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Smokejumper Magazine, January 2005

National Smokejumper Association

Gene Hamner

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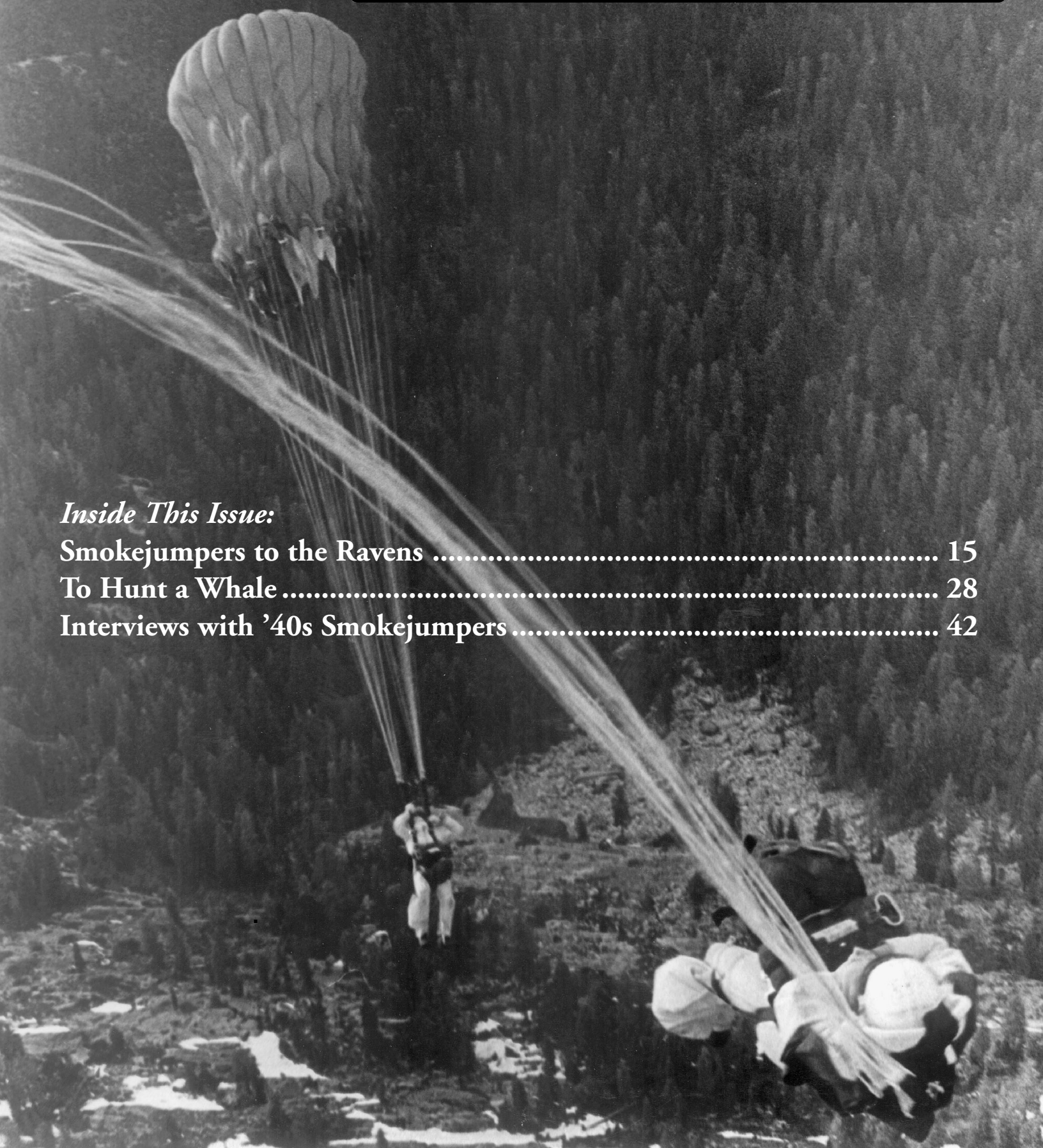
THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2005

SMOKEJUMPER

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Cover photo: *Early Season jump in Marble Mountain Wilderness (Courtesy Douglas Beck)*



Message from the President



by Doug Houston
(Redmond '73)
PRESIDENT

IT HAS BEEN AN exciting year for smokejumpers and the National Smokeyumper Association. We have new board members with Charlie Brown taking over as Treasurer for Dean Longanecker, who has decided it's time to do other things. Much thanks goes to Dean for an outstanding job and many hours of dedication to the NSA. Larry Longley has accepted the Historian position. Larry jumped at NCSB and brings a lot of experience and energy to the board. We now have just one position to fill, Merchandising Director. This is a very key position and if you have any interest, please contact us. Chuck Sheley is currently doing this along with the magazine and it's time for someone else to step forward and give Chuck some much deserved help.

2004 HIGHLIGHTS

**Over 100 miles of trail maintenance accomplished, including bridge construction and cabin reconstruction. Thanks to Jon McBride and 96 volunteers.

**New Colorado Trails Chapter

started. Projects completed in October. Way to go Bill Ruskin and crew.

**Smokeyumper Exhibit dedicated at Evergreen Aviation Museum. It's a great exhibit. Thanks to Bill Moody, Del, Pen and Ben at Evergreen.

**The Missoula National Smokeyumper Reunion held in June was attended by over 570 jumpers and over 1,000 at the Saturday night function. Thanks to Barry Hicks, Chuck Wilde, and the many volunteers who made this a huge success.

**Three active jumpers each jumped their 300th fire jump. Just amazing. Congratulations to Dale Longanecker, Wally Wasser and Mark Corbet.

**And then there was Dale Longanecker throwing out the first baseball on September 11th at Safeco Field in Seattle, a game between the Mariners and Boston. The game honored firefighters, police officers, and rescue workers. Quite an honor for Dale and for all smokejumpers.

A good year. There will be more in 2005. Also, the next national reunion will be held in Boise, Idaho, in 2007. All volunteers will be accepted.

Thanks to all of you that have made 2004 such a rewarding year for the NSA. Until next time, remember you have 100 yards of drift, the whole world is a jump spot, and your static line is clear. 🙌

Jump to the Northwest Arctic

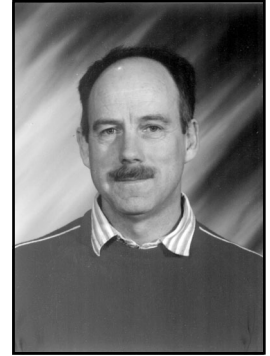
by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

The DC-3 circled high above the Kobuk River just south of the Brooks Range. Our jump spot was the ridge just west of Shelby Lake. As the spotter took the door off and stored it inside the plane, the jumpers moved towards the open door in pairs. To our right was Mauneluk Mountain, named after an Inupiat prophet, and to our left was Angutikada, a sacred mountain that was on the continental divide as well as the Arctic Circle.

As the spotter touched my leg, I sprang from the door on this the third day of July 1973 with the sun reflecting off the shimmering Brooks Range. It was a spectacular ride to the ground. I took a photo of my chute lying on the tundra

with the sparkling Kobuk River winding toward the Bering Sea.

It did not start out as an auspicious morning in Bettles, more than 100 miles to the east. **Rad Carlson** (CJ-70) came into the small shack where the crew was located. "**Gene Hobbs** (IDC-61) was pulled out of a plane yesterday near McGrath. Preliminary reports are that he broke all four limbs and his back when the chute ripped him through the side of the plane."



Jerry Dixon (NSA file)

This was a sobering reminder of the danger our job could entail. That he recovered and returned to a teaching career is a true tale of heroism. I had stood near Gene just the day before in Fairbanks at a briefing for lower 48 jumpers. This was my third booster trip to Alaska and every jump was an adventure. I later heard from a Para-rescue jumper that a portion of the door was hanging from the plane after the accident, so he and others could not jump and had to wait for a helicopter to come rescue Gene.

NSA Members — Save This Information

Please contact the following persons directly if you have business or questions:

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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

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 various places in the Pacific Northwest. The terms of four members of the BOD will expire July 1, 2005.

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. 15, 2005, fill out personal information sheet. Must be in my hands by Feb. 15.
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 20.
5. New board members to take office July 1st-election results published in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper*.

Please call, write or e-mail for your filing papers. My contact information is on page three of this issue. The time to act is now! 📞

We fought fire all that hot July day above the Kobuk with only one black bear wandering through the lines. There was a crew from the nearby village of Shungnak brought in to work with us. I could not even pronounce the name of the town, but I was fascinated by a people who had inhabited this region for 10,000 years and could thrive in a region where the wind chill can drop to -110 F and the summer hordes of mosquitoes drive animals crazy.

My wife, Deborah, would later recount, "After I first met Jerry in August 1983, we were talking outside the Shungnak School [in Alaska's northwest Arctic region]. As we were talking, he pointed to a far off ridge past the Mauneluk Mountains in the upper Kobuk River and said, 'I parachuted into a blaze there July 3, 1973, and fought fire with the parents and grandparents of the students in our school.' Pointing south, he said, 'July 1977, I was fire boss in a lead helicopter flying to a fire there in the Selawik hills. That was the same year I fought fire above the Kogoluktuk with the Shungnak crew. Also we built the fire lines around this village, which was surrounded by fire, and saved it.' After I married him, I found out it was all true!"

