wide Web.

Alaska jumpers also accepted varied fire assignments last season. **Wally Humphries** (Fairbanks '90) spent a month in Oregon as a Type 3 Incident Commander. **Matt Allen** (Fairbanks '95) and **Charlie Brown** (Fairbanks '88) served as liaisons to the Army, leading the troops on fire assignments in Washington. **Mike Bradley** (Fairbanks '95), **Matt Corley** (Fairbanks '97), **Marty Meierotto** (Fairbanks '94), **Steve Theisen** (Fairbanks '86) and **Robert Yeager** (Redding '92) were crew representatives, leading Alaska Native Crews to fires in Washington and California.

In September, **Chip Houde** (Fairbanks '88) joined the recovery effort at ground zero in New York City as an operations specialist on an overhead team. **Hank Falcon** (Redmond '83) also responded as a Situation Unit Leader. **Paul Lenmark** (Fairbanks '96) went to the Fire Use Training Academy in New Mexico as a prescribed fire course coordinator. **Fred Hernandez** (Redding '88) and **Steve Theisen** (Fairbanks '86) attended technical fire management courses in Seattle.

Fall tree-climbing details to New York and Chicago sent 14 jumpers on the hunt for the Asian



long-horned beetle. During the five-week assignments the urban jumpers scaled trees in rain or shine for about 10 hours a day.

A September detail to Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness in the Superior National Forest had 10 Alaskans paddling canoes to daily assignments. For three weeks the crew cut and burned sections of a half-million-acre blowdown—the result of a 1999 storm. Chief of party **John Lyons** (Fairbanks '90) described the detail as a “great time” with only two canoe casualties. Rookies **Jared Weber** and **Tom St.Clair** attempted to dock

their heavily loaded boat “through sheer force and speed,” swamping themselves and gear in the chilly water. In their defense, St. Clair was heard mumbling while soaking wet, “There's got to be a harder way.”

In October, **Jay Wattenbarger** (Fairbanks '92) took leave to Salt Lake City to net brine from the Great Salt Lakes. Thanks to Jay there will be no shortage of sea shrimp harvested for pet food this year.

A surprise fire call Oct. 10 sent seven jumpers driving to Clear for a 60 acre fire at a church youth camp. With no snow yet on the ground, strong winds threw embers from burn piles into black spruce forests surrounding several structures. With help from state firefighters, the jumpers were able to save a Paintball for Jesus firing range fortifying the woods. The late season fire was soon followed by the first winter storm of the year.

**Tom Roach** (Fairbanks '98) and wife Missy were married in Minnesota in October. **Mike Bradley** (Fairbanks '95) and fiancée Theresa are planning to marry in Alaska in November. **Ron Booker** (Redding '98) and wife Jacqueline had son Mykel in September.

In the fall, **Oded Shalom** (Fairbanks '95) continued working on his cabin in the hills above Fairbanks. **Robert Yeager** (Redding '92) finished his cabin near the Chena River. **Rick Thompson** (Fairbanks '89) had a work party at his property in October to finally get a roof over his head. His wife, Vickie, entertained with beer and food as a dozen bros

helped Rick complete his 10-year project.

The Alaska base had a makeover last fall. Its wood-paneled exterior was replaced with arctic baby-blue paneling in the hopes of pacifying a restless crew in the event of another slow season. Also new to the base is a large and curious “vanity curtain” appearing in October, separating the ready room from the locker aisles. The full-length drapery has the daunting task of imposing modesty on an already-humble and body-conscious crew.

Inside “the shack,” the crew plugged into a new virtual-reality jump simulator for future rookies and refresher training. The contraption is equipped with goggles and actual risers suspended from a large frame.

Alaska plans to welcome another six or so rookies in 2002 if they can make the cut. Lead rookie trainer **John Lyons** will hand over the reins to **Doug Carroll** (Fairbanks '94) this year after three seasons at the helm and five years total with the rooks. Lyon's tenure was highlighted by his tireless dedication to the program and the highest standards for our recruits.

Rookie trainers joining **Doug Carroll** in 2002 are **Matt Allen**, **David Bloemker** (Fairbanks '97), **Charlie Brown**, **Ty Humphrey** (Fairbanks '98) and **Robert Yeager**.

In January, **Bruce Nelson** (Fairbanks '81) returned to the Alaska base after an adventurous sabbatical. During his year away he scrapped his original plan of eating chocolates and watching soap operas. He instead hiked the entire Appalachian Trail and then canoed the length of the Mississippi River. Buck's good cheer and experience is welcomed back by his Alaska bros.

## Grangeville

by **Jerry Zumalt** (Redding '70)

Grangeville smokejumpers made 119 fire jumps to 33 fires from the GAC, and 121 additional proficiency jumps—a pretty slow season in central Idaho.

The base was able to effectively assist in suppressing several late season arson fires that threatened the local community, and inhaling on National Forest land. Although we experienced no jump injuries this season, we did have a serious mishap when one of our squad leaders was hit by a rock while working a large fire. He suffered a fracture to the ankle and lower leg as well as his hand.

We successfully trained a new squad leader, **Chris Hertel** (Grangeville '91), and some of our jumpers completed various overhead training assignments on large fires in the northern Rockies. Leading Edge

Aviation and pilot, **Bob Nicol**, supplied excellent aircraft services in support of our operation, and we were able to fly 48,000 pounds of cargo and bridge timbers into Shearer Airstrip at the end of the season.

We're currently into full project mode with climbers in New York City, Chicago and on the Shoshone National Forest in Wyoming, and working timber and hazardous fuels projects locally.

The elk are bugling, white tail are skulking around the breaks, and the steelhead are in the Salmon River!

## McCall

by **Rick Hudson** (Boise '73)

The McCall Smokejumper Base completed training of nine NEDS (rookies) June 29, adding them to the roster of 64 jumpers for the 2001 season. The first fire jump from McCall was on the Manti-LaSal Forest in southern Utah, reinforcing BLM jumpers from Cedar City.

Much of the jump activity from McCall to initial attack fires was to monsoon-influenced lightning in southeastern Idaho, Utah and northern Nevada. To better serve land managers in this area, McCall opened a spike base in Vernal, Utah, for a brief time and recorded 24 fire jumps. This spike operation was closed after two weeks and re-opened in Ogden, Utah.

From August through September, 167 fire jumps were made from the Ogden Spike Base primarily from Region 4's TDC-3 aircraft, Jumper 42. **Steve Mello** (McCall '74) suffered a fractured femur on a jump in the Uinta N.F. after a 28-year jump-career. With determination and therapy, he promises to be back next year.

McCall jumpers spent a good deal of the summer on the road boosting other jump bases for 151 fire jumps. Single-resource assignments by McCall jumpers amounted to 80.

Boise and Alaska BLM jumpers boosted McCall for 36 fire jumps in August. It's always good to work with the brothers of “the Dark Side,” but unfortunate that rounds and squares are no longer allowed together on the same aircraft, therefore often jumping separate fires. In better days, mixed-canopy loads on the same aircraft and spotted by qualified spotters, meant better efficiency and cost effectiveness.

When fire managers and coordinators ordered a load of jumpers, it didn't matter who rode which chute to the ground ... they all provided the same service when they got there. This season a load of jumpers often meant three rounds and five squares, which had to fly separately to the same fire. Even

coordinators got frustrated having to deal with this segregation. Hopefully this will change and we can jump together in the future.

The last fire jump of the season from McCall took place October 9 on a lightning fire into three inches of snow! That night the temperature dropped to 16 degrees ... but by then the jumpers had turned the fire over to the district and were snug at home. The season total for fire jumps by McCall came to 601, plus 649 proficiency jumps, for a grand total of 1,250 jumps.

Prescribed fire action took a crew to burn in Gunnison, Colo., early in October. Local burning on districts signed jumpers off as Ignition Specialist and Burn Boss Level II. Aphis Project tree climbing has scattered an infestation of jumpers from all bases to Chicago and New York for five-week assignments. McCall jumpers will primarily be swinging from the trees throughout Brooklyn and Queens during the time of autumn leaves.

Recruitment has started and the phones are ringing with prospective NEDS asking questions and wondering if they have what it takes to be a smokejumper—the best job they'll ever have!

## MISSOULA

by **Charlie Palmer** (Missoula '95)

Although the middle of October is fast approaching, the fire season of 2001 has not yet died. What it has lacked in intensity, especially compared to last fire season's record numbers, it has made up for in longevity. With a lack of any significant precipitation this fall, the potential for large fires continues to be a threat, and the Missoula base remains at the ready to respond.

In review of the 2001 fire season, Overhead Refresher Training was held March 27-31. Twenty-four individuals took part, comprised of Overhead from Missoula, Grangeville, and West Yellowstone. The following week, early refresher training began for 50 returnees. Individuals taking part in this two-week program were from the three Region One bases and McCall.

The first fire request came into Missoula May 6. This pounder fire was staffed by six from Missoula, and was burning in the Grant Creek area of the Lolo National Forest. In the middle of May, the Miles City, Mont., sub-base was activated, and several jump fires and pounders were initially attacked from this outpost.

Twenty-one detailers were assigned to the Silver City, N.M., base May 19. As has been done in the past few years, the crew was comprised of jumpers

from Regions 1, 4, 5, and 6, with Missoula providing the Overhead. According to Foreman **Wayne Williams** (Missoula '77), the crew had a below-average season with 54 total fire jumps, 10 jump fires, two walk-in fires, and one overhead assignment.

No booster crews were sent to Silver City, but the base did send 10 jumpers north to Vernal, Utah, to assist with McCall's sub-base operations there. Project work was varied, from sewing to prescribed fire, for a total of more than 2,000 hours. The monsoons finally arrived July 9, sending the remaining 11 jumpers to the emerging fire season in the Northern Rockies.

Twenty-nine rookies began training May 28 in a quest to earn a set of smokejumper wings. Five weeks later, when rookie training ended after completion of their 15th practice jump, 21 were left standing. Thirteen of these individuals were assigned to Missoula, six to Grangeville, and two to West Yellowstone.

Late Refresher Training began June 19, and, like Early Refresher, also ran for two weeks. Twenty-two jumpers participated, a preponderance of whom were students and teachers. With the addition of these folks, Missoula had 74 total jumpers for 2001.

An interesting recent phenomenon at the smokejumper base has been the number of our public school teachers who have abandoned their teaching jobs to pursue smokejumping as a career. Hmmm ... grading tests and being an advisor to the entomology club versus jumping fires and living the dream. Not sure what is going on there. Maybe the "table scraps" that are being paid to educators these days have something to do with it. Rumor has it that these teachers are taking \$15,000 pay increases to give up teaching full-time in order to become part-time jumpers.

The first fire jump out of Missoula occurred July 7. Five from Missoula jumped this one-acre fire located in the Rock Creek drainage east of Missoula. Lots of tricky winds, with a knife-ridge jump spot for a reward at the end of the ride. Unfortunately, a rookie on the jump fractured his wrist quite severely, and was out for the rest of the season. The fire season progressed in fits and starts from there.

By far, the busiest place in the fire world this summer was the West Yellowstone Base (please refer to its season report). Missoula sent several boosters to WYS throughout the summer, and the majority of MSO jumpers spent at least part of their time in West.

"Welcome to Missoula: Gateway to West Yellowstone" became the unofficial moniker for Fire Season 2001. The most recently jumped fire out of

Missoula took place Sept. 26. Twelve leaped from the DC-3 onto a running and torching fire on the Gallatin National Forest. Eighty acres at the time, winds pushed this fire over the ridgetop, expanding its size to more than 3,000 acres. Needless to say, it was not lined by 10 o'clock the next morning.

Sandwiched between the first and (so far) last jump fire of the season have been only 28 other jump fires. These 30 total jump fires account for 214 fire jumps, which represents only a third of the number of fire jumps during the record-setting 2000 season (542). During the course of the season, only four booster crews were sent to Missoula, and very few of these individuals got fire jumps. On the flip side, Missoula sent out a total of 13 boosters over the course of the season, with this breakdown:

West Yellowstone (5), Grangeville (1), Eastern Great Basin (1), Western Great Basin (1), Redding (3), Alaska (1), and Redmond (1).

As the season progressed, single-resource assignments became more frequent. The Missoula base sent out personnel filling 85 overhead requests. This included such things as fire line blasters, airtanker managers, mix-masters, air attack supervisors, and a variety of other Type I/II Team duties. The Paracargo program continued its history of successful operations, with both smokejumper and non-smokejumper fires being supplied via the highway of the skies.

Due to specialized skills and abilities, the



*(Courtesy of C. Patrick Scheid)*

smokejumping program has undertaken more and more non-fire project work in recent years. This year's activities include such things as tree climbing in New York and Chicago looking for Asian long-horned beetles, burn-plan writing and prescription burning in the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota, cone picking in Wyoming, the construction of jump suits for the U.S. military Special Forces, other various sewing projects, and crosscut saw work in the Salmon-Challis Forest, to name but a few. Through this diversification of duties, smokejumpers are expanding and strengthening their niche within the federal government.

In general news, long-time jumpers **Jim “Dirty” Linville** (Missoula ’69) and **Joe “Death” Chandler** (Missoula ’71) recently retired. The MSO base wishes them well in their future endeavors. The Missoula Smokejumper Welfare Fund recently donated \$2,000 to the Bringing Back the Mann Gulch DC-3 campaign. We encourage others to donate to this worthy cause.

Several Missoula jumpers have donated their time to the recently formed Missoula Medical Aid Disaster Relief Team, a group formed to assist in the New York City recovery efforts. This team is on a stand-by list, waiting to be called to duty. Several promotions have occurred at the base recently, with **Andy Hayes** (Missoula ’79) becoming operations foreman, **Todd Onken** (Missoula ’82) as loft foreman, and **Paul Fieldhouse** (McCall ’83) as the foreman of the newly created Fuels/Project Work position.

## NORTH CASCADES

by **Steve Dickenson** (LaGrande ’78)

This season was a busy one even though fires and jumps were slightly below 10-year averages for the base. The fire season began early with the first fire jump occurring in May, but a lack of lightning and a cooler-than-normal June limited activity until August.