Deborah, originally from Vermont, had come to this small Inupiat village a year before. We were both teachers, both 'suddenly single'. I lucked out. Soon after we met, we both sold our cars (Shungnak is 175 miles from a road) and

put our money into a dog team. We spent seven years there and our first son, Kipp, mushed with us in the Joe May Iditarod sled that was our wedding present.

All our weekends and school vacations were spent mushing in the Brooks Range and south to the Arctic Circle looking for new mountains to ski. Winter of 1985 with a friend, Ron Watters, we made our third attempt to climb Angutikada-Old Man Mountain. Angutikada rises 4000' from the upper Kobuk River plains. It is what the Kuuvunmiut have used to tell time since the last ice age. Because it stands out as a sentinel south of the Brooks Range on the Arctic Circle, in summer when the sun circles the sky not setting for months, time can be reckoned by the sun's position to the mountain.

We mushed two days to the base of the mountain in temperatures of -40F. Then we skied one day and built a snow cave. Finally we skied through a caribou herd and were able to climb to the summit as a rainbow arced through the frost crystals falling from the sky. The view was magnificent with the entire esplanade of the Brooks Range stretching from horizon to horizon. Yet again it was like looking through a mirror and seeing a reflection for I could see clearly the spot I had landed and first beheld this magnificent country (in what seemed a lifetime ago) via parachute and the door of a DC-3 jump ship. 🐾

The Wahoo Creek Fire—The Last Fire Jump of 1944

by Gregg Phifer (Missoula '44)

"Harkness. ..hurt."

With its motor cut, the red Travelair swooped low overhead and spotter Earl Cooley's (MSO-40) words, shouted over the idling engine, faintly drifted our way. Loren Zimmerman (MSO-43), first of our trio of Nine Mile-Missoula jumpers, hurried down the ridge. Stripping off my chutes and other equipment as I went, I hurried as fast as I could down the meadow in which I had landed and through the bordering trees.

Harkness (Edwin/MSO-43) lay flat on his back, one foot raised, in a little stone-dotted clearing. "Broken?" I asked. "Yes," replied Ed. "I landed on the point of that little rock right in the middle of all those big ones. Something snapped-here, in my foot."

We made Ed as comfortable as possible and returned to the jump area to retrieve our equipment. How about our radio? An SPF had been dropped to us, but had not been packed properly ... it tinkled like a baby's rattle. "The cargo bounced when it hit," Loren explained.

Swiftly we collected our equipment, then headed across the meadow and down the thousand-foot drop to the level of the fire. Our plane, having landed briefly at nearby Moose Creek,

returned immediately to drop a message and learned, through signals, how badly Harkness was hurt. Loren clambered to the ridge again, hiked to the lookout and called for a packer who would shortly be on his way.

Spectacular scenery greeted us as we arrived over the fire about 11:00 AM that morning. Rocky crags and razor-sharp ridges jutted at wild angles from the forest cover of the Selway Bitterroot Primitive Area of the Bitterroot National Forest in Idaho.

"It's not smoking very much, but it's crowned out," Zimmerman exclaimed. "Over there. I see a chute. Must be a couple of jumpers already on the fire."

Below our Travelair lay an inviting green mountain meadow along the ridge-top, perhaps seventy-five yards long and at its best twenty-five yards wide. But around the meadow we found the terrain less than inviting. Cliffs, snags, huge boulders - to say nothing of the fire. Aside from the meadow, our prospects did not look good.

Zimmerman jumped first. We were dropping one man at a pass. My normal nervousness evaporated as Cooley motioned for me to hook up. Just before we turned into our jumping run, I saw Loren's chute collapsing around him in the center

of the meadow. "Loren did a swell job," Earl shouted in my ear, "I want to see you do as well."

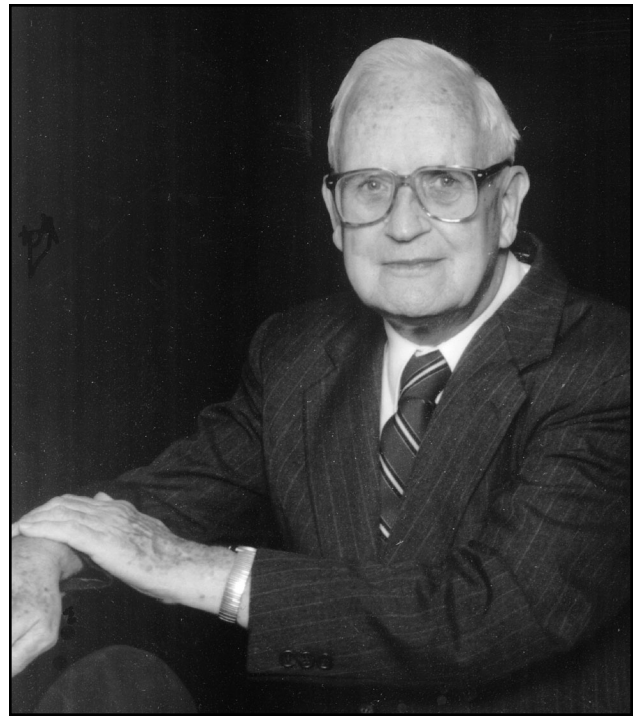
The pilot followed Earl's thumb and first-finger signals. Finally, Earl's raised hand dropped, ordering the pilot to "Cut the motor!" The plane nosed down. With a moment's hesitation to let the prop blast die, Earl slapped me on my back and I was out the door. The opening shock was light and I turned into the wind. My slotted Irvin chute came around swiftly and easily. I turned to face the spot and saw piles of rocks directly below me and a patch of snag-dotted trees between the rocks and the spot. Chinning myself on my front risers, I planed hard for my jump spot. The ground rose with a terrific wallop, and I fell flat on my face with no chance for a good roll. Harkness was our last jumper.

Later, we learned that the smokejumper Guardian Angel had worked overtime the prior evening when two Moose Creek jumpers dropped on the fire in high wind. **Jack Allen** (MSO-44) kicked his men out nearly a mile from the spot. Speeding along like an express train - or so it felt to him - **Dale Entwistle** (MSO-43) rejoiced to drape his pet Eagle over a half-dozen small snags. A second later, **Louis Goosen** (MSO-43) zoomed over the ridge. He was headed for a green slope beside huge rocks, but was caught by a ground wind and flung hard into the face of the sheer cliff. Luckily, his chute draped over the top and held. His feet found a three-foot ledge along which he made his way to safety. Hanging over the cliff, his chute could have been the smokejumper picture of the year had one of us brought a camera. Below the dangling chute, the cliff fell away over a hundred feet into jagged boulders.

As I followed "Whistle" to the bottom corner of the diamond-shaped fire, he told me that the Bitterroot Forest Supervisor discovered the fire and called it a "one-man fire. But we'll drop two of you on it, you'll probably be back at the Wahoo Lookout by tonight." Five acres had burned by late Friday when Allen dropped his two Moose Creek men. Fifteen minutes after they hit the fire, it flashed up the north side of the canyon and rapidly grew almost to its final twelve-acre size. Unlike most fires, our fire's dangerous sector was the bottom corner. With only three men on a twelve-acre fire, we had to stop the creeping and crowning along the edges. Nearby, a trickle of water into a small lake provided enough water for drinking, cooking our familiar K-ration, and mop up.

During our stay at Cox Creek, eight jumpers worked on Granite Ridge and two more on a nearby spot fire, twenty-nine (a smokejumper record to that time) on Bell Lake, two near the Wahoo Lookout and eighteen others in the Chelan National Forest in Washington. Planes scouted our territory frequently.

Harkness went out on the packer's horse on Sunday morning. At four that afternoon our Tri-Motor came over and circled. The spotter dropped a full fire camp-food, radio, tent, lanterns and bedrolls. One box of food came loose from its cargo chute and splattered all over the countryside: loaves of bread, busted open cans and jam was over everything. Five of a six-man walk-in crew arrived as the cargo fell: a foreman, three young boys and Old Louie. One of the young men couldn't keep up. His heel was still painful from a piece of shrapnel received while serving on his destroyer at Pearl Har-



Gregg Phifer (NSA file)

bor. Whistle and the foreman located him and brought him into our fire camp that evening.

We mopped up the fire on Monday and Tuesday, then left Wednesday morning. Goosen stayed with Old Louie and one of the kids to finalize our fire. All snags showing either smoke or fire had been felled. We hiked out over the Cox Creek Trail to Wahoo Creek. There we turned up to climb toward 7500-foot Wahoo Pass and the Idaho-Montana border.

Once in Montana, we hit a Forest Service road and hiked on to the cabin at Lost Horse, where a Forest Service cook fixed dinner for us. A pick-up truck took us to Hamilton, where we visited Harkness in the hospital and learned that he had broken three bones in his foot. The Inter-Mountain bus took us to Missoula, where our old familiar stakeside returned us home to Nine Mile. Our Wahoo fire had become a tiny part of smokejumper history.