We had 32 jump fires for 152 jumps. Three smokejumpers participated in the Silver City detail this year. Boosts at Redmond in mid-August and early September kept the crew busy in support of the busy season there.

Operations at the jump base were very busy this summer in support of the 30-Mile incident and subsequent investigation activities. In mid-September, a Type II Incident Management Team used the base to manage the Boundary fire in the Pasayten Wilderness. The jump base provided support for this fire in paracargo operations. There were seven missions dropping supplies and food to crews spiked on the fire.

The crew consisted of 22 jumpers this season; no rookies were trained. The aircraft here this season was the CASA, Jump 07 from Bighorn Airways, ably crewed by Kevin McBride and Earl Palmer, Jr.

Personnel changes occurring at the base were a new base manager, **Steve Dickenson** (LaGrande ’78) replaced **Doug Houston** (Redmond ’73), who retired early January. **Tim Lum** (Redding ’91) accepted a temporary squad leader position and two transfers from Redmond, **Matt Desimone** (Redmond ’97) and **Nan Floyd** (Redmond ’00), were welcomed additions.

In September, **Dale Longanecker** (Redmond ’74),

the loft supervisor, jumped his 276th fire jump on a fire down near Ellensburg, Wash. This jump tied him with **Rod Dow** (McCall ’68) for total number of fire jumps; it just happened Rod’s new home construction was nearby and he made an appearance to congratulate Dale personally. Dale jumped a fire later in the season to break the tie. Congratulations to Dale!

NCSB had boosters from McCall, Missoula, Grangeville, West Yellowstone and Redmond here this summer and we thank them for the high-quality assistance.

Jumpers from NCSB are currently climbing trees in New York and Chicago and are supporting prescribed fire operations in north Washington.

## REDDING

by **Josh Mathiesen** (Redding ’94)

With the fall clouds and cooler Redding temperatures (90 degrees?), it seems the 2001 fire season is coming to an end and our project work season is right around the corner. However, despite a few rainstorms in the valley and snow in the high country, Region 5 is still currently in fire season.

At press time, the California smokejumper unit has recorded 432 fire jumps. Many milestones and incredible jumps occurred during the season. The infamous tow blast horn went off May 11 with a request from the Butte Ranger District of the California Department of Forestry. This fire request started off a busy fire season with jumps on the Kings Range of the BLM on the scenic beaches of Northern California, John Muir Wilderness in the Central Sierras, and several fire requests near Lake Tahoe.

Folks returning from fires on the Six Rivers and Klamath National Forests in mid-September visited the Home of the Gobi, Cave Junction, Ore. With the help from Alaska and Boise BLM, McCall and Region 1 smokejumpers, the DC-3T from Rhodes Aviation was implemented to its capacity delivering, at times, 18 smokejumpers on a given incident. One of the pilots was **Jim Lafferty** (Idaho City ’63). In combination with the USFS-owned Shorts 330 Sherpa, we had the opportunity of delivering a Type I crew upon request.

**Tim Quigley** (Redding ’79) and **Ron Omont** (Redding ’78) received their 450th jumps in Redding. Omo also reached another milestone this season by obtaining his 200th fire jump on the Cooper fire while detailed to Silver City, N.M. During a September fire bust, Boise’s **Rob Turner** (Redding ’00) returned to the Shasta Trinity National Forest and

broke a fire-jump record, receiving his 28th fire jump for a season. Congratulations!

After seven years as base manager, **Arlen P. Cravens** (Canada '77) hung up his jump suit and accepted a position on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest as the assistant forest fire management officer. We wish him the best of luck and look forward to jumping the Shasta-Trinity more often.

In an unfortunate and freak accident, Training Battalion Chief **Bob Bente** (Redding '88) broke his leg during a spotting mission over the Modoc National Forest. Bob sustained an open compound fracture in his right leg and was hospitalized for several days. He is currently on light duty and is well on his way to a full recovery.

## REDMOND

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

Fire jump action at Redmond for 2001 was well above average. Only five seasons since 1964 recorded more than this season's 508 fire jumps. The first fire jump was May 25 and the last took place Oct. 16. As the season comes to a close we have people farmed out on burning details, thinning projects, climbing locally as well as in Chicago and New York.

Army rough-terrain landing training is coming up next, which will take us up to late November. This winter will see major building refurbishing, including all new windows and a new heating and cooling system.

Business was such that Redmond jumpers did very little traveling this season, making only 15 fire jumps at other bases. Boosters to Redmond made 130 fire jumps here.

The face of smokejumping is continually changing. The following statistics for this year's crew may be of interest to those of you who have been out of the program for a few years. Similar trends are seen nationally.

Of the 40 active smokejumpers at Redmond this season:

- Average age is 34.5 years
- Average number of seasons jumping is 8.2 years
- Average number of seasons in fire is 13.2 years
- 12.5 percent are women
- 22.5 percent are 40 years of age or older
- 10 percent have full-time appointments
- 30 percent have more than 200 jumps

## WEST YELLOWSTONE

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

It was another banner year at West Yellowstone,

with a few momentous occasions taking place this past season. One of these was the celebration of our 50th anniversary, which took place shortly after the tragic events of Sept. 11. Approximately 300 former and current smokejumpers, along with friends and family, came together for our weekend celebration.

On the evening of Saturday, Sept. 16, we had an awards and banquet ceremony, with most of the folks in attendance showing their American pride by wearing red, white and blue.

As for the fire season itself, I don't know the exact numbers for fire jumps and fire responses, but there were plenty. Just about every jumper from Missoula came through West on a booster or resource order. We also had boosters from the Great Basin and Redmond help out as well.

A few detailers worked here again this season, one of whom was **Tag O'Donnell** (Missoula '98), who did a great job helping out our program for the second year in a row.

With so much work going on with the busy fire season and the 50-year reunion, a few key individuals really stepped up to plate. **Lesley "Xena" Williams** (West Yellowstone '00) did a tremendous job with the banquet celebration, and **Cole Parker** (Missoula '92) helped run our retardant program for a second year. We will have a few folks climbing in Chicago this fall and coming spring, in addition to having a few folks out doing details in eastern Montana and other parts of the country. We may also have a few people working out at the base all winter as well.

The other momentous occasion is the retirement of **Bill "Chicken Man" Werhane** (Missoula '66). A truly remarkable individual, his contributions to the West base and the entire smokejumper program would take up volumes of this publication to list. If there ever is a Smokejumper Hall of Fame, C-Man should be one of the first to be inducted. He was both a leader on and off the fire line, knowing that leadership, training and guidance played just as much of part at the base as on the fire.

Bill had been the base manager at West at one time in his career. If being a smokejumper is comparable to professional sports, he was a Michael Jordan, a Cal Ripken and a Vince Lombardi all rolled into one. Best wishes to Bill and his new wife Gina (from the Philippines) with their new life and home in Meridian, Idaho. 🙏

# Female Smokejumpers

## New Jumpers by base — through 1999

(Listed base is base where jumper trained)

Information provided by Mark Corbett of the Redmond Smokejumpers

			McCALL		
			Name	Years Jumped	Seasons
			Shulman, Deanne	85-91	7
			Scissons, Amelia	89-96	8
			Guenzler, Brenda	90-91 93-96	6
			Morrow, Karen	90-91 94-96	5
			Allen, Shelly	98-99	2
			Dailey, Cheri	99	1
			Dunton, Melanie	99	1
			Kaaen, Karin	99	1
			Martin, Alexis	99	1
			<b>BOISE</b>		
			Name	Years Jumped	Seasons
			Rose, Kasey	93-99	7
			Cushman, Allison	93-99	7
			Scissons, Mimi	97-99	3
			Pryce, Diane	86-87	2
			<b>REDDING</b>		
			Name	Years Jumped	Seasons
			Pryce, Diana	83-85	3
			Tracey, Brenda	90-91	2
			Bailey, Ingrid	91	1
			Lowe, Cathleen	91, 96-97	3
			<b>REDMOND</b>		
			Name	Years Jumped	Seasons
			Cleveland, Windy	86	1
			Esterbrook, Kelly	86-95	10
			Freeman, Margo	90-95	6
			Hall, Tracy	95-96	2
			Hoening, Gretchen	91	1
			Johnson, Patty	97-98	2
			King, Sherill	83-84	2
			Kuehn, Marge	91-97	7
			Lamoreaux (Tripp), Renee	89-99	11
			Lusk, Cynthia	87 97-99	4
			Ondricek, Julia	97-99	3
			Pickering, Tracy	95-97	3
			Rambo, Carolyn	95	1
			Saphra, Irene	86-89	4
			Thoele, Tiffan	95-99	5
			Townsend (Rothwell), Tara	92	1
			<b>MISSOULA</b>		
			Name	Years Jumped	Seasons
			Kamm, Wendy	82-85	4
			Maynard, Kim	82-90	9
			Reimers, Linda	82	1
			Anderson, Leslie	84-89	6
			Phillips, Margarita	88-99	12
			Doehring, Sarah	91-99 GAC-97	8
			McQuade, Andrea	92-94 WYS-94	3
			Dunlap, Shelley	95-99	5
			Faulkner, Jeannine	98-99	2
			Wallace, Cynthia	98	1
			Champion, Cindy	99	1
			<b>GAC</b>		
			Name	Years Jumped	Seasons
			Embry, Robin	85-89 91-99	14
			Dorris, Karen	89	1
			Kuehn-Tabor, Marge	95-99	5
			Nelson, Stephanie	95-99	5
			Allen, Shelly	97 MYL 98	1
			Doehring, Sarah	97	1
			Johnson, Patty	99	1
			Pietila, Kirsten	99	1
			Marynuik, Jennifer	99	1
			<b>ALASKA</b>		
			Name	Years Jumped	Seasons
			Pryce, Diane	88-89	1
			Ahlstorm, Sandra	90-97	8
			Taylor, Paige	95-96	2
			Lydic, La'Ona	99	
			<b>WEST YELLOWSTONE</b>		
			Name	Years Jumped	Seasons
			McQuade, Andrea	92-94 WYS-94	3



# Items from the Fire Pack



## The Gravity of the Situation

I can understand why planes fall and crash in the mountains with no apparent explanation. We experienced a frightening plunge in 1945 while returning to Missoula after a fire. All of a sudden the motors roared like an automobile motor out of gear with the accelerator held at the same speed. We fell about 1,000 feet in those few seconds. The drop caused gravity to disappear and we were stuck to the ceiling for a while. Air finally caught the plane and the engines resumed their normal sound while we crashed to the floor. The plane landed safely despite the unsettling experience.

**Maynard Shetler** (Missoula '45)

## Nothing Crazy or Illegal

During the 1951 season, I enlisted in the Air Force as I was going to be drafted into the army after the Forest Service season was over. The Korean Conflict made the drafting of college students a reality, as the status was changed from 1-B (postponed) to 1-A (draftable).

I spent three years, nine months as an Air Force survival instructor, training all combat air crewmembers in survival techniques and escape/evasion methods. I returned to smokejumper activity in 1955 at the Cave Junction base, where **Jim Allen** was foreman. I brought three of my survival-instructor buddies with me, as their work ethics fit into the jumper mentality perfectly—"Afraid of nothing; willing to try

anything"—although they never did anything crazy or illegal.

**Hal Werner** (NCSB '48)

## Inner Peace

In June of 1945 my application for smokejumpers was accepted and I departed for the West. For many, smokejumpers was a vital and fulfilling experience. I had been active in school and college athletics and was fond of the outdoors. For me, it was a mistake. To be a good jumper, one needed inner peace, which I did not have. In training everything went wrong. I encountered one mishap after another. Earl Cooley and the squad leader transferred me to lookout duty which salvaged my summer. The solitary life was calming. I received a good rating as a lookout which partly eased my disappointment over my smokejumping.

**CPS-103 Trainee** (Missoula '45)

## God and Jack Heintzelman Protected Us

The smokejumper training camp in Missoula was administered by Bretheren, Mennonite and Quakers. Morale was "upbeat". During training, I was selected by a group of smokejumpers from the Cave Junction, Oregon, camp. That season I chalked up 15 fire jumps.

The airstrip at CJ was a primitive dirt runway. On one occasion four of us and a spotter took off in the single engine Fairchild on a fire call. At about

300 feet, the motor "conked" out and the pilot glided into a field adjacent to the airstrip. After the pilot/mechanic had worked on the plane for half an hour, he announced that "we were ready to go." Foreman Jack Heintzelman told him to first take it up for a test. The engine again failed at about 400 feet and the Fairchild winged over and crashed and exploded right in front of us. God and Jack Heintzelman had protected us.

**Robert Painter MD** (Cave Junction '44)

## Japanese Fire Balloons

Before the 1945 season began Art Wiebe told all of us that the Japanese had sent "fire balloons" aloft to drift with the prevailing air currents across the Pacific Ocean. A few such balloons landed in the northwestern forest but I am unaware of any fires that they caused. If any CPS crews ran across any balloon-set fires, no word ever reached us in Missoula.

**Gregg Phifer** (Missoula '44)

## No Time Wasted

It is difficult now to understand the strong public support for the war effort. To say the least, taking a conscientious objector position was not at all popular. My application to the smokejumper unit was accepted in 1943. It was gratifying to know that I was one of the 62 chosen out of over 300 applications. Earl Cooley met us at the train station and asked for



a volunteer to help him set up Camp Paxon. I volunteered and drove the sixty miles to Camp Paxon with Earl. No time was wasted getting us ready to fight forest fires. Ten days after arriving at Camp Paxon, I made my first parachute jump. I looked up and saw a chute above me and I looked down and saw nothing but trees and water.

**Clarence Quay** (Missoula '43)

### **Brother to the Army—Me to Smokejumpers**

My brother and I were drafted. He went into the army and I went into CPS. The Mennonite Church supported both of us. I trained at the smokejumper unit at Nine Mile near Missoula. Two fire jumps stand out in my memory. One was in the Seven Devils are along the Snake River between Oregon and Idaho. **Herb Crocker** and I were the last to jump from two planeloads of jumpers called to the fire. The sun was down and distance hard to judge. The first plane was dropping cargo at that time and actually flew between Herb and myself when we were in the air. I hung up about 60 feet in a yellow pine. Later that night we walked out 15 miles in the dark.

**Walter Reimer** (Missoula '44)

### **Bag 'em Dan-O**

Somehow we survived the depression on 320 acres of dust blown land in Kansas. We had no cash flow problems since there was no cash! I was drafted in 1942 and **Elmer Neufeld** and I were selected for the smokejumpers in 1944.

My first fire jump was an abject disaster. **Diz Lehman** and I flew northeast from McCall to the fire. Diz reached the ground

but I hung up in, not one, but three snags. After pounding the fire for a couple days it was time to retrieve my chute. With deep apprehension I struggled up the tree and attempted to clear the chute. I was always scared of high places, even that time Johnnie and I jumped off the windmill tower and sank into a snowdrift up to our eyeballs. Diz and I decided to chop down the trees. We gathered up the tattered shreds of the chute, poured our last water on the ashes and headed for the road.

The shocking news when I reached McCall was that a parachute was worth \$125. As time passed and no severance papers with a ticket back to Fort Collins came for Laurel Sargent, I began to breath easier. Diz said he figured the Forest Service people were probably over on the road watching us with the glasses all the time.

**Laurel Sargent** (McCall '44)

### **Friends More Important**

I grew up in Kansas on a small farm with a big mortgage. After being drafted and selected for smokejumpers, I arrived at Seeley Lake in April of 1943. I spent two and a half years as a smokejumper. Nineteen forty-five was a busy summer. One interesting jump was half a mile

from the "River of No Return". The hike out started with a one-mile vertical climb in elevation in the first seven miles of trail. Then 13 miles on the ridgetop to the nearest road.

We who grew up in the Great Depression feel it was a hard time with few pleasures. In retrospect, I feel it prepared us for a fuller life where possessions are not as important as friends.

**Earl Schmidt** (Missoula '43)

### **People & Memories**

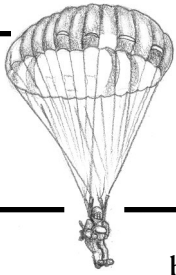
Who can forget **Earl Cooley**. His stories match the excitement of the old West as good or better than those from the books by Louis L'Amour. **Earl Schmidt** for his energy at falling trees, trimming and burning slash. **Jim Mattocks** introduced me to speed reading and 100 percent recall. After watching him read a botany book rapidly turning the pages, I asked him what was on page 325. Jim told me the botanical names of the plants on that page. **Ralph Spicer** and I developed a friendship that started at Nine Mile and extended beyond our smokejumping days. It was a real shock to hear that Ralph had been killed when hit by a car while working as a surveyor after the war.

**Charles Schumacher**  
(Missoula '44) 🦋

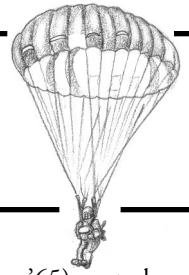
## ***Smokejumper Magazine for Your Family & Friends?***

**Butch Perry** (Missoula '67) had a great suggestion for those jumpers out there who would like to give their family and friends a "taste" of what their job is about. Why not give parents, close friends or other relatives a gift subscription to *Smokejumper* magazine? So to follow through with that thought, we are offering a year's subscription to the magazine for \$15.00. This is for non-jumpers and would be a great Christmas gift for any parent and non-member to receive. Just write "gift subscription" on the merchandise order blank and make sure that you include the complete mailing address of the recipient.

While you are at it, why not order a copy of the NSA video and make it a complete package.



# Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Some interesting material put together by **Denis Golik** (McCall '74) on **Smokejumpers Worldwide**.... Pioneered by the U.S. in 1939, three other countries have also developed their own smokejumper programs. Begun in 1947 and by far the largest, the USSR has had as many as 2,600 smokejumpers and 5,000 annually (1976) but are now stabilized (1999) at 3,900 combined jumpers and rappellers.

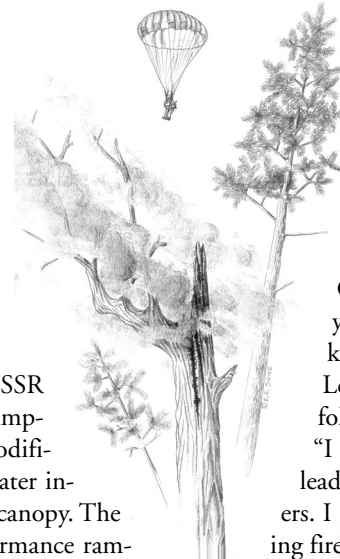
During a cooperative exchange trip to USSR smokejumper bases in 1976, visiting U.S. jumpers discovered the extended steering gore modification on the Soviet round parachutes and later incorporated this design concept on the FS-12 canopy. The Russians now predominantly use high-performance ram-air canopies.

The Soviets displayed their gender equality when women entered their smokejumper program in only its second year (1948). In the U.S. there was a 42-year wait for the first successful woman smokejumper.

The most recent addition to the smokejumper family is Mongolia, which began its program in 1969 modeled after the Soviets. Currently there are about 100 plus jumpers. Canada has had several intermittent jumper operations since the mid-1940s. Saskatchewan and Alberta had a program for 20 years, from 1947 to 1966. Yukon and Northwest Territories had two contract jumper operations from approximately 1976 to 1995. In 1998, British Columbia began a government sponsored program. Canadian and U.S. jumpers occasionally reinforce each other during periods of high fire activity.

**Frank Tweedy** (Idaho City '52) was mentioned in a newspaper article repeated in the "Blast from the Past" column in the July issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. **Bob Evans** (Idaho City '53) emailed that he thought Frank had been killed in a parachute accident and wondered if I had any details. I went to **Ted Burgon** (Idaho City '52) who replied with the following: "Frank was my bunk partner and a really fine person. We both went into the military after our summer in Idaho City. When Frank returned, he decided to make a free-fall and went out to the old Floating Feather strip west of Boise. Jumped from about 3,400 feet and never cracked his chute."

Had a good phone conversation with **T.J. Thompson** (Missoula '55) catching up on some NSA business. T.J. made a donation to the NSA in memory of **Chuck Evans** (Missoula '56) who was his first cousin. Chuck passed away as a result of a brain aneurysm at the end of the 1962 fire season.



**Terry Egan** (Cave Junction '65) sent along some comments on **Chuck Mansfield's** story about the "Tin Cup" fire which ran in the April issue of *Smokejumper*. "I was in the second wave which **Dee Dutton** (Missoula '51) was spotting. By the time we arrived it was getting dark. (*It was 9:05 P.M.-editor*) Dee threw out a set of streamers then called Leroy "Lead Hook"

Cook over and said: 'I can't see the streamers—you're a streamer'. So he had Leroy hook up and kicked him out on a one-man pass. We all watched Leroy successfully make it down so I hooked up and followed him down, steering by the light of the fire." "I admired Dee Dutton for a lot of qualities such as leadership and patience with a lot of goof-ball jumpers. I most admire him for his aggressive way of attacking fires. I recall we once jumped a state fire on the coast where the winds were kicking up higher than normally allowable for jumping. He put us out anyway, picking as a jump spot some reproduction that was around 40 or 50 feet high. We all landed safety except for **Jerry Howe** (Cave Junction '65) who landed in the granddaddy of all cedars, using all of his 150-foot letdown rope and having to free-fall 10 feet to the ground".

After reading The "Jumpers Killed In The Line of Duty" article in the April issue, **Bill Robertson** (Missoula '57) forwarded the following: "Some additional information on **Arden Davis** (Fairbanks '66) from my diary: He died at 14:15 on May 11, 1966 at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Experimental Farm. During the letdown, a shroud line had snagged under his helmet (he had not raised his face mask) and strangled him—he was a mere 5 feet above the ground when we reached him. He was on the first stick out of the DC-3 and I was one of the last out. He had drifted quite some distance from the jump spot and no one had checked on him until after I was on the ground. Don Wahl was first on the scene and was cutting him down when I got there. Don administered mouth to mouth, but it had been too long—probably 20 minutes or so."

Heard from **Charley Moseley** (Cave Jct. '62) that his son John is flying Apache helicopters for the 101st Airborne. John was born in Bangkok 1966 during Charley's Air-America days.

There was an extensive article in the Eugene, Ore., *Register-Guard* about Kevin Towers who is currently the general manager of the San Diego Padres in major league baseball. Kevin was selected to head up the Padres in 1995 and was one of the youngest general managers in baseball at the time. He currently has the tough job of dealing with those people who make \$10 million or more a year. Kevin is the son of **Dave "Chutes" Towers** (Cave Jct. '60).

**Larry Boggs** (Redding '63) passed along an article from the July 29th *Idaho Statesman* newspaper featuring **Justin Brollier** (Boise '01) who had completed rookie training this spring. Justin now joins brother **Jake** (Redding '95) and father **Phil** (Boise '71) on the Boise roster.

I didn't get a bio on **Charlie Roos** (Redmond '97) in time to meet the print deadline for the October issue of the magazine. Charlie wrote the article "Is There Life After Smokejumping?" I've been able to find out that while taking a hiatus from jumping, Charlie is currently headquartered in Seattle, but spends the majority of his time roaming the west teaching the finer nuances of urban interface fire fighting to city fire departments and private insurers. His return to smokejumping is scheduled for this coming spring, at a site yet to be determined.

**Tom Albert** (Cave Jct. '64) was one of only 40 aircraft operating later in the day on Sept. 11th. Tom, flying a lead plane working the Darby fire in Calif., said it was a real eerie feeling flying into the Sacramento airport. His plane and a California Highway Patrol aircraft were the only planes in the air.

**Stan Cohen** of the Museum of Mountain Flying in Missoula relates: "We are bringing back the Mann Gulch DC-3 on Oct 16 flying it from West Memphis, Arkansas. Will have a ceremony on that Friday. We are going out on a big limb to bring this back as we are borrowing half the money with our land as collateral and have a year to pay the other half. In other words we need to raise the full \$125,000. It is costing us about \$6,000 to bring it back. Hopefully we can restore it back to its 1949 look in the coming years and have it as a memorial to all fallen firefighters. This is a Montana project, not just Missoula." *NOTE: The NSA Board of Directors recently voted to send \$1000 to the MMF in support of this project.*

Just got a membership from **Mary LaMoy** (pilot) who is working with the BLM jumpers in the Boise/Great Basin areas. "I've yet to work with a finer group of people" Mary says of that group. Welcome to the NSA Mary!

**Chris Demarest** (associate) has been doing school presentations lately on the East coast as a prelude to the release of his new children's book *Smokejumpers 1-10* which should be released this spring. The smokejumper art is terrific. Much of Chris' work illustrates *Smokejumper* magazine. His last children's book, *Firefighters A-Z*, was selected to the *New York Times* top ten list and is in its fourth printing.

**Ted Burgon** (Idaho City '52) has been appointed director (principal) of the Huascarán International School in Huaraz, Peru. The school is sponsored by a copper mining company and is situated at 10,400 feet in the Andes. The mine is an open pit copper mine at 14,000 feet. This is a nine-month contract for the Burgons.

Ted writes that the mountains to the east are all between 18,000 and 20,000 feet and only across the narrow valley. They are snow and glacier capped as summer begins. To the northeast is Montana Huascarán, a 22,300 foot climber's paradise and still only known by serious climbers. The area is right out of a *National Geographic* photo essay.

Nancy has adapted to the altitude but Ted is still suffering a little.

**Jerry Dixon** (McCall '71) is currently teaching gifted students in Seward, Alaska, and is a regular contributor to *Smokejumper*. Jerry has just received the Teacher of the Year award and passed along part of his acceptance speech: "After a generation of teaching gifted learners I have come to love my work as much as I did smokejumping. That is saying something, because jumping from DC-3s from the Kenai to the Brooks Range and Yukon Territories to the Bering Sea is what I dreamed of in my youth." Congratulations to Jerry for this prestigious award.

**Mark Corbet** (LaGrande '74) mentions that **Wally Wasser** (McCall '79) may challenge Dale Longanecker's jump record in the future. Wally is jumping out of Boise and has gotten 20 fire jumps this season.

**Norman Hill** (Fairbanks '63) passed along an article from his local newspaper in Memphis, TN, concerning the return of the Mann Gulch C-47 to Missoula. There is more about this historic event in this issue in an article from the *Missoulian*.

Several days after hearing from Norman, **Bob Hewitt** (Missoula '56) sent along the same clipping from the Memphis paper. Bob thought that he had made a fire jump from the Mann Gulch Doug. He also relayed that seven jumpers had gotten together at Branson, Missouri, for a mid-America reunion. Looking forward to a picture of that group. 🍷

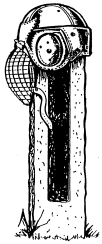
## NSA Merchandise Bargain Close-outs

*The merchandise store needs to clear the shelves and move these items. Great buys at below cost:*

1. Reunion 2000 Run T-shirts. White with NSA logo and "National Smokejumper Reunion 10K". Medium, large and 2XL....  
..... \$5.00 (reg. \$12)

2. NSA embroidered logo pocket t-shirt, green. **Only have one XL** ...  
..... \$10.00 (reg. \$17)

*Use the order blank on the merchandise form or call (530) 893-0436.*



## Off The List

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

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

### **Frederick W. Annala** (Missoula '47)

Fred Annala died July 17, 2001, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was born in Butte, MT, where he attended school. After joining the Army in 1951 he moved to Milwaukee.

Fred jumped one season at Missoula.

### **Philip Daniel Davis, Jr.** (Missoula '48).

Phil, who was National Smokejumper Association secretary from Sept. 1996 to June 1999, died of natural causes on Oct. 9, 2001, at the Riverside Health Care Center in Missoula. He was 76.