We had left the fire none too soon. Thursday night clouds obscured the bright star-studded sky and twice we received light sprinkles. Goosen walked out through an inch or more of snow. The fire season of 1944 was over, fourth light one in a row. The next year provided a study in contrast, one of the most difficult fire seasons in years. I made three fire jumps in 1944 and seven in '45. In '44 we had about 120 jumpers, but by 1945 CPS 103 had 200 jumpers, and we went round and round the list. 🍄

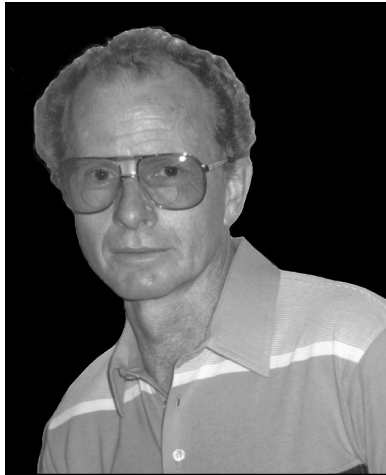
By 1944 when Gregg joined the CPS/USFS smokejumpers, he had earned his BA from Pacific and his MA from Iowa. After release from CPS and two years teaching at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, he returned to Iowa for his doctorate. He joined the faculty at Florida State University in 1949 and retired as Professor Emeritus in 1994. Gregg currently lives in Tallahassee, Florida.



Sounding Off from the Editor



Smokejumper Magazine—How Did It/Does It Happen?



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

I'VE ALWAYS FELT that the newsletter, *The Static Line*, and then the *Smokejumper* magazine have been the lifeline of the NSA. How else can we tie together 1800 smokejumpers who live all over the U.S. and a few foreign countries? A reunion every five years will not keep a viable membership base.

My first issue as editor was the October 1999 issue.

When I volunteered for this job, I had no background in journalism or editing, having been a P.E. teacher and Cross Country/Track and Field coach for 36 years. Since 1999, each issue has been a learning experience. I would like to tell you readers how the magazine evolved and what goes into the production of each issue.

The first move was to change the name from *The Static Line* to *Smokejumper* magazine. The former is the name of some military publications, and I thought *Smokejumper* was pretty specific to our organization. Changing it from a newsletter to a magazine was important. We added a cover page with a full picture, a table of contents and letters to the editor.

Finding someone to do the momentous task of layout was the next problem. My first issue was done working long range with a person 700 miles away. This layout process is a hands-on job, so it needed to be moved locally so that the layout person and I could sit down at all stages of the process. After making a long list from the Yellow Pages and getting a lengthy number of bids, I found myself on the phone with Larry



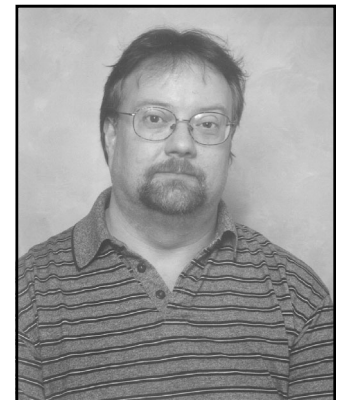
Larry S. Jackson

Jackson of Heidelberg Graphics. Yes, he did magazine and book layouts, but then he asked, "Do you need help with printing and mailing?" That was the clincher. Those items were next on my list. Now I could take care of all three. He knew the ropes with the dreaded U.S. Postal Service Bulk Mail department. Larry's layout and photo reproductions are great! We run 20-25 photos per issue. The magazine is printed, not copied, and I'm very pleased with the result. What a break to be working with Larry at Heidelberg.

Wendy Nichols, one of my runners from past track teams, was an editor for *Videomaker Magazine*, one of the largest in that field and printed locally. She was instrumental in giving me advice in standardizing the different parts of the magazine. I divided the magazine into three areas: Features, Quarterly Items and Other Items. Each needed to have a standard format that would not change from issue to issue.

I added the editorial column "Sounding Off" and "Checking The Canopy" (encouraged by **Tom Decker** IDC-64 and **Stan Tate** MYC-53) and changed the obits to "Off The List." Success brought a large number of letters across my desk, and I felt that communication from the members needed to be passed on and "Odds and Ends" resulted. Digging into the past and printing historical information was the basis for "Items from the Fire Pack." "Blast from the Past" takes care of the old newspaper items that are sent my way.

Mark Corbet (LGD-74) came up with the idea of recording specific bits of history and "Milestones" was born. Early on, I came into contact with **Chris Sorensen** (Associate), who was on top of all wildfire related news in the U.S. If it happened, Chris had it within minutes. Even though we are not a publication that covers breaking news, I felt we



Chris Sorensen

needed to cover the legislative and other happenings in the Wildland fire field. "The View from Outside the Fence" was first published in the April 2002 issue and has been a quarterly since.

"Touching All Bases" is a quarterly report from each of the nine smokejumper bases. My workload was getting so overwhelming that I had to drop that column. **Mike McMillan** (FBX-96) came to the rescue and now is in charge of the job of squeezing that info out of the bases and meeting deadlines.

I hope you notice that all of the quarterly columns are headed with artwork. Thanks goes out to **Ken Morris** (Associate), **Dan Veenendaal** (Associate), **Eric Rajala** (MSO-82) and **Chris DeMarest** (Associate) for their work.

Cartoons have come from **John D'Anna**, **Nick Holmes** (RDD-79) and **Al Boucher** (CJ-49) on a regular basis. Author **Steve McDonald** (Associate) has been kind enough to allow the printing of his poems. **Jerry Dixon** (MYC-71) has taken us to every wilderness and mountaintop in the country.

Editing has been an enormous challenge. Magazine related mail, email and phone calls make up about 40 contacts a week. Each must be handled immediately or it will be lost or the backlog will become overwhelming. At any given time, there are about 80 active articles on the board. My goal is to get them edited and into an issue ASAP and move on to the next. Just like building a fireline - contain and get to the next problem. Feature articles are currently backlogged and going into issues about at least a year down the line. Keep 'em coming anyway.

I couldn't make it without people to help type and edit articles. Over this six-year period, the "staff" has boiled down to the following people whom I would like to introduce to you:

Jill Leger is another one of my ex-track runners (400/800/Relay) from my 1980s teams. She is currently on staff at National Geographic Television and Film, where she works on documentaries airing on NBC, MSNBC, PBS and the National Geographic Channel. After graduating from UCLA with a degree in journalism, she worked on the copy desk at *Investor's Business Daily* in Los Angeles. A stint at *PC Magazine* in New York City followed, during which she earned a Master's degree in journalism from New York



Jill Leger

University. She moved to Washington, DC, in 1997 to work for C-SPAN, where as an associate producer, she was part of a 5-person team to win a 1999 Peabody Award, for a yearlong series on the American presidents. Jill's time is limited, but she is able to edit some of the longer and more difficult feature articles for each issue.

Denis Symes (MYC-63) is a Lead Program Analyst for the U.S. General Services Administration in Washington, DC. Previous Federal service included research and development of new technologies, navigation systems (including GPS), and command and control strategies (to control vehicle fleets). He has also held private sector positions as



Denis Symes

Director of Sales and Marketing for Volvo's Bus Division and Director of Project and Technology Development for the Washington METRO system. As a consultant, he managed projects involving business development for major corporations and security enhancements in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Denis came on board last year. I received a series of short stories from him that were so well done, I had to send him an email. Next thing, he's helping out with editing articles for the magazine. He has been a great help. Strangely enough, Denis and Jill both work in DC within a few blocks of each other.



Emmy Haynes

Emmy Haynes was also one of my runners and on the same teams as Jill Leger. After graduating from Chico High in

1987, Emmy fought fire on one of my crews while studying at Smith College in Massachusetts. She graduated with a BA in European Studies in 1991 and promptly joined the Mendocino Hotshots for a season. Emmy then got a Masters in Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh and a law degree from Ohio State University. She has worked for the Library of Congress, the Supreme Court of Ohio, has taught mediation at Ohio State University, and is currently home taking care of her one-year old daughter, Ellie. Emmy handles the longer articles that need to be typed and put into a document for the computer layout.



K. G. Sheley

For the large part of the magazine not covered by these three people, **K.G. Sheley**, my wife of 43 years, does the final readings and corrections. She graduated from Chico State University with a degree in elementary education and did graduate work to obtain a teaching credential. K.G. is retired from the Business Affairs/Accounting office at Chico State. I go over the articles four to five times and she still is able to find needed corrections. After raising our boys on various bases, she still is not able to get away from smoke-jumping.

Let me run down the normal timeline for the production of an issue:

1. *Ten weeks* ahead of the date on the magazine: Meet with Larry Jackson. I will give Larry the completed magazine on a disk with all articles edited and in a Word document. Each article is also included in a hardcopy folder about three inches thick with the pictures to match the article. A complete photo log is part of the package. This is key to matching photos to the articles, listing the correct names and giving the credits.
2. *Eight weeks*: Go over first draft, make corrections and meet with Larry again.
3. *Seven weeks*: Go over second draft, make corrections or skip to final blue line. Determine and place the

print order.

4. *Five weeks*: Pick up print order of approximately 1800 magazines. Insert and place 1800 magazines in mailing envelopes. This is usually handled by my wife and myself and is a 12-hour job. Call for **Larry Lufkin** (CJ-63) to electronically send the mailing labels.
5. *Four Weeks*: Prepare custom documents and hand mail to foreign members. Prepare magazines to hand mail to our members who move seasonally. Take the remaining 1750 magazines to Bulk mailing for delivery to membership.
6. Between that time and the next issue: Handle the returned magazines (20-30) by trying to find new addresses and remail. Make changes in the master database.

I feel the magazine is a success. Getting the raw material to print is basic to the product. No stories/news, nothing to print. Keep your articles coming my way. Without the material, there is nothing to build. Your submissions may have to be edited (in most cases this means shortening) but I have always printed everything that has been sent in. Each person has a story or remembrance to tell and that is history. Smokejumper magazine is the means to record that history.



The Story Behind the Picture

by Bill Little

Don Webb (MYC-56) loaned me a couple issues of *Smokejumper* magazine and I enjoyed reading them. Thought your readers might be interested in the following picture.

I took the picture of the Johnson Flying Service's Travelair at the Taylor Ranch on Big Creek (Payette Forest) in early May, 1956. Jess Taylor is on the right, Mrs. Taylor in the center and Bus Thorpe is on the left. Some of the old timers will remember Bus as he was a packer for the Payette Forest in the 50s and packed a lot of jumpers out of the back country. Big Creek Ranger, Bob Burkholder, is nearly out of sight behind Mrs. Taylor.

Taylor ranch acted as a collection point for jumpers brought in from fires in the back country. The men would usually overnight and be picked up by a Johnson plane. Taylor had an agreement with the Forest Service to provide jumpers with meals and a

place to bed down. The Taylors were well-liked and provided a valuable service in that remote country.

Bill Little retired from the U.S. For-

est Service in 1988 and is living in Kino Bay, Mexico, with his wife, Mary. He can be reached at: 4771 Camino Del Norte, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635. 🦋



(Courtesy Bill Little)

I Jump Into Hell

From the outside it looks like a rotten job. The hours are lousy, the pay's worse. But when we hit the silk to save a life or fight a fire we wouldn't trade places with anyone.

by Len Krout (Missoula '46)

As told by Starr Jenkins (Cave Junction '48)

Originally published in October, 1955 issue of "Cavalier" magazine, copyright 1955 by Fawcett Publications, Inc.

It was after four on a hot July afternoon and the Missoula smokejumpers were mighty busy; fires kept popping up throughout the region and men shuttled out in small groups to drop from the sky and fight them. I was working as dispatcher in the Forest Service parachute loft when the radio sputtered to life. It brought bad news about one of our men. A likeable young college kid, **Harold "Hal" McElroy** (MSO-51), had shattered his thigh and lay on a brushy slope in the Lolo National Forest's Powell District. This was right up the hill that Lewis and Clark passed 146 years earlier. Late that afternoon, Hal and four other men jumped into a half-acre fire; he landed in a big cedar tree that shed him and his parachute like rain off a metal roof.

"It's **Dick Carpenter's** (MSO-49) crew," said the boss, "... the Ford load that took off at three. Krout, You're squadleader on this one. Rustle that rescue gear into the other Ford. You want to spot this one, Jim?" **Jim Waite** (MSO-40), veteran parachute technician and one of the pioneers of aerial fire fighting, nodded and went out to find his spotter's kit.

The top seven men on the jump list—**Richard Pennington** (MSO-48), **Wallace "Red" Campbell** (MSO-51), **William Brennan** (MSO-50), **Lewis Thoman** (MSO-50), **Martin Onishuk** (MSO-51), **Lee Brown** (MSO-50), and **Richard Whitney** (MSO-51)—were called in from their brush piling detail. At least some were experienced.

Studying a map of the Lolo Forest, I saw that Wendover Ridge Lookout was the closest landmark. The jump spot was in section 14, about six miles from Powell Ranger Station, in the area the Forest Service was punching the Lewis and Clark highway through the biggest wilderness left in America.

"We'll have the ambulance on that road when you get there," the boss said.

"Okay," I replied as I dragged my big sack of jump gear off the rack.

The carefully laid-out routine, prepared for months and perfected through years, was now in action. The men rolled in and helped trundle the gear into the boxcar maw of the gawky old Tri-Motor. The Stokes stretcher had the first aid kit and arctic sleeping bags wrapped up inside it with a pair of canvas-covered 28-foot cargo chutes attached. The Stokes stretcher was made of light, strong tubing with a wire-mesh basket fitting the shape of a man. The divided-leg part of the basket acted as a leg splint. "Okay, you guys! Get your jump gear aboard. We can suit up in the plane," I said. "Move out!"

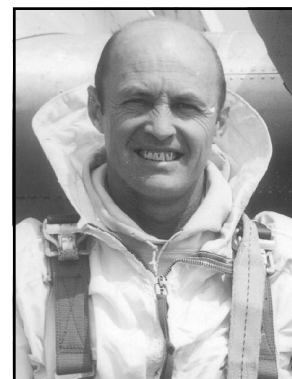
The Tri-Motor's skin was corrugated aluminum, giving her the look of a tin roof. Her control cables ran outside the fuselage, trembling in the breeze. Nothing so blasé as a cowling covered the knobby cylinder heads of her engines. When it rained, the cabin leaked. Twenty-three years old, she was square and slow and noisy, and had to be started with a crank. But, she had an unbelievably fat wing, which helped her lift out of deep canyons.

Bob Johnson, the mountain-flying pioneer and main Forest Service aerial contractor in Region One, owned her.

At 5:40 PM we were airborne heading southwest toward the Powell District. Looking out the Ford's square windows, we watched the bristly green peaks of the Bitterroot Range pass under us. The new men might have been sweating this one out a little. As for the experienced men, this was what we had come for. This was why we suffered the dullness of labor projects between fires, endless Forest Service paper work, meager pay and, summer job insecurity with little future. We did this to be here, roaring over the peaks under a vast squadron of sunny cumulus, toward a jump. We were tense and alert, and we felt absolutely wonderful!

As the sun sank to the west, the valleys were filled with night. We strained our eyes probing the shadowy depths to find the dangers. There wasn't a good jump spot around. The timber was tall cedar, virgin wilderness that had never been logged or burned. If McElroy could get hurt on one of those slippery green treetops, so could we. But hell, poor Mac had been down there with his leg in pieces for three hours, so we figured we might as well get on with it.

The earlier load's chutes were limp gray ghosts in the timber below. Jim Waite, wearing his goggles and emergency flat-pack, jammed his head into the slipstream and examined the rugged terrain. He picked a slightly different spot than had been chosen for the first load, threw out his drift chute, and watched the tiny white bubble until it disappeared in the trees, 1,000 feet below. Calculating the drift, he yelled over the droning motors for us to hook up. We were going out two at a pass, so Onishuk and I snapped our static lines onto the overhead cable. We waited as Jim checked a dozen details of our rig one more time. At last we were ready to go.



Len Krout (NSA file)

On Jim's signal, the pilot cut the motors. I felt the slap on the shoulder that meant "Shove off!" as the old Ford slowed to a sluggish sixty mph. I was out and away.

The sky was almost silent as the plane droned-on in a wide circle. Ordinary tree landings didn't scare us. Usually, live springy tree limbs are the gentlest way to bring a chute to a stop. We were very aware that, like McElroy, we might not hang up securely in those big cedars, but just tip the air out of our canopies and slam to the ground fifty or 100-foot below. This is the most dangerous thing in smokejumping, not, as the man on the street would believe, having a chute not open. You wear two chutes and have plenty of time to crack the second. You shouldn't land in the fire and burn, since you can steer your chute to a safe spot. Your jump suit and helmet protect you so the live-tree branches won't stab you. However, hard, sharp dead limbs can pierce the suit. No, the worst danger is spilling your air in a treetop and whistling on through. Usually your chute hangs up good and solid and brings you bouncing to a stop, but if you don't tree-up solid, injury can occur. In certain types of timber or on a bad day, slip-ups can occur. And this was one of those days.

We sailed into the trees one by one and nobody hung up. I slipped through a gap in the timber and watched the branches go by, then crumpled safely onto the ground. Dick Pennington crashed down through the branches to a safe ground landing; but his jumping mate, Lew Thoman, didn't. Lew caromed through thirty or forty feet of branches, hit a log on landing, and twisted his ankle badly. Dick and I ran over and removed Lew's boot. The ankle was big, blue, and puffing up fast.

On the last stick, Campbell, the tall redhead, also had bad luck. He peeled out of a big cedar, spilled the air out of his canopy, and hurtled eighty feet to the ground. Branches partially broke his fall, but when he hit the slick needles on the steep slope, he started a tremendous skidding slide that ended against a clump of brush. It would have been laughable except that he'd broken his wrist. Ironically, we had jumped in to rescue one casualty and had two ourselves.

By 6:15 PM the light was evaporating fast. The Ford zoomed down to treetop level and Waite kicked out the cargo. Some of it thumped down around us, but the big stretcher package, with rations, canteens, and plasma units inside, hung-up fifty feet from the ground in one of the thickest trees on the hill.

I signaled the plane with news of our casualties. It didn't look bad enough to warrant *another* rescue crew, thank Heaven, so I signaled for a pair of climbing irons. The Ford dove again and the climbing spurs whistled into the hill. I then dispatched three guys to get the stretcher down. Wrestling 160 pounds of dead weight, tangled with two chutes, out of a tall shaggy-barked cedar is not a job for an inexperienced climber. These men were woods-experienced—smokejumpers carefully trained for their curious set of specialties. I gave Campbell first aid, dressed the cuts and splinted his wrist. Except for his wrist, he was in fine shape, especially considering the height of his fall. He was anxious to help as much as he could.