He was born Jan. 18, 1925, in Judith Gap, Mont., where he attended grade school and high school. After studying a quarter at Montana State University, he served in the Army Signal Corps. Following his discharge, he moved to Bozeman and graduated from MSU in 1951 with a degree in electrical engineering. He smokejumped from Missoula two summers while attending the university. Phil trained for IBM in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., worked at the Alameda Air Station in Oakland, Calif., then returned to Montana in 1953 and opened an IBM office. He worked for IBM for 31 years, retiring in 1980. He married E. Helen VonPresentin in 1956 in Dillon, Mont.

In addition to his duties as a NSA board member, he also was on the Young Audiences board of directors. He was a track and field official for many years and in 1999 was the recipient of a statewide sports award. His passions were his family, friends, snow skiing and mountaineering. Phil loved music, especially Dixieland jazz and the Missoula Symphony. His wife Helen of Missoula, two children, four grandchildren, two brothers, numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and many friends survive him.

The family suggests that memorials be made in Phil's name to the National Smokejumper Association, P.O. Box 4081, Missoula, MT 59806; the Missoula Symphony, P.O. Box 8301, Missoula, MT 59807; or to Shodair Children's Hospital, P.O. Box 5539, Helena, MT 59604. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Philip Davis, 207 Westview Dr., Missoula, MT 59803.

### **Edward E. Guy** (McCall '60)

Just received a note from John Guy who informed us that his son Edward passed away on September 21, 2001, from a heart attack while living in Guatemala. Mr. Guy said that he was glad that Ed was able to attend the reunion in Redding where he was able to visit with many old friends from McCall

and that his time at McCall was one of the happiest times of his life.

### **Cyrus M. Johnson** (Missoula '45)

Cyrus Johnson died Jan. 21, 2001, after suffering a heart attack and a stroke. He was a member of the CPS-103 jumpers. His surviving widow is Lynn B. Johnson, 233 Allford Mill Rd., Bunn, NC 27508.

### **Lloyd E. King** (Missoula '44)

Lloyd King died on August 14, 2001, of pneumonia and heart failure. He jumped the 1944 and 1945 seasons as a member of the CPS-103 jumpers. He was a member of the Emmanuel Mennonite Church in La Junta, Colorado. His surviving widow is Ruth King and resides at 1004 Casa Del Sol - Apt. H, La Junta, CO 81050.

### **Lloyd A. Knapp** (Missoula '49)

Lloyd, of Skykomish, Wash., died May 21, 2001. He was born March 23, 1930, in Orofino, Idaho, was graduated from high school in Kettle Falls, Wash., and from Washington State University in 1953. While in college, he was a smokejumper from 1949 through 1951. Lloyd served in the Army during the Korean War and worked in private industry for several years. He was a forester on the Mt. Baker/Snoqualmie National Forest from 1970 until he retired in 1988. Five brothers survive him.

### **Charlotte Jean Looper**

Charlotte died October 4, 2001 in Winnemucca, Nevada. She was the wife of long-time smokejumper Orville Looper. Charlotte began her career with the U.S. Forest Service at the Siskiyou Aerial Project in Cave Junction, Oregon, where she had many friends among the smokejumper community. After leaving Cave Junction, she accompanied Orv as he opened new smokejumper bases at Redding, California, and Fairbanks, Alaska. **Clayton "Clayt" Ogle** (Missoula '46)

**Clayton Ogle** died in Helena, Mont., July 27, 2001, of a heart attack. Clayt was born Nov. 11, 1924, in Butte. In 1933 he moved with his family to Helena where he completed high school in 1943, then enlisted in the Army Air Corps. He completed 25 combat missions as a B-17 ball turret gunner, helping destroy oil refineries and transportation targets in Nazi Germany. He was decorated with the Purple Heart, three Air Medals and five campaign stars and his 301st Bomb Group

received two Presidential Citations. Following his discharge in 1945, Clayt enrolled at the University of Montana School of Forestry. In 1946 and 1947, he completed 18 jumps as a smokejumper on fires in Montana and northern Idaho. Clayt received a BS in forestry from UM in 1949 and later did graduate studies at Montana State University, UM, the University of Oklahoma and Utah State University. He worked 34 years for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. Following assignments at Townsend, Helena, Glasgow and Lewistown, Mont., he supervised the plant and biological science programs for the agency statewide from in Bozeman. He retired after seven years' service as chief of operations and management for Montana's 60 Soil Conservation Service field offices.

His wife, Jane survives him as well as a daughter, three sons, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The family suggests memorials to the Covenant United Methodist Church, 2330 Broadway St., Helena, MT 59601; Missoula Smokejumpers Welfare Fund, 6765 W. Broadway, Missoula, MT 59808; or a charity of the donor's choice. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Clayton Ogle, 1501 Poplar St., Helena, MT 59601.

#### **Harold J. Toews (Missoula '44)**

Harold Toews died on April 16, 2001, in Olympia, Wash. He was a CPS jumper in Missoula during the 1944 and 1945 seasons. Harold lived in Lustre, Mont., for many years where he farmed over 2000 acres and was on several school boards and an active member of the Lustre Mennonite Brethren Church. Harold is survived by Lillian, his wife of 52 years.

#### **Kimbuck Williams (Missoula '52)**

Kimbuck Williams, who served 33 years as Placer County's (Calif.) elected auditor-controller, died July 25, 2001 in Auburn, Calif. Over his career, he easily won election to the controller's post nine times.

Kimbuck was raised in rural Auburn before joining the Navy and serving as an aircraft radio operator. After leaving the Navy, he jumped the 1952 season at Missoula. He graduated from Sacramento State College and went to work with the state Department of Finance. During his election campaigns, he walked door-to-door traveling one end of Placer Country to the other with the message: "Keep Kimbuck." He retired from office during his ninth term in April 2000. 🦋

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## **MEMBER PROFILE**

# **JERRY SCHMIDT**

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JERRY SCHMIDT IS A NATIVE OF Colorado, graduating with a forest recreation degree from Colorado State University in 1963. He was an outstanding track and cross-country runner at CSU, where he held the mile record as well as the ascent record for the 28-mile Pikes Peak Marathon. After the 1963 fire season, Jerry began his Forest Service career in Santa Fe, N.M.

This was interrupted as he was drafted by the Army, followed by graduation from the Infantry OCS program and the Airborne training school at Fort Benning, Ga. He served as a rifle platoon leader with the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam until he was wounded in December of 1965.

After recuperating, he served as the leader of the Counterinsurgency Warfare training group at Fort Gordon, Ga., until his discharge in December 1966. Jerry enjoyed a long career with the USFS, serving as a district ranger on the Prescott National Forest, a fire staff on both the Santa Fe and Wenatchee National Forests, and as a national program coordinator in Washington, D.C.

During his last 14 years, he was forest supervisor on the Medicine Bow-Routt N.F. and Thunder Basin National Grassland, retiring in November 2000.

Since retiring, he and four others have started a consulting company called Land Stewardship Associates,



*Jerry E. Schmidt (Cave Junction '62). (Courtesy Jerry Schmidt)*

providing services to private property owners and forested communities in the Rocky Mountain area.

Jerry is married to Jeanetta, who operates an antique store in Laramie, Wyo. Their son, Andy, is a software developer in Denver. Becka, their daughter, is a social counselor in Loveland, Colo. Jerry and Jeanetta have four grandchildren. 🦋

# New Fire Shelters: Bureaucracy vs. Safety

by Steve Smith (NSA Historian)

The West is in another hot, dry and dangerous fire season. Many believe this year will be worse than last year, when huge fires raged from New Mexico to Montana. Tragically, this fire season quickly turned deadly. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, in Washington State, four young firefighters, trapped in a wildfire blowup, died inside their emergency aluminum and fiberglass fire shelters.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service understand the risks to those who fight wildland fires. Safety training is a top priority for these agencies. Firefighters memorize the Ten Standard Fire Orders, 18 Situations that Shout Watch Out and rules about safety zones, fire monitoring and communications. Yet, inexplicably, the BLM and Forest Service send these brave men and women to the fire lines carrying obsolete fire shelters that should be replaced.

Fire shelters are the last hope and last resort for those trapped in a fire. There are more than a million of the current fire shelters in circulation. They were developed in the '60s and became mandatory for forest firefighters in the '70s. Since then, they have been used about 1,500 times. Investigators who follow up on those incidents say that about 50 percent of those uses were necessary to prevent injury or save the life of the firefighter. They credit the current fire shelter with saving more than 250 lives.

Why speak out against that kind of track record? Because there is new technology available that has tested 300 percent more survivable than this thirty-year-old shelter. Behind this new technology is a California man who takes each new fire death very personally.

In 1994 a fire blowup on Storm King Mountain, near Glenwood Springs, Colorado, took the lives of fourteen firefighters. One of those, a smokejumper named Roger Roth, died inside his fire shelter. In the years following the fire, Jim Roth, Roger's brother, quit his job as an aeronautical engineer and made it his life's work to build a better shelter that would save Roger's fellow firefighters if they had to use their shelters.

Using modern materials and space-age technology, Jim Roth has built a remarkable fire shelter. His new Storm King Mountain Shelter was tested alongside the existing shelter in a variety of fire tests. Video of one test, the International Crown Fire Modeling Experiment, conducted in the Northwest Territories of Canada, shows the standard fire shelter was completely destroyed while Roth's shelter withstood temperatures of nearly 2,000 degrees.

But Jim Roth's shelter won't be saving firefighters' lives, not this year and maybe not ever. A bureaucratic nightmare is the reward Jim Roth got for his effort. When he knocked on their door, government agencies weren't convinced of

the need to upgrade fire shelters.

The current shelter is not designed to withstand flame contact. At temperatures above 500 degrees, the adhesive breaks down, creating a toxic gas. At that point, the aluminum and fiberglass layers separate and the shelter fails, exposing the person inside to the fire.

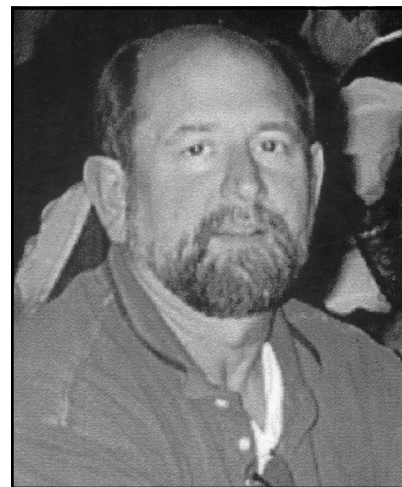
The government agencies involved have raised two issues critical of Roth's shelter. It weighs one and a half pounds more than the existing shelter and it costs ten times more than the current \$39 version. However, when compared to the cost of other fire fighting tools, such as \$6,000 for one air tanker load of fire retardant, the cost of the new shelter seems justified.

Recently, the agencies involved have begun the slow process of setting new standards and specifications and designing a new fire shelter. On the present course, it will be 2005 or later before the new shelter gets to those on the fire lines. How many more young men and women will we lose by then?

There is a cruel irony here. Our government, quick to set safety standards for private industry, is very slow about getting its own house in order, especially when it's a private citizen demanding improvements.

After years of frustration working within the system, Roth finds his emotions overwhelm him at times like this, when more firefighters die in a fire shelter. Could the Storm King Mountain shelter have saved the four who died in Washington State on July 10<sup>th</sup>? Jim Roth believes it could. Tragically, he and the families of the four firefighters will never know. 🙏

*Steve Smith did his fire fighting long before fire shelters were invented. He recently spent three summers producing a documentary about smokejumpers as they fought fires from New Mexico to the Arctic Circle. During the filming he carried the current shelter but didn't need it.*



Steve Smith. (Courtesy of Steve Smith)

# BOOK REVIEW

## Evans' *The Smoke Jumper*: Well Worth Reading

by Gary "Tex" Welch (Cave Junction '60)

I finished reading Nicholas Evans new book, *The Smoke Jumper*, about an hour ago. I did my daily mile swim to clear my mind and would now like to offer the following opinion of the book.

I read the book with mixed emotions. I have read Nicholas Evans before—*The Loop* and *The Horse Whisperer*—and consider him an excellent teller of tales. About halfway through the book I thought, "Maybe he should have called this book *Two Men and a Woman* or something different," because only 10 percent is about smokejumping. But as I swam my laps (not as fast as I once did but still a steady one-yard-per-second pace), I began to think about the book and smokejumping.

I have always considered myself a smokejumper, ever since I made my first jump in Seats Field in 1960. I jumped for three summers, not a big part of my 62 years on this earth. If I were to write my life story, which I won't because I am too lazy, but if I did, I couldn't very well tell it in a span of my smokejumping years. So, I have decided and decreed that Nicholas Evans was within his rights to title the book, *The Smoke Jumper*, and well done, too. He spins a great story, with a good mixture of adventure, romance, personal relationships, give and take, and an overview of smokejumpers' bonding and commitment to each other. Or something like that.

I think any of you would enjoy the book. It is not a Murry Taylor *Jumping Fire*—Murry still has the smokejumper/firefighting book wrapped up—but *The Smoke Jumper* is still a heck of a story and worth reading. Thought I would give you my two cents worth.

By the way, I ordered it from Amazon/Borders way before it was due to be published. Every airport and bookstore had it before those jerks got around to mailing my copy. I had bought it at Wal-Mart and was halfway through when my copy finally came in the mail. Don't do Borders/Amazon. By the time you pay postage, you can pay tax at Wal-Mart and have the book for about the same price and be finished reading it before A/B can mail it out. This wasn't meant to be anti-Amazon, but I have an extra copy now, and I will be giving it to someone for his or her birthday, still in the wrapper.

Hope some of you read the book. It makes us all even more famous than we already are. 🙏

## Pray for What Comes Next

by Tom Decker, COL-U.S. Army  
(Idaho City '64)

**Smokejumpers pray for their country...and for themselves.** Okay, jumpers, we still pray for what comes next, and if your prayers are like mine, I pray first of all to remember those who have been important in my own life. Prayers *in memoriam* establish what comes next.