Thoman was a different story. The ankle didn't seem to be broken, but he obviously couldn't walk. He was quite cheerful and did not object to being left in a temporary camp with

water, rations, and bedroll. We would come back later and get him. The others returned with the stretcher as the sky had faded to twilight. We passed out our canteens and flashlights. All our gear was rounded up, and we headed down through the tangled woods toward where McElroy lay.

Carpenter met us part way and led us through the trees. **William Tucker** (MSO-50), another jumper of the original crew, was tending McElroy, who was in pretty bad shape. His right femur was smashed just below his hip joint. Though it was a simple fracture, he was in considerable pain. He was still conscious and shock and nausea were taking their toll. I gave him a shot of Demerol to deaden the pain, and one of the guys cut a straight tree limb to use as a splint. We bound him up and bundled him onto the stretcher, zipping the sleeping bag up around him. Just as we started the long struggle out of the forest, three men from the Powell Ranger Station appeared out of the gloom.

That was a break! We could now fully man the stretcher. One of the men was Bud Moore, long time ranger of the Powell District. He knew this wild country like his own front porch. They had been shrewd enough to bring extra Pulaskis, which saved us from stripping the fire crew of two or three to support our one cruiser's ax in its colossal job of clearing trail through the jungle of brush. A moment later, C. K. "Hy" Lyman, the Lolo Forest Supervisor, showed up. He just happened to be out prowling this neck of the Bitterroots when the first jumpers spilled out of the sky.

Why does it take an eight-man squad to carry one patient on a stretcher? Well, take a friend and try carrying a loaded stretcher for even a few hundred yards. Two hundred pounds or so resting on four sets of knuckles quickly becomes a staggering load. To make it easier to transport an injured man, Region One made several modifications to the Navy Stokes stretcher. One is a fat squishy airplane tire that fits under the stretcher to take the weight on open trails making the rig into an elongated wheelbarrow. The tire, at eight pounds pressure, is mounted under the middle and cushions the bumps before transmitting them to the patient. Another help is a simple harness that slips under the stretcher poles so a man can bear the load with his shoulders instead of his hands. The poles themselves are an improvement over other stretchers in that they are hollow with telescoping extensions. This makes a compact load for dropping and yet pulls out to give plenty of gripping space for the long haul and the rough places.

Bud Moore and Pennington scouted ahead for the best trail through that jungle, while Hy Lyman searched for any passable route over the ridge top. The rest of us hoisted McElroy's stretcher for the long ride home. Everybody had a place on the stretcher except Red Campbell, whose broken wrist only let him carry our sack of rations. By now, it was 8:30 PM and pitch black. had already rigged my flashlight on its headband and switched it on.

Our brand of air-assault stretcher run is the fastest way to get a hurt man out of roadless country to a hospital when a helicopter is not available. The record for a ground rescue was set by **Bill Wood** (MSO-43) and his crew across the Bitterroot mountains—sixteen miles at four and a half miles an hour, the last eight of which were over unmaintained trail. We weren't

setting any records that night in the Powell District; it was going to take all night to pack poor McElroy just *three miles!*

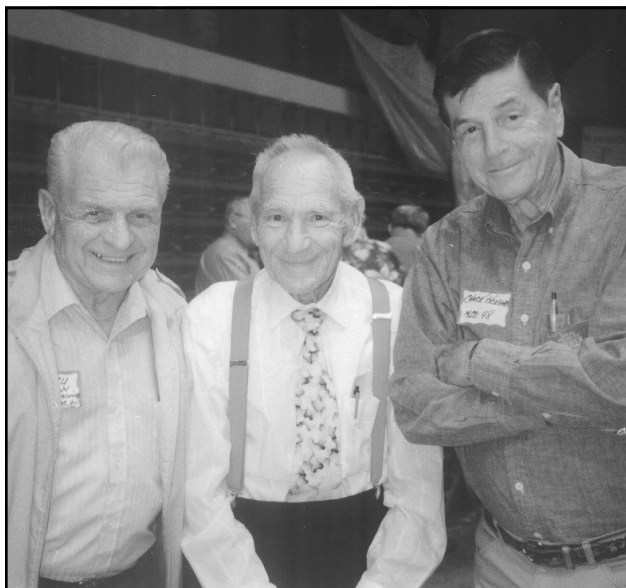
Somewhere around 10:30 PM, we had to stop to loosen Campbell's bandages and tighten the stretcher's axle bolts. The men rested for the few minutes, and then we were off again, hustling for speed in this maddening country.

Mac was pretty sick for most of the night, and at about 2 AM we stopped so I could squirt another tiny tube of Demerol into his arm. At last we angled up out of the creek bed to cross a spur-ridge that led to the highway. To the east, the sky was getting gray. It was 4:10 AM, and the ambulance was waiting, gleaming in the faint light of dawn. We were also met by a ground party from Powell, with a couple of trucks, hot coffee and sandwiches. We rested there for a short time, and then got into the trucks for a four-mile ride to Powell Ranger Station and beds for a weary crew.

My job wasn't quite over though. I had to go back and help Carpenter's men mop up the half-acre burn they had tied down the day before.

After shedding his jump suit the previous afternoon, Dick Carpenter sent **Fred Prussing** (MSO-49) and **Dan Flohr** (MSO-51) down to the fire to scout it and start work, while he stayed to help McElroy. This wasn't a Salmon River fire, like the one Pennington jumped in '48; then seventy-five jumpers poured out of the sky on it. This wasn't like the terrible 1949 Mann Gulch Fire either that killed a dozen jumpers when it exploded through flash fuel on a steep slope near Helena, Montana. It was just one of the thousands of little fires the Forest Service extinguishes every year before they make headlines.

Remember though, every fire that makes headlines, whether lightning or man caused, was once no bigger than this quietly crackling half-acre, a fire that could be controlled by a few smokejumpers with shovels and hard work. Prussing and Flohr fought his one by the simplest, oldest method known. Despite experiments with pumps, dry ice, chemicals, and water bombs,



L-R: Jerry Linton (MSO-48), Jake Dougherty (MSO-48), Chuck Pickard (MSO-48) at Reunion 2004. (Courtesy Jerry Linton)



L-R: Jerry Dixon (MYC-71) and Bob Sallee (MSO-49) at Reunion 2004. (Courtesy Jerry Dixon)

the best way to fight fire in the high country is to "Separate the fuel from the fire." Water is rarely available on a mountainside, so you cannot fight fire like a city fireman. You just try to isolate the fire from the rest of the forest (with a fireline around it), spread out the hot coals to cool, pray that the wind doesn't play havoc with your plans and, let the fire burn itself out.

The two basic tools are the shovel and the Pulaski. The Pulaski is a tool with an ax on one side and a hoe on the other. It's named for an old-time Idaho ranger who saved the lives of his crew by forcing them at gunpoint into a mineshaft during the unbelievable 2,000 square-mile holocaust of 1910. He kept them there while the fire roared over them.

After Carpenter and his buddies had tumbled out of the first flight, the spotter, **Wallace Dobbins** (MSO-47), sent the four firepacks down under cargo chutes. These compact bundles, parachuted in pairs with the tool handles poking out the tops, also contained flashlights, bedrolls, canteens and two days' food supply per man.

They started work building fireline. One man used a Pulaski to chop a trail through the brush and cut small trees along the edge of the fire. He cleared the big-tree limbs as high as he could reach with the Pulaski's ax-blade and occasionally used the hoe end to scrape a shallow trench in the earth below. The other man used a shovel to clear all burnable material down to mineral earth. Where the trench went along the downhill side of the fire, it had to be deeper and banked to catch any flaming debris rolling down from the fire.

You'd be surprised how a small trench will stop a fire. A shovel width is enough in most cases, if it's down to good mineral earth with no uncut roots or flammable duff left in the trench. Strangely enough, forest fires rarely burn up in the trees, which is why big trees often live. The majority of fires, if not pushed by a brisk wind, burn on the ground and not high in the trees. That's why the small hand-dug line usually works. If a strong wind comes up though, five dozer-widths

of trench, or a canyon a mile wide for that matter, may not be enough to stop her.

Carpenter checked on our progress several times, and he and Tucker did their share of the back work too, when not tending McElroy. As the men grubbed the line around the fire, they paused whenever necessary to smother the hotter-than-usual spots with shovel-fulls of dirt and keep the fire on the ground and out of the trees. When the line was completed, they moved into the still-crackling burn, rolling the logs' burning side up and gouging the fire out of them with the Pulaskis. They scattered the hot spots to cool and mixed the flaming embers with dirt to make an effective fire extinguisher. When the whole half-acre was reduced to a smoking black scar on the land, they sat down near their newly made line to keep an eye on their now-captive enemy and eat supper.

McElroy healed in due time. Thoman's ankle was, as we suspected, just a bad sprain. Campbell wasn't as lucky though; his wrist never did heal perfectly, he only regained 20% of the full use of his wrist. He became the first permanent disability (there have been only two as of 1951) in the history of the Missoula jumpers.