But we also pray for strength. As a chaplain, I'm often "the designated pray-er," so I've said my share of public prayers that the forces of justice and the strength of military prevail; in private I've had my doubts. In retrospect, I honestly believe that God has never let us down, and I am amazed.

I also pray for my own strength, as I firm up my resolve for the long haul and count the possible sacrifices yet to be made.

I pray for courage, admitting my own shortcomings and trying to identify my fears, and I find — as you may, too — that it's tough to be honest, even in prayer.

The flags that sprouted up everywhere after September 11<sup>th</sup> were our way of saying that being an American is important, so we pray for who we are. Our identity determines what we stand for, and what we stand for determines who is in the fight with us.

Did you notice the "we?" Sooner or later, I pray not alone but with others. We're in this together, and that is not a fact of politics but rather a statement of our human condition. And so when I pray *with others*, I also pray *for others*, sometimes hard, for we all carry wounds inflicted by those who have been on a collision course with our destiny.

So who does this praying? Clergy pray, but so do those who think that God may have checked out. We pray in our houses of worship. We pray with our minds and hearts, with our feet and hands, with our tongue and with our ears. We pray with our whole being "when we sleep and when we rise up," as the scripture says.

When I was going through a tough time, a former jump partner told me that it's just like standing in the door with the spotter's hand on your boot toe. "When it's time to go," he said, "you'll know what to do." In his own way, this was his prayer for me. And I got it.

We need prayer in peace and in war, in victory or in defeat. Prayer brings out the best in us when we face the worst. Prayer does not skip dates on the calendar, but transforms us to meet what comes next. God is bigger than all of our troubles and surely is a present help in time of need.

# Of Fire and Rivers

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

**T**his past summer I took my boys Kipp and Pyper (ages 10 and 13) floating the Main Salmon River in Idaho. They kayaked and I rafted. Often I would point out places high above: “There’s Chamberlain Basin. On July 22, 1971, **Bill Newlun** (Redding '70) and I jumped a fire there at the junction of Three Blaze and Flossie trails. Bill landed in a snag and I twisted my knee. **Smokey Stover** (McCall '46) packed out our gear with mules and we rode horses to Chamberlain Meadows. Bill was the ‘world’s best dressed jumper.’ He wore milkman pants and a bow tie on the ride out.”

At the junction of the South Fork and Main Salmon Rivers, I showed them the jump spot of August 7, 1974, where **Don Ranstrom** (Missoula '66), **Clark Noble** (McCall '70), “**Wild Bill**” **Yensen** (McCall '53), **Jerry Blattner** (McCall '63), **Thad Duel** (McCall '56) and I jumped. “We had two fires and a super jump spot. Yensen brought his camera and I filmed a section that made it into *Smokejumpers—Firefighters from the Sky*.

“There on the ridge above Rugged Creek, **Vince Masi** (McCall '72) and I jumped on July 24, 1973. We fought fire with our hands until the gear arrived and used our cargo chutes like hammocks for sleeping.”

Eventually, as I pointed up to the Salmon River breaks, my boys would say, “Don’t tell us ... there were two young men, near to the wild heart of life, jumping into a mile-deep canyon called the Salmon River Country.”

Thirty years ago a senior jumper said, “Smokejumping is just about transportation.” **Jeff Fereday** (McCall '70) quickly replied, “No, it is a lot more than that, a whole lot more.” And it is.

Every time I read a NSA magazine, I am staggered by the depth and width of jumper lives. From the decorated veterans of four wars to the finest in medicine, law, education and business, to the top positions of virtually every fire post in America, jumpers are there. I agree with a recent letter in *Smokejumper* that there is a strong case for the jumper program, just because of the quality of the individuals it attracts. Missoula had 450 applicants for one position last year and it was awarded to a Navy Seal!

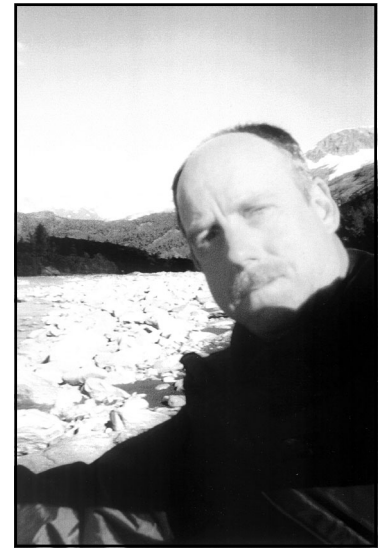
NSA has become a focused organization that speaks for jumpers. We become informed and involved by reading articles by **Jim Vietch** (Missoula '67) on funding allocation and base realignment. We can have a positive input concerning “bureaucratic” maneuvers concerning such veteran jumpers as **Steve Nemore**

(Redmond '69). The jumper trail project has involved scores of jumpers working on wildland trails. The NSA Directors recently set up a brokerage account for jumpers who want to get their life memberships. I plan to be one of the first to donate appreciated stock of \$1000. There are many advantages to donating stock. A donated stock that has doubled in value will cost a jumper in the 33 percent tax bracket about \$200. A donated stock that has tripled in value will cost a jumper about \$1, assuming the same tax bracket. So there are benefits for both the individual and the organization.

Floating the Salmon River, my boys swam two rapids. I packed them in my raft to row Mallard Rapid, where in almost 30 years of river descents I have seen kayaks swallowed, rafts dumped and oar locks broken, sending oars flying. As I rowed across the top, I could hear Pyper behind me say to Kipp, “Don’t worry. Daddy was a smokejumper from the Salmon River Country.”

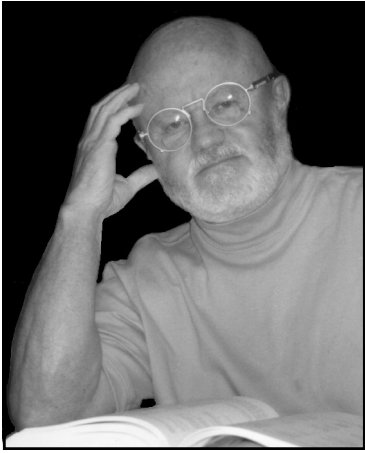
I have come to realize that smokejumping is the best job I ever had. 🐼

*Jerry Dixon currently teaches gifted students in Seward, Alaska, and is a frequent contributor to Smokejumper magazine. He can be reached at: js2dixon@hotmail.com*



*Jerry Dixon. (Courtesy of Jerry Dixon)*





# Jump List



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

*The "Jump List" is a compilation of information the National Smokejumper Association receives from members, associates and friends. It is intended to inform our readers what members are doing and where they reside.*

## Alaska

**David W. Stephens**, '76, jumped for eight seasons. Dave is the owner and manager of the Manzanita Lumber Company, a retail lumber and hardware store in Nehalem, Ore.

**Garry E. White**, '65, after jumping for four seasons from Fairbanks, began working as a manager in the air cargo business. From 1969 through 1997, he was successively an executive for Interior Airways, Alaska International Air, Mark Air, G.E. White & Associates, and Denali Cargo. Garry is now the vice-president in charge of charter operations for Lynden Air Cargo's fleet of C-130 Hercules, aircraft. He lives in Anchorage.



## Boise

**Larry D. Steele**, '71, jumped for six seasons from Boise and Missoula. Since 1977, he has served as a contract specialist with the Forest Service. Larry is now working on the Lolo National Forest and living in Missoula.

## Cave Junction

**Myron B. Kreidler**, '65, after working as an optometrist for 16 years, was elected to the Washington state legislature. He then served two years as a United States congressman, four years with the Northwest Power Planning Council, and a year as a regional director for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Living in Lacey, Wash., Mike is now the Washington state insurance commissioner.

**Jan W. VanWagtendonk**, '62, earned a master's degree

in range management and a Ph.D. in fire science from the University of California in Berkeley. He served as a captain in the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, before going to work as a research scientist for the National Park Service. Since 1975, he has been a research scientist for the U.S. Geological Survey in Yosemite. Jan lives in El Portal, Calif. **Donald O. Thomas**, '58, has been doing aviation-insurance claims, but says he would rather tell people that he is a piano player in a warehouse. Don lives in Camarillo, Calif.

**John O. Thach**, '46, has worked as an accountant and an auditor. Now at the age of 81, he is preparing income-tax returns. John lives in Westminster, Colo.

## Idaho City

**Donald H. Bell**, '69, jumped for 12 seasons, eleven in Alaska. Don is now an aircraft freight loader living in Ft. Wainwright, Alaska.

## McCall

**Scott A. Bates**, '69, jumped for 10 seasons from McCall and Fairbanks. He has been working as a silviculturist for the Forest Service. Now on the Fortune District of the Kootenai National Forest, he is two years from retirement. Master Bates lives in Whitefish, Mont.

**Ted E. Button**, '69, says that he bounced around for 10 years after jumping fire and has been flying since 1979. He is now vice-president of operations for TMP Worldwide Inc. Ted lives in Mountain Lakes, NJ.

**Dale L. Schmaljohn**, '60, jumped for 13 seasons. He retired as a school psychologist, and is now in private practice. Dale lives in Boise.

## Missoula

**Roger W. Archibald**, '84, jumped for eight seasons, and then worked as a freelance writer and photographer. In addition, he held seasonal positions as a National Park Service attendant, as a merchant marine officer, and as a researcher for a federal contractor on educational studies. Roger is now the head park ranger at the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, and he is a captain with the Charles River Boat Company in Boston. He lives in North Quincy, Mass.

**Michael K. Pepion**, '82, jumped for 14 seasons and then became a therapist intern in the Mental Health Clinic at the Seattle Veteran's Hospital. Mike earned a master of social work degree from the University of Washington and is now a social worker counselor. He lives in Darby, Mont.

**Karl R. Brauneis**, '77, earned a degree in forest and range science and has been a forester for the US Forest Service since 1979. Karl is now the zone fire management officer for the Shoshone National Forest. He lives in Lander, Wyo.

**James R. Beck**, '75, jumped fire for 23 seasons, during 10 of which he was a foreman and nine a squad leader. Jim is now aircraft coordinator for the Northern Rockies Coordinator Center in Missoula.

**Will M. Anderson**, '74, jumped for four seasons before going to medical school. Will is now a vascular, thoracic, and trauma surgeon living in Pendleton, Ore.

**Willis Curdy**, '71, jumped for 21 years and was then detailed to the Region 1 Aviation Unit. He is now a Sherpa co-pilot and an air attack pilot. Willis lives in Missoula.

**Forrest Lee Brissey**, '66, earned a master's degree in electrical engineering from Washington University in 1971, and then served as a captain in the Army. He was an engineer at Honeywell for 15 years; and since 1999, has been a program manager, first with Alliant Techsystems and now with Raytheon's Naval and Maritime Systems. Lee lives in Woodenville, Wash.

**Robert L. Dayton**, '65, jumped for five seasons. Bob is now a Merrill Lynch vice-president living in Billings, Mont.

**Frank H. Tainter**, '62, served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Chile after jumping fire. He then earned a Ph.D. and became a professor at Clemson University. Frank retired last March after completing more than 30 years of research in forest pathology.

**Dale E. Graff**, '61, jumped for three seasons. He says, "On one jump in Idaho, the fire blew up, trapping 20 of us and burning our gear. Helicopter pilot Rod Snider received the Carnegie Medal for rescuing us." Dale joined the Montana Fish and Wildlife Department in 1963. He served first as a game warden and then as a captain, retiring in 1994 as an assistant chief. Dale lives in Helena,

Mont.

**Monroe J. Leraas**, '60, jumped from '60 through '62 and from '66 through '68. He then served 20 years in the FBI. Monroe is now employed as the operating superintendent for a local mutual water company near his home in Julian, Calif.

**Duane L. Ferdinand**, '59, served with the Bureau of Land Management for 30 years, retiring in 1995. Duane is now planning director and historic preservation officer for the city of Lewistown, Mont.

**David H. Morton**, '59, earned a bachelor of science degree in forest management, and then worked at various assignments in the Forest Service from 1958 to 1997. Mort is now a guide for the Black Otter Guide Service (back country horses and mules) and is improving his homes at Pray, Troy, and Bay of Los Angeles in Baja Norte, Mexico.

**Roger M. Siemens**, '59, earned a degree in wildlife biology and went to work for the Forest Service, retiring after 35 years as the ranger in the Big Timber District of the Deerlake National Forest. Roger now runs a small business (recreation resources, contracting, consulting, wood products, and animal-damage control) in Silver Star, Mont.

**Donald V. Courtney**, '56, served with the CIA for 24 years, from '61 through '85, and then worked as an independent contractor for 11 years. Don is now very busy enjoying life in Bonner, Mont.

**Dwight W. Zwick**, '55, earned an MBA from Harvard. He reports that he has made and lost a lot of money as an entrepreneur. Dwight is now applying for a patent to convert oil shale into petroleum. He lives in Centennial, Colo.

**Lorin G. Lafoe**, '51, after earning a master's degree in organic chemistry, Lorin worked for Dow Chemical, Borg Warner, Celanese Fibers, Emery Industries, International Paper, and Abbott Laboratories. Lorin is now retired and living in Chandler, Ariz.

**Roger Evans**, '50, was a surgeon until 1992. Living in Sagle, Idaho, Roger is now happily retired to skiing, tennis, hiking, and travel.

**John D. Rossheim**, '49, worked as a cartographer for the U.S. Geologic Survey and for the Forest Service. He then served 20 years with the Navy as a civilian intelligence analyst. John, now retired, lives in Harrisonburg, Va.

**K.C. Cole**, '49, earned a doctor of education degree from Wayne State University. He taught in elementary schools for six years, and then was an elementary school principal or an elementary school supervisor from 1957 until he retired in 1986. K.C. lives in Cedar, Mich.

**Norman E. Allen**, '46, jumped for eight seasons. He

was a teacher for seven years, and a fire dispatcher in the Thompson Falls Ranger District for 17 years. Norm is now retired and is shooting black powder in Thompson Falls, Mont.

### North Cascades

**Ray R. Smith**, '74, earned a bachelor of science degree in geology from Washington State University and went to work for the U.S. Geologic Survey. He has been in their Water Resource Division for 25 years and counting. Ray lives in Veradale, Wash.

**David S. Larson**, '71, earned a doctor of dental surgery degree from the University of Washington, and now practices orthodontics in Wenatchee. He is writing a novel entitled *Wildfire and Ripstop*. David lives in Leavenworth, Wash.

**Warren E. Schwab**, '57, worked in cost estimating for the Boeing Company. He was a senior pricing analyst for the Rocket Research Division. Now retired, "Swabie" lives in Valley, Wash.

### Redding

**Andy Yamamoto**, '98, broke his back in three places during a practice jump in Silver City. Making a full recovery, he was put back on the jump list just as the season ended. He is now working for the Redondo Beach

(Calif.) Fire Department where he was hired after setting some records at their fire academy.

**Jerry M. Martinez**, '77, has worked for the Forest Service since 1974. Currently he is the district fire management officer in the Sioux District of the Custer National Forest. Four years from retirement, Jerry plans to stay in Camp Crook, S.D., building rustic furniture and gardening.

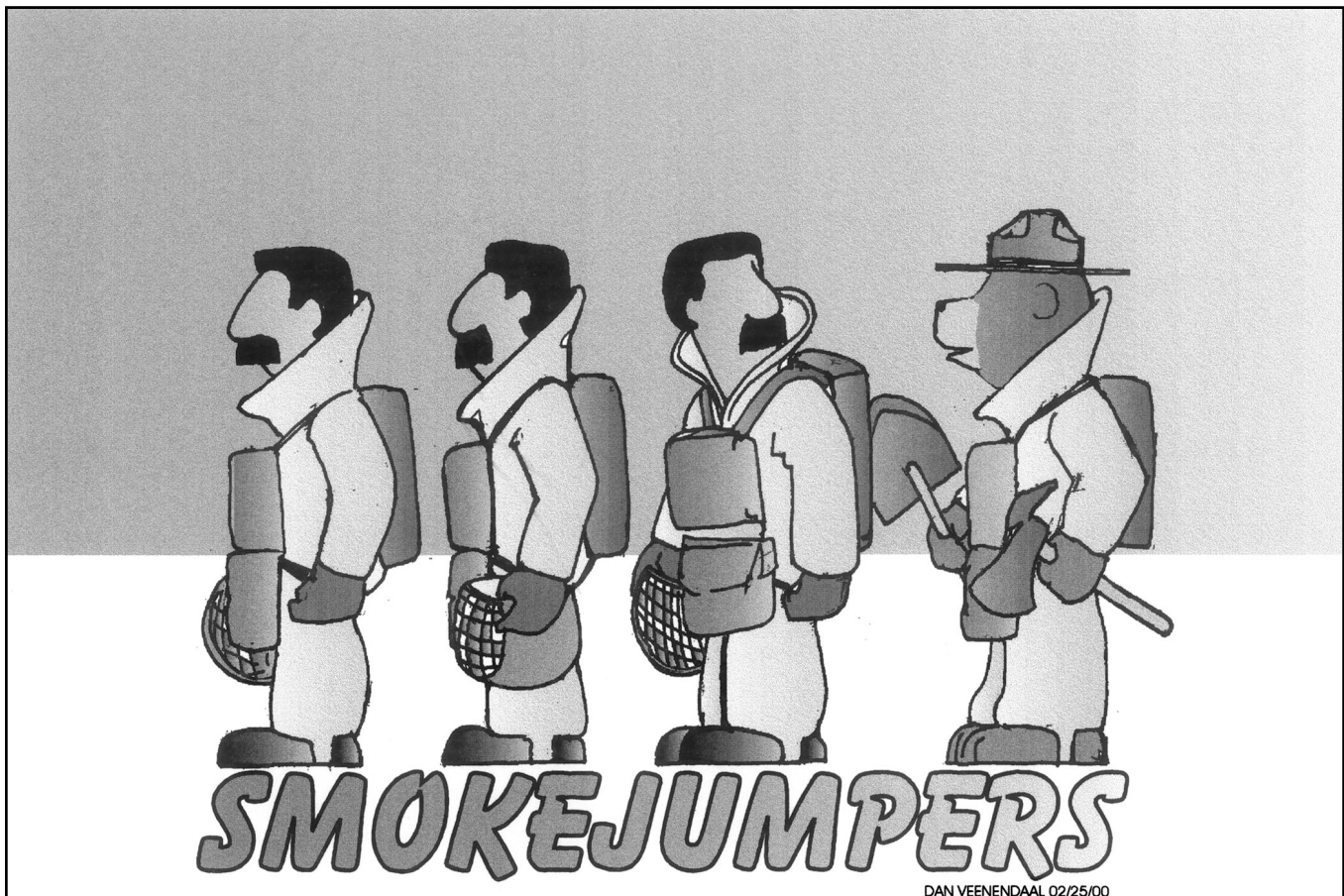
### Redmond

**Dewey L. Warner**, '75, is the Redmond base manager. After 27 years, he is still there.

### Associates

**Frank Holober** is the author of *Raiders of the China Coast* published by the Naval Institute Press in 1999, which mentions many Missoula jumpers who served in Taiwan from 1951 to 1954. He was a China specialist in the CIA from 1947 through 1971 with service in Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, and Cambodia. Living in Bethesda, Md., Frank is now working on two more books.

**Jeanene R. Jukkala** is the widow of Art Jukkala, who jumped for eight years in Missoula and rookied in 1956. Mrs. Jukkala is living in Missoula. 🐻





# NSA Guest Book



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

I really enjoyed the looking thru the site, was a seasonal FF in Southern Oregon, outa Grants Pass summers of 58, 59, 60 ... then spent some time with Uncle Sam ... went with CA Forestry in 70, retired now. Helped pack out a few jumpers while in Oregon who were a little unlucky, the site brought back a lotta memories. Keep up the good work.

**Dick Davis <dick42@urs2.net> Beaumont, CA**

Looking for an acquaintance. Met him at a fire in Oregon and again in Wyoming. Jumps out of West Yellowstone. Nickname Blondy, a rigger about 50-might be retired. Knew some of the people I jumped with in Vietnam in the 3rd Force Recon Company. I'm retired from American Oil Company as Operations Chief. Used to unwind by going to fires with the Oregon National Guard. My phone number is 1-800-303-0294 ext 23. Someone from West Yellowstone please call me. Home number is (936) 436-1448.

**Corrin Hasty <Corrin.Hasty@usarc-emh2.army.mil>**

An interesting site, I am seeking jumpers to chat about experiences and issues related to wildland fire fighting operations with helicopters. Contact via our email address supplied.

**Dave Millsteed <bmqvrfb@hermes.com.au> Blue Mountains  
N.S.W. Australia**

I started jumping in the NCSB in 1954, then Redding 58, then Alaska 59-62. Any one that remembers me please e-mail my wife [sandybrennan@msn.com](mailto:sandybrennan@msn.com) or call 360 9438827

**Don Brennan <sandybrennan@msn.com> Olympia, WA**

My father was one of the first of eighteen smokejumpers in Alaska in 1959.

**Beau J. Brennan <bbrennan@umail.ucsb.edu> Goleta, CA**

I see Phil Monsanto posted a comment in June. If anyone knows his email address, please let him know an old friend is looking for him. Thanks!

**Melissa <melimo99@aol.com> Seattle, WA**

A week ago, I was walking up on Cascade Summit above Odell Lake in Oregon and found a smokejumpers radio. I would like to return it to the smokejumper from Redmond, OR. How can I do this?

**Bonni Goodman <jiggs50@aol.com> Santa Rosa, CA USA**

Great web site! I cut line with some s-jumpers in 87 on the Stanislaus. Mike Lanier was my boss. Best fire captain in the biz.

**Paul Reed <Paublror1@aol.com> Berkeley, CA**

Just read the history notes on the "Crashing the Koyokuk". Glad a friend passed on the Smokejumpers website as I wanted to be able to keep in touch with some of my old friends in the Biz. I was the co-pilot on Tanker 138 that day with Ed Dugan flying the left seat. The story was fairly factual although the fuel bladders were 500 gallons and I left the aircraft as we all did at 300 feet, about ten minutes after the smokejumpers exited. That was after I unloaded several pallets of C Rats, the last Rollagon of fuel, tool boxes,

hydraulic cans, and whatever I could get my hands on trying to lighten our load so both Dugan and I could jump from a higher altitude. Didn't quite work out, and rest is history. The smokejumpers on the flight that day were great guys and I ended up getting some sport jumps with Jim Olsen on the Oahu north shore some years later. Howdy to you boys if you are perusing this letter. Ed Dugan is a Captain at Horizon Air and living in Camus, WA. My wife is Valerie Thal-Slocum, MD 11 Captain at FedEx (Was the '93 Team leader of the US SkydivingWorld team of formation Skydiving), and I'm a Captain on the DC10 at FedEx also. E-Mail: [N2158C@AOL.com](mailto:N2158C@AOL.com). Thanks for the memories!

**Jim Slocum**

Hi, visited the Winthrop Smoke jumpers base a few weeks ago and was shown around by a real nice 'chap' called Jason (I think). All very interesting.

**Phil <phil.rose1@btinternet.com> Norwich , UK**

In regard to your article called "Crashing the Koyukuk": I was just there 3 days ago when on a Federal and State Forest Defoliation study, I flew over the wreckage of the C-119 that had crashed there in 1981. We took several aerial photos of the plane that is mostly overgrown and buried in the heavy sands of the Koyukuk River. The co-pilot, Jim Slocum, is someone I know and I'm sure he will get a kick out of the article and the photos I'll send him. Slocum and all his crazy skydiving buddies frequently tell this story. It's quite humorous to listen to even after all these years.

**Chris Urstadt <oh2flyfish@worldnet.att.net> Girdwood, AK**

Just found this site, its really great to see some interesting things!. I was a paratrooper in the army from 1967-1970. I can see that I really missed out on something for the last (30) years. My respect goes out to all you jumpers!

**J.R. Elledge <Jresde@aol.com> Lexington , SC**

Hello everyone! What a first rate website... Keep up the great work! I'm off to Montana to do some great jumping.

**Randy Reyes <BRTProductions@ecosse.net> Malibu, CA**

Hi smokejumpers! My students will come back to visit your website as I have located Mr. Stuart Roosa and the moon trees' home.

**Paul Jen <pjen@isu.edu.tw> Kaosiung, TAIWAN**

Hey you 1959 MSO jumpers-I never see any of you on this website. Would like to chat and this is a good way to find out where you are. Give a holler.

**Wade Erwin <wderwin@bellsouth.net> Snellville, GA**

I've enjoyed hearing all the stories that my father used to tell me of Earl Cooley and their crews. My father was a Smokejumper from 1943-45 of Missoula, MT, Ellis D. Roberts. He doesn't have email and if anyone would like to stay in touch you may email me I just finished Murry Taylor's "Jumping Fire" and it truly is a great story.

**Gary Roberts <groberts@npr.org> Washington, DC**

Went to the Air America reunion this year. Met many jumpers. Took many pictures with other people's cameras. Hope one picture ends up in the Smokejumper quarterly.

**Gene Hamner Lodi, CA USA**

My father, the late Tom Crane was an Alaska Smokejumper in the mid 60s. My sister, Colleen Hawley recently found this website and had requested any old stories / photos about our dad which some of you may like to share. The people who have shared stories - thanks so much- they really mean a lot to my family. I recently met with Dave Liebersbach, also a former AK jumper in Boise, ID. I hadn't seen Dave since I was probably 5 years old, so to connect 30 years later was great. It's pretty special to have the opportunity to meet those of you who knew my father and shared his love of AK as well as jumping. I don't think either of my parents (Tom and Sue Crane) realized what we were leaving when we transferred from Fairbanks to Vale, Oregon in 1976.

Vicky Crane <vzc@moffatt.com> Boise, ID

Reading M. Taylor's book "JUMPING FIRE" at present. Makes me wish nobody had to do it, and at same that I was 30 years younger and try it!

Tony Winig <tony\_winig@hotmail.com> Boise, ID

I was pleasantly surprised when my sister (Kathy Keach) told me what my brother had found on the internet. John Culbertson's article captured my Uncle Jim's character beautifully and nearly brought him back to life again for me. I was 21 when he passed away. Like my sister, I also have fond memories of him. Warm summer nights resting our pillows on our bedroom windowsills talking and giggling like young girls do, only to have Uncle Jim sneak up and scare us

with a snorting sound outside our window. I always admired his carefree and jovial personality which reflected in his attitude towards life. I was always amazed by his bravery when he would go "hunting for rattlers" near our house. It's been a week or so since I've read John Culbertson's article. Since then the memories of Uncle Jim have been in my thoughts nearly every day. I want to thank you John, for honoring my uncle with this beautiful story. He led a very unique and fascinating life and he is missed greatly by his family. Thank you for being such a good friend to him.

India (Rodgers) Schropp <Ischropp@hotmail.com> Olathe, KS

I enjoy your website! My father (Bob Fogg) worked for Johnson Flying Service out of McCall, Idaho from the mid '40s through the '70s and shared a close alliance with the smokejumpers for many years. It is interesting to go through your jumper list, as there are so many familiar names. During the early years of smokejumping, as a child I remember being a part of the smokejumper summer parties, and until my later years, I didn't really realize what an honor it was to be included as part of a family that was welcomed into such a unique fraternity. I have many enjoyable memories, pictures, etc, of the pilots and smokejumpers from the fifties and sixties, and early seventies. If I can be of any historical help, let me know. Sincerely, Bill Fogg 6494 West Parapet Court Boise, Idaho 83703 208-853-7322

Bill Fogg <boiseriverrats@juno.com> Boise, ID 🐿

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

# JOE GUTKOSKI

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by Ted Burgon

JOE (MISSOULA '50) SPENT 13 seasons as a smokejumper and is qualified for his 100-jump pin. Over the years he jumped in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota, Washington, California, Oregon, Arizona and New Mexico. He then spent the next 21 years as a landscape architect for the Forest Service. He graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a bachelor of science degree in landscape architecture in 1951.