McElroy was a typical smokejumper rescue, in direct line of duty on our Forest Service job. We've pulled other people out of the woods also, hunters, trappers, homesteaders, flyers, and at all times of the year, which in Montana means snow.

We appreciate any chance to help these people, especially since we're already trained and equipped.

This does bring up the one gripe I have about our air rescue work. There is no budget for financing our work, including replacement of expended gear. Our wages are usually small. Most of the time we work for nothing, since nine out of ten rescues seem to fall on weekends; the FS won't pay us except for our regular workweek. There's no overtime paid except for bringing out regular FS personnel. In fact, sometimes we work our backs off without so much as a thank you. And worst of all, if the injured party can't guarantee repayment of the rescue expenses before we take off, the Forest Service has to turn them down and there's no rescue at all! Bob Johnson often contributes his helicopter or planes, which at \$75 to \$190 an hour is costly.

That's what hurts. I know if I were lying on some remote frozen ridge in Montana or Idaho with a shattered leg, I'd sure as hell want someone to come after me, whether I could pay their costs or not. I think some of the sportsmen's groups or the States should get together to foot the bill on emergency cases like these, even if the Federal government won't. A penny or two added to the hunting licenses would at least keep us in Demerol and jump rations, and make us available when needed, even if we still might not get paid. 🦋

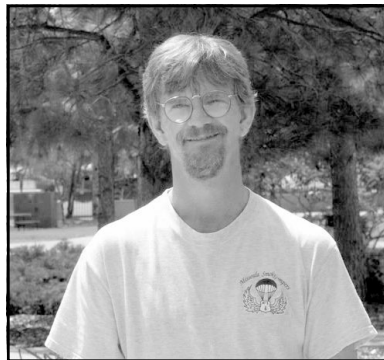
'One Big, Huge Class': Ceremony Marked By Camaraderie, Respect for Past

by Jill Léger (Associate Editor)

The folks at the newly renamed Missoula Fire, Science and Technology Center are probably still recovering from the excitement of last June's reunion.

But they can congratulate themselves on a job well done. Forest Service spokesman **Tim Eldridge** (MSO-82) estimated that more than a thousand people turned out for the center's June 19 rededication ceremony, one of the reunion's central events. Thanks to months of preparation, said Eldridge, he and his team pulled off the ceremony with nary a hitch.

"I saw people having a wonderful time. I actually had a wonderful time, even though I was practically brain-dead, I was so tired," Eldridge said. "I enjoyed every minute of it. There were no glitches, really. It all came out perfectly. I mean, everything worked.



Tim Eldridge (Courtesy Jill Léger)

Nobody fainted or hit their head on the tarmac. The main thing is that people seemed to be having a really good time."

The event featured remarks from Forest Service head Dale Bosworth, BLM Fire and Aviation director Larry Hamilton and representatives from the offices of Montana senators Max

Baucus and Conrad Burns.

Afterwards, attendees watched practice jumps taking place in the hills north of the center and toured different parts of the facility itself, which includes offices of the National Weather Service and the Missoula Technology and Development Center.

Eldridge, who not incidentally helped kick off the event by singing the national anthem, said he particularly enjoyed the chance to see old friends.

"It was just like old home week, old folks week, whatever you call it," he said. "All of sudden, you start meeting all these people you haven't seen for years!"

Eldridge said he felt a bond with all the jumpers who attended the ceremony—not only with those he trained with.

"Even if they jumped in the '40s,

you still feel that bond. It's still there," he said. "You know what they went through. They know what you went through. Nobody else has had that feeling."

Eldridge said the ceremony was a chance to emphasize the importance of the past and the lessons it can impart. In this spirit, he said, the event included a presentation by Mann Gulch survivor **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49), who rededicated the DC-3 used in the Mann Gulch Fire.

"Everybody out here pretty much looks back on the past with great fondness," said Eldridge. "The history is something that should be cherished."

If the present cherishes the past, at reunion weekend in Missoula, the past seemed to cherish the present as well.

Rookie **Chris Loraas** (MSO-04) said he was at first a little intimidated by the numbers: some 1,000 thousand members registered for the reunion, versus just 23 rookies in the class of 2004. But he said his nerves were calmed immediately.

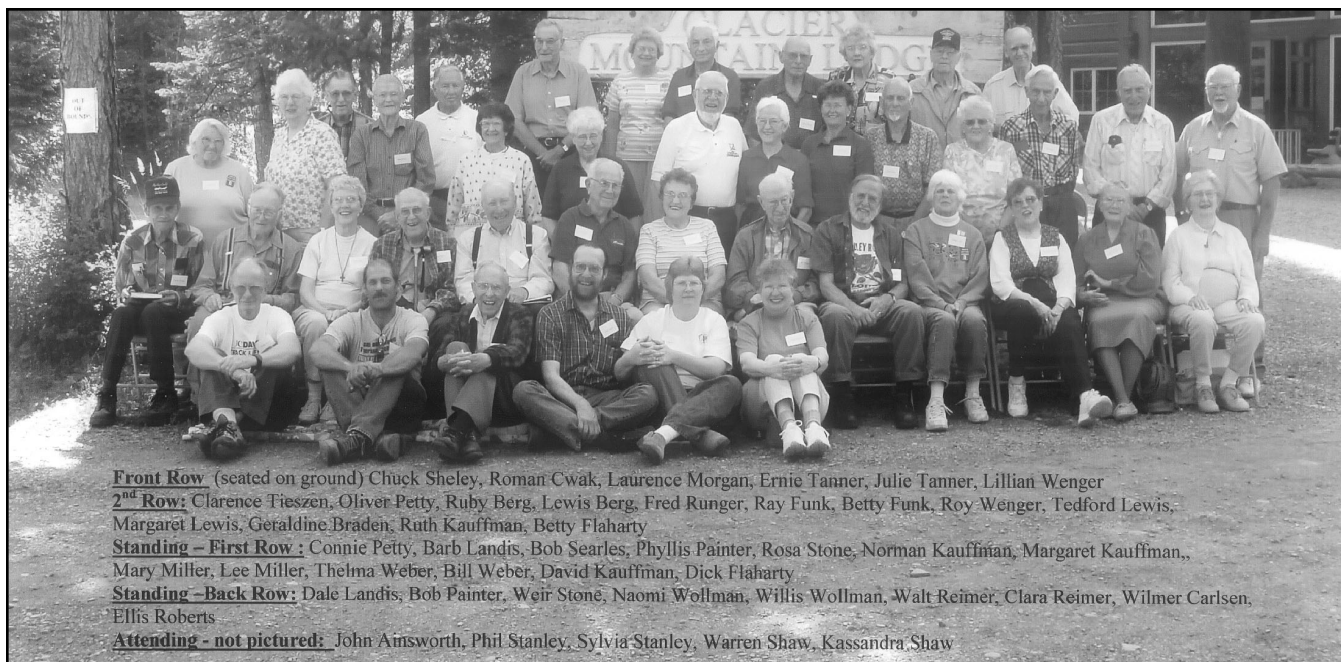
"One of the first individuals I met noticed my nametag that said 'rookie,'" Loraas said. "He was super-excited about it. He showed me his nametag. He rookied in 1942. I was like, 'Oh, my word.' He was genuinely excited for us. That seemed to be the theme. A lot of the individuals were from the '40s classes. They were super-psyched about the rookie class. They were really excited when we showed up. That was really awesome."

The facility's original dedication

ceremony took place on September 22, 1954. President Dwight Eisenhower traveled to Missoula to participate—and was even made an honorary smokejumper. Some 30,000 people showed up for the event.

No doubt jumpers back then shared the strong sense of community that continues to this day.

"Some of these guys have jumped a year; some of these guys have jumped 25 or 30 years. It doesn't matter," said Eldridge. "You're all part of one, big huge class. You've learned a lot of the same values, the work ethic. You love these people and want to be around them. And it's good every now and then to have this opportunity. Then it's like you were never apart for very long at all. It's heartwarming." 🦋



Front Row (seated on ground) Chuck Sheley, Roman Cwak, Laurence Morgan, Ernie Tanner, Julie Tanner, Lillian Wenger
2nd Row: Clarence Tieszen, Oliver Petty, Ruby Berg, Lewis Berg, Fred Runger, Ray Funk, Betty Funk, Roy Wenger, Tedford Lewis, Margaret Lewis, Geraldine Braden, Ruth Kauffman, Betty Flaharty
Standing – First Row : Connie Petty, Barb Landis, Bob Searles, Phyllis Painter, Rosa Stone, Norman Kauffman, Margaret Kauffman, Mary Miller, Lee Miller, Thelma Weber, Bill Weber, David Kauffman, Dick Flaharty
Standing – Back Row: Dale Landis, Bob Painter, Weir Stone, Naomi Wollman, Willis Wollman, Walt Reimer, Clara Reimer, Wilmer Carlsen, Ellis Roberts
Attending - not pictured: John Ainsworth, Phil Stanley, Sylvia Stanley, Warren Shaw, Cassandra Shaw

CPS-103 Holds Reunion at Hungry Horse

by Lillian Wenger

July 12-16, 2004, the Civilian Public Service (CPS) smokejumpers of Camp 103 held what possibly may have been their last reunion at the Glacier Mountain Bible Camp in Hungry Horse, Montana. They started their first of many reunions in 1973. The 1943 group did their training at Camp Paxson, Seeley Lake, Montana. Later the camp was moved to Camp Manard at Ninemile just outside Missoula. The men were applicants from all three peace church camps and various other faiths and seculars.

Special recognition was given **Roy Wenger**, the first CPS director. Roy coordinated efforts between the peace churches, the Forest Service, and the Selective Service in setting up this camp. **Phil Stanley** (MSO-43) had written R-1 Fire Control and the National Service Board for Religious Objectors suggesting that they use CO's as smokejumpers. Due to WWII there was a shortage of qualified men for this

job. Starting with 60 smokejumpers in 1943, the program had over 220 jumpers during the 1945 season. Questioned about this camp, Roy said, "With men from all three peace churches and other denominations in one camp, it was thought this would be a difficult camp to direct; however, these men were all independent thinkers and wished to succeed. It was one of the easiest camps to direct."

Ed Ward (MSO-80) presented the men with "Certificates of Appreciation" for their work and **Tedford Lewis** (MSO-43) was recognized for his work in coordinating the last few reunions.

A quote from the reunion program: "Work for peace-pray for peace. Vote at every opportunity. Speak truth to power. And remember the Bard's admonishment: 'To thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.'" 🦋

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

IT WAS A PLEASURE TO meet many of you at the reunion in Missoula. Jerry Dixon stopped by the NSA merchandise table on Friday night. He had just returned from a fifty miler in the Bob Marshal (see *Smokejumper* October 2004) and was headed into the Bitterroot on the Monday after the reunion to search for a missing memorial to Wag Dodge. Jerry stated that Wag Dodge's ashes were spread at his favorite lake in the Bitterroot and that Johnson Flying Service had built a memorial out of aircraft parts welded together which was left at the site. Another party attempted to find the memorial several years ago without success.

The Missoula reunion was also the first time that many of the volunteer staff of *Smokejumper* magazine, including Chuck and his lovely wife, K.G., Copy Editors Dennis Symes (MYC-63) and Jill Leger and myself, have been together in the same room since Chuck took the helm from Jack Demmons over five years ago.

2004 was the 40th anniversary of the passing of the Wilderness Act. Stephanie Ambrose Tubbs, daughter of the late author and historian Stephen Ambrose, lives in Helena,

Montana, and is proposing that the Gates of the Mountains be declared a wilderness area. The leadership of this association needs to weigh in on this issue and decide where we as an association stand on this issue. Wilderness designation has the potential to negatively affect Mann Gulch.

I have not heard much from the field regarding the lack of heavy air tankers during the 2004 season. With the exception of the Southwest and Alaska, it was a below average season. Gratefully, there were no fatalities in 2004 due to lack of air support. There is a rumor going around that there will be about seven heavy tankers available for the 2005 season. I toured the Neptune facility in Missoula during the reunion and was very impressed with their operation and the aircraft. As I stated previously in this column, Neptune's contribution to the Missoula economy is 13 million dollars annually.

Last fall, a private wildland fire contractor based in Bozeman, Montana, actually had the gall to advocate in state newspapers that the Federal Government should compensate wildland fire contractors just as farmers are when there is a slow fire season like 2004. I could hear the laughing from Greybull to Chico and points in between when that came out. Many people have gone into business for themselves and purchased engines, tenders, bulldozers, portable kitchens, shower trailers and other equipment in hopes of gaining government contracts. They fail to realize that forest fires are cyclical and now they want a handout. If anyone deserves compensation, it is the air tanker contractors.

The air tanker fiasco reminds me of a timely quote by Bob Johnson in Steve Smith's classic, *Fly the Biggest*

Piece Back, on page 232, "Our outfit had been put together for the Forest Service to fit Forest Service jobs. Gradually, though, they got people in there who didn't think we knew what we were talking about, for instance when they phased out the Tri-motors. In my estimation, phasing out the Tri-motors was the wrong thing to do. It's true the Fords were slow, but in reasonably short flights, they did a bang-up job that nothing else could do... But the Forest Service wanted faster and more modern airplanes." Sound familiar? As much as things change, they remain the same.

The Public Safety Officer Benefit for Pilots is languishing in both the Senate and House. I would encourage all of you who care about this issue to once again contact your Senators and Representatives by phone or e-mail. Due to security issues, there are long delays in sending mail to Congress.

This column is dedicated to NSA Associate member Stephen McDonald, author of *Baker 30* and *Bitterroot*, who passed away in September 2004. 🙏

Please Tell Us When You Change Address

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

Smokejumpers to the Ravens

by Gene Hamner (Missoula '67)

Part One

“As the war dragged on, so the myth grew. Apparently, there was another war even nastier than the one in Vietnam. The men who chose to fight in it were handpicked volunteers, and anyone accepted for a tour seemed to disappear as if from the face of the earth.

“The pilots were military men, but flew into battle in civilian clothes. They fought with obsolete propeller aircraft and suffered the highest casualty rate of the Indochinese War—as high as 50 percent. Their job was to fly as the winged artillery of an army of Stone Age mercenaries in the pay of the CIA (Hmong), and they operated out of a secret city hidden in the mountains on the Red Chinese border. The pilots spoke of colleagues who had vanished into the highly classified operation codenamed the ‘Steve Canyon Program.’

“Insiders who worked with them knew these pilots as the Ravens. The legend has become hazy, a half-remembered war story known only to a few veterans of Vietnam. ‘The Steve Canyon Program? The Ravens—a weird bunch of guys who lived and fought out there in the jungle in the Other Theater somewhere. Hell, what was the name of the country?’”

– Excerpted from *The Ravens: The Men Who Flew in America’s Secret War in Laos*, by Christopher Robbins.

It was December 1969, and both the war in Vietnam and the antiwar effort in the United States were in full swing. It certainly wasn’t a great time to be in the military. Cries of “baby-killer!” and other terms, not to mention one-finger salutes, greeted just about anyone in uniform on the streets of American cities.

What was I doing at this time? I was enrolled in an Air Force pilot-training program, having volunteered for an assignment to Vietnam. December was when we put in our “dream sheets”—that is, when we requested assignments, including base and aircraft. We still had three months to go before graduation, but graduation was within our sights.

Asking for an assignment to Vietnam was crazy enough, but asking for a frontline flying assignment was just plain nuts, especially when there were relatively safe “trash-hauling” (cargo aircraft) assignments available, as well as super-safe instructor-pilot slots. But that wasn’t in my blood. In any case, no matter what assignment one chose, sooner or later Vietnam was going to be any pilot’s future. I wasn’t married and figured it would be better to go now rather than later. The three months passed more quickly than I expected, and one day in March 1970, we assembled in the gym and were told that the assignments had been sent down.

Apprehension was thick in the air. As our names were called and the aircraft and base assignments given, shouts of

joy and moans of disgust were heard. My assignment was an O-2 Skymaster to Vietnam. It wasn’t a fighter, but it was one of my choices, so I couldn’t complain. Orders to report to Cam Rahn Bay came down, along with additional orders to report first to Fairchild Air Force Base (AFB) near Spokane, Washington, for mountain-survival school, then to Eglin AFB in Florida for O-2 upgrade training. Following that, I would fly to Clark AFB in the Philippines for jungle-survival training.

After six summers with the U.S. Forest Service, including two summers of smokejumping, I was more than ready for any survival training the Air Force could give me. Many times on the fire line I had asked some of the ex-Special Forces and ex-Force recon guys about their survival training, and as a result, I was familiar with many edible forest delicacies.

As it happened, I aced my preliminary training. In the Philippines, I made my instructor teach me all that he could—what was edible and what to avoid. I ate whatever the guide gave me to eat. Most was not bad; I just had to get past any food prejudices. I wanted to put everything I could in my favor to survive. That included running barefoot a couple miles each day. I learned that the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) stripped captured soldiers of their boots, knowing that U.S. soldiers typically have tender feet and would therefore be more easily captured.

In August 1970, the DC-8 landed in Cam Rahn Bay, and I stepped out to take my first look at the country I thought was going to be my home for the next 53 weeks. I now know that I experienced what all those before me had experienced in those first few seconds: apprehension, fear, anxiety, and exhilaration. I think everybody at that moment believes they have titanium skin, and knows that whatever bad happens will happen to someone else.

The week of orientation passed quickly, with lectures about the war in South Vietnam, the country, and its people. Toward the end of the week, we were given a slide presentation about the various bases and told what to expect at each. High on the list of the most hazardous assignments was an assignment to the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron (23rd TASS) at Nakhon Phanom (NKP), Thailand. You virtually had no choice from this base but to direct your craft either east to the heavily defended Ho Chi Minh Trail (HCMT) or north to the beginning of the HCMT and a place up there called the “PDJ” (which stands for “Plaines des Jars”). All those places were defended with who-knows-how-many antiaircraft (AAA) guns. The most common guns along the trail were the quad-barrel 23-mm and the 37-mm AAA guns. An equally dangerous assignment was an assignment to Danang or Pleiku, where activity focused in



Laotian pilots with Gene. (Courtesy Gene Hammer)

the southern part of Laos. Least hazardous among the assignments were those close to the coast or down in the Mekong Delta.