During World War II, Joe served on the U.S. Navy's destroyer *Lansdowne, DD-486*. After his discharge in 1946, he went to work for the Forest Service on the Nez Pierce National forest as a seasonal firefighter.

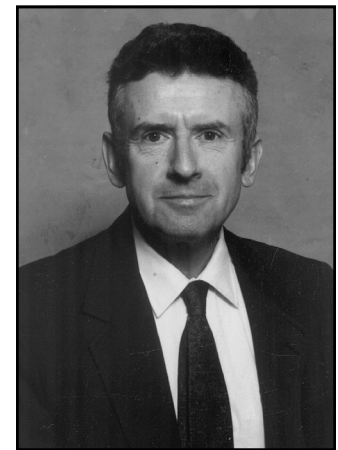
One of his more-interesting stories is when he participated in a search for Ernest Bruffy after the August 1959 earthquake near West Yellowstone. This was the earthquake that formed Quake Lake and resulted in the loss of more than two dozen lives. Joe hiked miles of mountainous area searching for the missing hiker. His saga is related in a story in this issue of *Smokejumper* magazine.

His best fire season as a smokejumper was in 1952 with four fire jumps at Deming, N.M., 10 more out

of Missoula, and a rescue jump for a total of 15. He retired from the Forest Service in 1982 after 32 years of work there.

During those years Joe and his wife Milly raised three children, and all three graduated from Montana State University in Bozeman. Milly worked as a nurse at St. Patrick's and during that time cared for a number of injured smokejumpers.

Over the years Joe has been active in many organizations in Montana. He is the current president of Montana River Action Network, past president of the Gallatin Wildlife Association (six years), current secretary of the American Buffalo Foundation (since 1990), former president of Bozeman Babe Ruth Baseball League, and former chairman of the Gallatin County Schools, Park and Recreation Planning Committee. 🐿



Joe Gutkoski. (Courtesy of Joe Gutkoski)



*Mars Flying Boat. (Courtesy of Jack King)*

# Traveling Member Finds Huge Flying Boats

by Carl Gidlund

A.J. “Jack” King (Missoula ’47) was recently traveling with his wife on Vancouver Island in British Columbia when he saw “a huge flying boat taxiing for takeoff which appeared to be of a size in the area of Howard Hughes’s aircraft, the *Spruce Goose*.”

He writes that he visited the aircraft’s home base at Sproat Lake near Port Alberni, and learned the following:

Two of the nine Mars Flying Boats, built by the Martin Aircraft Co. in the U.S. during World War II, are stationed there, working as retardant aircraft for Forest Industries Flying Tankers, Ltd.

Designed to transport troops and supplies and search for submarines, the Martin Mars has a wingspan of 200 feet, about 17 feet longer than a Boeing 747. The four-engine aircraft can carry 7,200 gallons of water which, when dropped, can

cover about four acres.

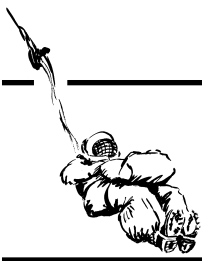
The aircraft fills its water tanks by skimming the surface of a water body at 60 to 70 knots. When the tanks are full, a foam concentrate is injected into the water load while the plane cruises to a forest fire at 190 mph.

The planes carry a crew of four, a captain, first officer and two flight engineers. Four Wright Cyclone 2500 hp engines mounted with four-blade 15-foot propellers power each aircraft.

The operation has been accident-free since the loss of the prototype water bomber in 1961.

Additional information can be obtained from the tanker firm’s Web site ([martinmars.com/mars.html](http://martinmars.com/mars.html)).

Jack King, who jumped from Missoula in 1947 and 1948, is chairman of Valley Bank of Kalispell. He lives in Kalispell, Mont. 📍



# Blast from the Past



## Idaho City 1952

As of this writing all the Idaho City smokejumpers are at the loft, having returned from the fire they jumped. Which reminds me that we have never given you the names of the boys.

They are **Ted Burgon** from Pocatello; **Gene Lewton** from Buhl; **Frank Tweedy** from Boise; **Elmer Huston**, Caldwell; **Jim Emerson**, Portland; **Glenn Curtis**, Xenia, Ohio; **Taylor Cottle**, Salt Lake City; and **Smokey Stover** and **Jack Wilcock** from Idaho City.

Last week **Clare Hartnett**, **Smokey Stover**, **Bob Caldwell** and **Gene Lewton** flew several trips in search of the crashed airplane from Salmon in which Stoddard and Smothers lost their lives. The difficulty in locating the plane from the air points to the apparent need for distinctive upper wing or fuselage markings.

*Idaho City News June 1952*

## Ex-Smokejumper Heads for the Moon

The biggest leap ever taken by a smokejumper is scheduled for Jan. 31—launch date for Apollo 14 rocket to the moon. Aboard will be U.S. Air Force Major **Stuart Roosa**, former smokejumper under Redmond Air Center's **Jim Allen** and fellow jumper with **Al Boucher**. As module pilot, Roosa will remain at the controls of the module while astronauts Alan Shepard and Edgar Mitchell set foot on the moon surface.

The native of Arizona, who did his jumping out of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base at Cave Junction in 1953, has been a guest at the Allen's Redmond home this week.

Allen recalls Roosa as "outstanding ... the ideal jumper." Allen was just taking charge of the Siskiyou base when Roosa started his rookie season. The red-haired jumper, fresh out of college, stands out in Allen's mind for his enthusiasm, leadership and his main interest in life—joining the Air Force.

That summer Roosa made 11 jumps. Boucher recalls the seriousness with which Roosa went about his work that summer. Much of the jumping was done



out of Medford due to the paving of the runway at Cave Junction.

The astronaut, who will be taking off in America's latest space vehicle Sunday, can look back with nostalgia to the days when he jumped out of a Noorduyn Noorseman. With him will be going the good wishes of RAC's Boucher and Allen, who in 1966 wrote Roosa, "Congratulations on your selection to the nation's space team. It is quite an honor to have an ex-Forest Service smokejumper

assigned to that program. ...We are mighty proud of you."

*The Redmond Spokesman January 1971*

## Missoula 1946

The fire was in Big Creek on the Bitterroot, the plane was the Travelair, Cooley was the spotter and the air was hot and turbulent. The jump probably should not have been made. I got into trouble before I left the plane. I was on the step when Cooley saw that the belt around my chute had come loose. He knew that if he touched me at all, I leave the plane at the wrong time. So he just grabbed me and fixed the belt.

After I exited, my chute opened inside out and I sailed helplessly down the canyon like the tail of a kite. I managed to stay in the canyon and away from the cliffs and landed in a little bunch of blowdown knocking myself out. I don't know for how long but Cooley was through dropping my partner (**George Saffian** Missoula '46) and the cargo when I came to. I started toward Saffian and found him hung up in a huge spruce snag with a banged up leg and a bridge knocked out of his mouth. My first question to him—where did the cargo go? That didn't go over so good. It was almost dark by the time we got Saffian out of the tree and we had no tools, personal gear or food.

The fire was no more than a bonfire high on a rocky ledge. We wrapped ourselves in a parachute for the night and ate huckleberries. The next morning we spotted an orange cargo chute and recovered about half our stuff including a shovel. We took the shovel and climbed the canyon wall which was like scaling a cliff. To our dismay, when we got within 100 feet of

the fire we found a deep granite crevice between us and the fire. Two sharp peaks went high into the air. We were on one and the fire on the other. Back down to Big Creek to try climbing the ridge and coming in from the top.

On the way down the next morning we met Tom Ford the district packer. Tom had a lariat and he and I took our shovel and started for the fire. Saffian was pretty well crippled up by this time. We used the lariat thrown around trees and “roped” up the hill and put out the fire. Today we would never take the risk of putting out this fire but in those days it would have meant a “pink slip” if we hadn’t stuck with it.

*Bob Morgan’s (Missoula ’46) notes courtesy of Dave Colclough and the NRMRA Newsletter. Bob retired as Bitterroot N.F. supervisor in about 1987.*

### Reflections of D.B. Cooper

Thanks for your good note with the newspaper items on D.B. Cooper. It is sort of humorous that the FBI man quoted about the case considered D. B. to be “a bungler and a fool.” This after D. B. (though clearly a crook and an extortionist for doing this dastardly deed) was smart enough to (1) invent a whole new way to steal [I believe his was the first hijacking of a plane, was it not?]; (2) invent a new way to do it [show them a note: “I’ve got a bomb”]; (3) ask for a

reasonable amount of money [\$200,000] so they could scrape it up in a hurry; (4) let all the passengers go but keep the crew hostage; (5) know which was the only commercial airliner to have a self-contained exit ladder which could be lowered in flight; (6) ask for two jump outfits not just one so that they might think he was going to force the stewardess to jump with him—thus making sure they would not sabotage the chutes. Also by insisting they fly him to Mexico with the first refueling stop to be at Reno, he got them to put all their defense efforts into stopping him at Reno—NOT en route.

Anyone smart enough to do all this was also smart enough to make it a night drop so no one would see him coming down. Being a jumper, he probably planned on where he would be on the Seattle to Reno corridor after takeoff and picked (by timing) a relatively low-altitude landing area. He could have landed, buried his chutes, walked down to the edge of the Columbia and buried a little of the loot along a sandbar where it would likely wash out later and be found by some small boy playing. Yeah, D.B. Cooper was a real bumbler and a fool. 🐼

*Reflections on D. B. Cooper—who of course was NOT a smokejumper from a letter to Chuck Pickard (Missoula ’48) from Starr Jenkins (Cave Junction ’48).*

## Reunion Information— Mark These Dates!

<b>Cave Junction</b>	June 21–23, 2002, in Cave Junction. Contact Gary Buck (541) 592-2055 or Wes Brown (541) 592-2250, alpha@cdsnet.net
<b>CPS-103</b>	July 16–19, 2002, at the Glacier Mountain Lodge in Hungry Horse, Montana. T. Richard Flaharty, 11615 Ostrom Avenue, Granada Hills, CA 91344-2519. (818) 360-6690 Tedford & Margie Lewis, 415 W. Kirkham Ave., Webster Groves, MO 63119. (314) 961-4200
<b>McCall</b>	June 2003
<b>NSA</b>	2004 in Missoula



# Flying Treasure Returns To Become Missoula Museum Centerpiece

by Mick Holien of the *Missoulian*

The C-47 aircraft took smokejumper crew to Mann Gulch in 1949.

The throaty purr of dual Pratt and Whitney radial engines signaled the return this week of a C-47, No. 24320, to the Missoula Valley where the reliable plane was used by Johnson Flying Service pilots for almost 30 years.

"There he is," said one of the two dozen or so spectators standing outside the Museum of Mountain Flying on Tuesday as the glistening silver shine of the aircraft became visible from the south.

"I love that sound," said another.

"Cool man, cool," said Stan Cohen, president of the museum's board of directors, as the airplane made a low-level flyby over the runway closest to the museum and not far from where it will be displayed in a soon-to-be-built 18,500-square-foot hangar.

The plane is getting the special treatment because of the role it played in Montana history. It was this aircraft that left Missoula on Aug. 5, 1949, to deliver a smokejumper crew to Mann Gulch. Twelve smokejumpers and a fireguard already on the ground died that day in what was then the second deadliest forest fire in U.S. history.

Flying in from Scottsbluff, Neb., the C-47, a DC-3

look-alike, made a few passes over Mann Gulch before landing in Missoula.

Dick Komberec, a member of the museum board who accompanied the airplane to Missoula, is the Delta Airlines pilot who discovered the aircraft in Arkansas and convinced the board to buy it.

He also flew the plane on its last mission out of Missoula in the mid-'70s.

"To me it brought my youth back because I was a young man when I had the privilege of flying this for Bob Johnson," he said. "Twenty-five years ago I went by the tower and went over the mountain the other direction." The museum obtained the plane from McNeely Air in West Memphis, Ark., for \$125,000. Fund-raising to pay for the aircraft is ongoing, according to Cohen.

In addition to ferrying smokejumpers to forest fires, the durable C-47 was useful in other endeavors, in part because it could carry such a heavy load, said Komberec.

"The airplanes did all kinds of missions all over the world," he said. There were about 12,000 of the planes built; about 500 remain in flying condition.

"People go to the top of mountains, they go to bottom of the ocean, they go 2,000 feet through ice to recover old historic airplanes," Komberec said, "so this museum is extremely fortunate to get this airplane."

"If we brought any other C-47 or DC-3 here, it wouldn't be the same thing and it wouldn't mean the same thing to people," said Komberec.

"This one is special and we're going to preserve it forever so future people and young people can carry on the tradition."

There will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony to welcome the C-47, No. 24320, back to Missoula at the Museum of Mountain Flying at the east end of Missoula International Airport at 11 A.M. Friday. 🗨️



(Courtesy of Stan Cohen)

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

# DAVID BENNETT

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by Jim Budenholzer

The National Smokejumper Association would like to highlight the joining of David Bennett into Life Member status. From 1961 to 1966, Dave jumped out of Missoula, after which he went on to a distinguished career as an engineer in nuclear-weapons production and robotics.

### In which David Bennett seeks to become a smokejumper, he has an interesting interview

Dave grew up in western Montana. Even as a kid, he and his future high-school classmate and jump buddy, Milton Knuckles (Missoula '61), with whom he grew up, had a belief about smokejumpers: "They were our heroes!"

As a young man he worked cutting slash, as a trail-crew member, and as a firefighter in the St. Regis District. Not surprisingly, they both decided they wanted to become smokejumpers; they both applied in the fall of 1959.

That winter, without knowing the status of his and Mil's applications, Dave remembers that he was on his way home from college, and on an impulse he stopped at the Ariel Fire Depot in Missoula. He'd already sent in the application, as had Knuckles, so he decided he'd just sort of check in to see if he was going to get a job.

Not knowing anyone, he walked around until he found someone to talk to. He found a man named "Earl." Dave didn't know that this was Earl Cooley, who was the father of smokejumping.

"I didn't know he was the guy to talk to. He could have been the janitor. I asked him if he was a jumper, and he said, "Yeah," he'd "done a little."

Cooley asked Dave if Dave had "ever been around airplanes?" Dave wanted to make a good impression, so he said, "A lot."

Cooley then asked Dave what he thought about jumping out of them. When Dave didn't reply, Cooley informed Dave that he "looked kind of skinny." Dave says he told Cooley, "I'm not skinny. I'm wiry."

His impromptu interview with Earl Cooley ended when Cooley advised Dave that he wasn't much beyond being a "green kid." Dave remembers that Al Kramer was there and laughing so hard he had to leave. Dave himself now laughs at the coincidence.

### In which David Bennett goes on his first fire and learns to scramble eggs

The interview must not have gone too badly because in the spring of '61, Dave and Milt each got a letter. Dave remembers the feeling: "We were excited and apprehensive. Lot of testosterone got flowing!"

They went to rookie training together and were roommates during rookie camp. Dave remembers that 1961 was a hot year during which he had about 11 fire jumps, some out of Grangeville and Cave Junction. The year started fast and kept

running. Within weeks of completing training he had jumped four fires.

He recalls that on the flight to his first fire jump he and another rookie, Tom Kovalicky, deferentially seated themselves near the bulkhead—as far from the open door as possible.

"The spotter and veterans, 'old guys,' had to motion to us by waiving their hands to us to invite us to come to the open door," Dave recalled.

They jumped out and the Idaho side of the Bitterroots, on White Sand Creek. It was a three-manner with two rookies. It was a "picnic in the woods with a nice little hike out," Dave said.

Then he and his rookie-buddy went on another three-manner

on Squaw Creek in the Moose Creek District. But this one got away from the jumpers, and they were on Squaw Creek close to a week when their food ran out. A relief drop occurred, Dave recalled, but the carton of food got hung up in a tree. They cut the cargo chute out of the tree and weren't too concerned when it hit the ground, because they assumed it was filled with C rations.

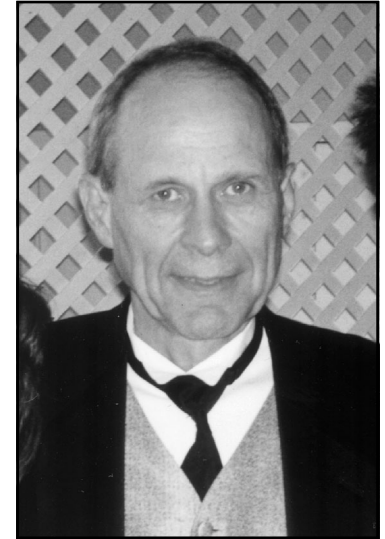
In fact, the carton was filled with 24 dozen eggs that broke and ran everywhere when the carton hit. They had to scramble the eggs in their hard hats. They stayed on the fire several more days and discovered that there are only so many ways you can stir up an omelette in a hardhat. They finally got relieved. Dave said of the memory, "I can still taste the eggs in my mouth."

### In which David Bennett was chased by sled dogs in Alaska

Dave was detailed early in the season for about six weeks to Alaska in 1962, during which he had about three fire jumps. They worked out of the International Airport outside of Fairbanks. He remembers the Doug (Douglas DC-3) landing on a dirt strip outside a remote village named Huslia.

The pilot warned them about walking in to town because of nasty sled dogs. The jumpers ignored the pilot's warning. The Huslia sled dogs sniffed the jumpers coming and ran the jumpers back to the plane, where the pilot had remained.

### In which David is made squad leader



*David Bennett. (Courtesy of Dave Bennett)*

Earl Cooley made Dave Bennet a squad leader in 1963 so that Dave could help train the new guys, who were judged to be a little green.

### **In which David Bennett is in a Ford Tri-Motor that loses an engine and all must jump**

Dave was detailed as a squad leader to Grangeville in 1964 with Dayton Grover, and with Ed Nyquist as foreman. From Grangeville, they got an eight-manner fire call and loaded a Ford Tri-Motor for a fire outside of Elk City. They were wheels-up in the early afternoon with Frank Borgeson as pilot. Later he said he had looked over the plane carefully, and that it had looked “okay in every way.”

Dave said he remembers it was a nice day. He was sitting by the door and was going to be the first one out. They were just coming up on Elk City when—BANG! There was this tremendous bang, followed by an equally tremendous vibration. The vibrations were so intense that the cigarette butts came dancing up through the cracks in the floor.

The right propeller had come through the fuselage just behind the forward bulkhead, and it had gone cleanly through the fuselage and out the left side exactly between the control cables and through the main spar on the left wing. It had shot through the plane like a bullet.

When Dave looked out the door he could see plane parts going by.

“Yes, sir, we all started thinking about the same thing at the same time: jumping out,” he recollected.

However, to everyone’s chagrin, Bennett’s static line clip was tucked under harness capewell so tightly he could not dig it out so that he could clip in and jump. So he dug for it and dug for it. It wouldn’t come free.

John Scott, the next jumper, began to get impatient with Dave’s fumbling and digging. “Forget about your clipping in!” Scott yelled. “Jump with your reserve chute! Trust it!”

Dave remembered telling Scott, “I don’t think I should do that.” Then Dave freed his clip and snapped in, and they all went out in an eight-man stick over Elk City.

In Dave’s words, “I recall just after the chute opened I saw the engine drop off the Ford, streaming gas behind. My eyes were pretty big to see the seven chutes, everybody except for Frank Borgeson and Ted Nyquist, who were in the plane. I watched them make a circle to land, but I couldn’t see what happened.

“I look up thinking I’d had one narrow escape in the Ford, but the day wasn’t over. I still had to land successfully.”

He thought he saw a small jump spot, but there was a fir tree with a dead top right in his descending downwind line of flight. He made a judgment and he decided he’d crash through the top of the dead snag and thus hit the spot. Unfortunately, the dead wood was really hard and tough, and one spike of it went between his boot and his leg strap and jump pants.

“Unbelievably,” Dave now remembers, “the top didn’t break and my chute spilled forward and I was hanging upside down by my sparred bootstrap, with the chute collapsed below me. I was about 25 feet up; still too far up for comfort.”

Dave started wiggling around. Though upside down, he began to think about what was going to happen once his leg

came loose.

When he was facing towards the tree, he grabbed some branches. He then got to kicking and by lifting himself with his “off” foot, took a little weight off his snagged foot, and got the stuck leg up and off the spar.

Down he went, end-over-end, grabbing branches and air until he hit, getting the wind knocked out of him, but otherwise escaping unhurt. He gathered with the others at the Ford in the lumberyard.

He said he remembers the pilots were standing there, grinning away. About two minutes after the engine had buried itself in the lumberyard, the Ford Tri-Motor had, for lack of a better place to land, also made its way to the lumberyard. The final report indicated that the cause was “propeller fatigue.”

### **In which David Bennett has high hopes for a cook on a fire, but instead suffers a disappointment**

Dave recollected that he went on a six-man fire in North Fork of Moose Creek in 1965. The fire, though on a lake, ended up being a long, drawn-out affair. It took the jumpers more than a week to mop it up. They had a radio and in the course of talking to the Forest Service, they asked for additional food. The Forest Service said, “How about a cook?” which was shortly followed on the fire by the arrival of a helicopter.

Dave sadly remembered that a guy got off the helicopter and they asked him if he was the promised cook.

“No,” Dave remembered the guy saying, he was “the time keeper.”

The guy sat there and kept track of Dave and his crew to make sure they didn’t log any extra hours. “That was a terrible disappointment,” Dave lamented.

### **In which David Bennett goes on to a career in engineering, but has one last call**

Dave had achieved his goal in the spring of 1966 and had graduated from Montana Tech with a degree in engineering. He thought he had put smokejumping behind him when a confluence of events brought him back for one last jump. It was an early fire season, and Dave said at the memory: “I was broke.”

Earl Cooley called and asked if Dave could come jump a fire.

Dave said, “You bet I can. Pay me right away!” Dave fondly remembers he made plenty to get him out of college and on his way.

Dave feels he’d been a smokejumper to pay for his education and that’s what he had done. He was licensed to be an engineer. But he couldn’t say “no” when Cooley called and asked him to come and jump an early fire in the season, yet the last in his career.

### **In which David Bennett, as an engineer, progresses in life**

After leaving the jumpers in 1966, Bennett went to work in the nuclear industry as an engineer and later as a project manager. When queried specifically about what it was he did, Dave was forthright: “I was right in the weapons-production business—bombs.”

Then, when robots first became available in the 1970s, he got involved in robotics, both sales and project management. He has worked since then in development of remotely operated arms and vehicles. These are robots that perform work in environments where people would rather not go.

These environments include nuclear radiation, sub-sea operations for the Navy and offshore oil producers, explosive ordinance disposal and extra-vehicular space operations. One example of the things he developed were gloves for space suits.

He is acclaimed for the development of a robotic mannequin, which has been used to test protective clothing for soldiers, such as protective clothing they wear for chemical warfare. Bennett was honored by the National Academy of Arts for Industrial Design for a portfolio of photos on the robotic mannequin.

#### **In which the life member describes his current affairs**

Dave is still applying his knowledge and experience to solve complex problems. When not telecommuting, he commutes in his own airplane from state of Washington to Maryland, where he the director of business development for a robotics company. Current assignments include project management of a robot for General Electric that will inspect and clean turbine blades. Dave is now on the engineering side of the project, having worked on selling it as well. As the project manager, he has moved to areas of the project where his assistance is needed most.

Bennett gained his knowledge in part by a master's degree in engineering science from Montana Tech, and a master's in

mechanical engineering from the University of Washington.

#### **In which David Bennett enjoys life: skydiver, flyer, fisherman, grandfather**

Bennett also picked up skydiving, which he did for 20 years after he concluded his firefighting. He has more than 2300 jumps. He also learned to fly and has his own plane, a Cessna. The mountains and rivers, too, appeal to him. He fly-fishes, often at locales to which he has flown in his Cessna.

As a father he enjoys his three children, and as a grandfather his grandchildren keep him busy with soccer games and airplane rides. He will see Milton Knuckles at his high school reunion this year.

#### **In which David Bennett summarizes his experience as a smokejumper**

"Certainly," Dave said, "the experience shaped my life. It affected me in terms of understanding the value of teamwork, and for me it was truly the first experience I had away from home.

"I grew up out in the country and all of a sudden it was my first glimpse of the wide, wide world. Thirty-four years after my last Forest Service jump, I can still say that the Jumper Operation was the best job I ever had." 🍄

*Editor's note—We are grateful to David Bennett for his life membership commitment to the NSA. He may be reached at his home, 232 Piper St., Richland, WA 99352; or by e-mail at [bigguy@owt.com](mailto:bigguy@owt.com).*



*Two former Cave Junction jumpers were recently brought together by the 30-Mile fire tragedy. Terry Egan (Cave Jct.'65), who is a unit manager with the Washington Emergency Management Division, is shown briefing Doug Sutherland (Cave Jct.'57), Washington State Commissioner of Public Lands. Four USFS firefighters lost their lives and four were injured in that incident.*

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# Coming Home from the Great War

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

My father is a WWII vet who served in the Pacific, yet growing up we children heard virtually nothing of his experiences. Dad and I still remember a conversation in August of 2000 in the sunny park near his small non-descript downstairs apartment when I told him, "Dad, you were a member of the Allied Expeditionary Force, the greatest expeditionary force the world has ever known. There were only two types of men who fought in the Pacific. Those that would enslave the world and those like you that fought to free it. We are proud of you."

My father, Rod, has been in and out of VA hospitals since August of 1945 soon after he landed with the American Occupation Force in Otaru. He said, "I was never able to celebrate the end of the war as I was in the hospital." What he suffered from was not a bullet wound but what was then referred to as "shell shock."

He told me later that it wasn't until August 2000 he realized that he could be proud of his service even though he did not have the Purple Heart.

My father served in the Pacific as a 1st Lt. in the Army. He was on Leyte in the Philippines and then rode in an amphibious landing craft to land at Otaru on the northern Japanese Island of Hokkaido just three weeks after the atom bomb was dropped. But he has no physical scars from the war, just those he carried inside.

Almost 15 years ago we went together to a Vietnam Vet. Memorial at the Utah St. Capitol. My cousin, Benny Fryer, has his name there because he was a navigator of one of the last B52s shot down over North Vietnam on Dec. 27, 1972, (Senator McCain writes about these raids and how the Hanoi

POWs were cheering from their cells). Then we visited the WWII memorial. This is a memorial in a shady park with small markers telling the name of servicemen, their branch of service and how they died. I asked my father if he knew any of the men on the markers. "Oh yes," he replied, "I lost 19 of my Sigma Nu fraternity brothers in the war, they are all here."

Then he started at one end and named them, the most popular guy on the U of Utah campus, a pilot died in the Pacific, the best basketball player in the house, died on the German front, his friend that he would drive to Alta with in a 1935 Model A with no snow tires, and on and on. After about six I asked him to stop, I was overwhelmed. I saw my father in the slanting afternoon light on that memorial as I had never seen him before, as someone who everyday was still making the landing at Otaru and came back when his buddies didn't. He still could not understand why.

When we had the talk in August 2000 I had just finished one of the incredible spring/summers of my life having skied across the Western Alps on La Haute Route, traversed the Alaska Range and climbed Denali and then raced the Wilderness Classic across the Wrangell St.-Elias Range. There is no doubt my father had lived these adventures through me as he had my jumping.

He was there in McCall with my younger sister when I came off my first fire jump in the River of No Return Wilderness. I told him how proud I was of his service and that he could finally accept the campaign medals he had earned. So Dec. 7th of this year I will have delivered these medals to my father in the hope that he will be finally able to come home. 🇺🇸



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