“If You’re Going To Go To War, Go Fight It”

There were a few of us who asked for NKP first and Danang second. I always say if you’re going to go to war, go to fight it. After all the assignments were given out, a major came into the room and said there was one last thing to be included in our briefing. He mentioned there was an assignment to a classified location that took only the most motivated, most talented of the forward air controllers (FACs). The unclassified name was the “Steve Canyon Program.” In order to qualify for this assignment, we had to meet certain requirements. We each needed a specified number of hours of actual FAC flying time in the next six months, as well as recommendations from everyone in our chain of command. Also, the applicant had to pass muster on each of several interviews. Not much else was said, and not many people even gave it a second thought. I was caught hook, line, and sinker.

Once again I volunteered for an exceptionally dangerous assignment, and for whatever reason, I was given the assignment to NKP over several of the other pilots. I was driven to my room to gather my belongings and taken to Base Ops, where I was put on the next airplane to Bangkok. Six hours later, I was sitting on a barstool down in the Patpong district of Bangkok. *This* was my idea of fighting a war. From there it was on to NKP.

NKP was both a Special Operations base and home to many very secret projects, such as the “Igloo White” program, which monitored movement along the HCMT. We arrived and got a ride to the 23rd TASS headquarters and signed in. Our call signs began with the word “Nail,” and we were each given a number to complete the call sign. Mine was “Nail 68.”

On September 6, 1971, I experienced the first of the 565 combat missions I would eventually fly. It lasted nearly an hour, before engine problems brought us home. That mission represented a fraction of the 1,396 combat hours that I would log over the next two years. Twenty-five days later, I had my combat checkout, and I was fully qualified.

Let me make it clear that nighttime FACing is no picnic. It’s nice that the enemy can’t see the aircraft and has to shoot at you by sound, but that didn’t always make it hard for the gunners to be accurate. Like us, they got better as the dry season progressed. Sometimes the fighters as they checked in at night asked us to go “bright-flash.” That is, they wanted us to turn on all the plane’s lights and then quickly turn them off. If the fighters were looking in the right place, they could pick us up and get oriented. Of course, the enemy gunners could also get oriented. Nothing like seeing a clip of 23- or 37-mm fire coming up at you to make you want a cold can of beer to put the moisture back in your mouth. After some time in the night sky, we’d get used to the AAA coming up and could judge what AAA presented a hazard and required some maneuvering to avoid and what AAA was a clean miss. The real danger lay with the AAA that we couldn’t see.

On some of these nights, when I was getting “hosed” by the AAA for my entire station time of three hours, I thought of that quiet assignment in some sleepy delta outpost in South Vietnam that I could have had. But whenever I had those thoughts, I would think of the briefing back in Cam Rahn Bay and what the major had said about the Steve Canyon Program. I would think about the hours that I had to acquire in the first six months if I wanted to apply for that next assignment. That would make me ask for more flying time. If I had time off, I would jump in the backseat of an OV-10 and get more hours.

Dry season in Laos lasts from October through February. During these months, North Vietnam was sending trucks down the HCMT in huge numbers. Finding them at night wasn't difficult. Getting fighters with the right kind of ordnance was the main problem. Avoiding all the ground fire was the second-biggest problem. On a typical mission, once the trucks were spotted, the gunners would begin shooting. By eavesdropping on our transmissions, they'd know that the trucks in their area had been spotted. From then until we left the area, it was a case of constant radio transmissions and a sky filled with fighters and AAA. It's hard to imagine now what it felt like sitting for three hours in a plane while airbursts of 23- and 37-mm shells were going off around. Sometimes the explosions were so close, I could see the glowing shrapnel passing over or near my plane. All the while I was talking to the fighters, giving briefings about a target, telling them where the safe bail-out areas were, or giving them corrections based on the previous bomb explosions. Sometimes, while one strike was in progress, a second or third set of fighters would check in, interrupting the flow of transmissions and causing momentary confusion. As a FAC, I had to handle it all. On top of that, I also had to fly the airplane so the navigator sitting to my right could stay oriented with the target, manage the fuel, and handle any problems in the aircraft. The exhilaration and adrenaline flow were so intense, time passed in a flash.

Staying Focused

When things were going smoothly, the whole thing seemed choreographed like some kind of bizarre ballet. Problem is, things seldom went smoothly. We would let our auxiliary fuel tanks run dry, causing the affected engine to quit momentarily. It seemed as if this only happened when we were the busiest. Such was a typical dry-season night in the life of a FAC flying over Uncle Ho's trail. The major's words that only the most motivated and qualified FACs would be considered for the Steve Canyon Program were all that kept me there, willing to sit in all that AAA and deal with all that stress.

During the dry season of 1971, the U.S. thought a South Vietnamese invasion of Laos to interdict the HCMT would be a strategic thing to do. The basic plan was fairly simple and straightforward. With the support of U.S. Army helicopters and bombers, South Vietnamese soldiers would be inserted into Laos on the top of mountains at locations known as “hard sites.” From these positions, they would

strike NVA trucks and troops. The invasion commenced on February 5, 1971. All went well for the first couple days before NVA resistance stiffened. In spite of U.S. projections, the South Vietnamese were not up to the task of fighting the NVA on their own turf.

I arrived at Quang-Tri on February 22, 1971, just as the situation for the South Vietnamese was getting desperate. Several of the forward operating bases in Laos were in danger of being overrun by the NVA. On my first mission, I arrived at one of the hard sites just as it was being overrun. I called for an AC-130 gunship (call sign, “Spectre”) while directing several sets of F-4s in bombing runs on the NVA columns moving toward the site. Radio transmissions from the site were panicky, and I couldn't get specific target locations from the commander. Soon the calls were just screams, and the radio went silent.

Another night, I flew cover for a helicopter crew that had been shot down several days earlier. When I arrived, they reported they'd been out of food and water for a couple of days, and attempts to get supplies to them were hampered by the proximity of NVA troops. As we talked, the downed helicopter pilot reported that the NVA was closing in on his position. I called for a Spectre AC-130 gunship. After that request, AAA began lighting up the sky. It was some of the most intense AAA that I'd seen. As the fighters checked in, the intensity of the ground fire increased. I wanted to get all the fighters on- and off-target before the gunship arrived, because the two types of ordnance couldn't work together. It took all the months of experience my right-seater and I had to keep everything coordinated and moving smoothly. I hadn't worked in such close proximity to American soldiers before and certainly didn't want any ordnance to hit them. The next day, Roger Carter (“Nail 21”) earned the Air Force Cross for his work in the successful rescue of the helicopter crew.

Reaching For The Brass Ring

February was the first month that I was qualified to submit a letter of application for the Steve Canyon Program, and I did. I talked to my squadron commander to be sure I would receive the support I'd need to begin the process. He was willing to help, but he cautioned me not to be overly optimistic. Many applicants were flatly rejected, he said, and many were selected and put through the training process only to be fired shortly thereafter. There weren't many who made the final cut. Because of our work in the airspace over Laos and exposure to the AAA, and because of the number of air strikes we directed, Nails were given priority consideration over in-country FACs.

I may not have been so optimistic had I known that only 21 Ravens served at any one time in Laos, and FACs were accepted only when a Raven was lost, or when someone was going home. (During the course of the war there were only about 160 Ravens in total.) I know all this now. Then I was just a wide-eyed (wild-eyed?) first lieutenant with a desire to do something I knew very little about.

The application was submitted, and I sat and waited. Weeks went by, then a month. Then I was notified that I



Hmong villagers showing Gene how they process opium. (Courtesy Gene Hammer)

would have an interview with someone at the Royal Thai AFB in Northern Thailand. I was to go with another Nail, named Randy, in the backseat of his OV-10 on an early-morning mission, and then we would rest at Udorn and prepare for the interview. The mission would be flown in the northern part of Laos, near the little town of Ban Ban, situated at the trailhead of the HCMT.

Exuberance was high, ignorance was higher, and luck would nearly run its course on this flight. We arrived over the area as trucks still in high-gear headed down the trail. Randy called for Tactical Air Command (TAC) and got it almost immediately. AAA was heavy and accurate. As we were rolling in for a rocket pass to mark the target, a 37-mm projectile exploded nearby and sent shrapnel into the right engine. As the OV-10 pulled off the target, the engine started giving Randy fits. We left the area, and Randy assessed the damage. He shut the engine down, and we limped back home on the remaining engine. No interview that day, just lots of beer and war stories.

Several days later, we flew to Udorn for the first of several interviews. This first one was just so that people in the Steve Canyon Program could get first impressions of us and gather some personal information. About a month later, a major came up to NKP to give me a check ride and to fly a combat mission. He may have been an excellent O-2 pilot, but he hadn't had much combat experience and certainly none over the trail. We flew the check ride in the late

afternoon, switched aircraft to one set up for a night mission, and then took off. The major was calm and enjoyed the scenic flight over Western Laos. I checked into my working area, and right away we picked up some "movers" (trucks). The fighters checked in, and the guns began to shoot. It was a typical night for me, and the gunners didn't seem to be any more accurate than at any other time, so I probably appeared nonchalant about all the fireworks going off around us. The major had an entirely different perspective on this "suicide" mission. After a few minutes of observing the airbursts, he became very agitated, sweaty, and nervous. A few minutes more, and he yelled into the intercom for me to end the air-strike and return to NKP. He'd had enough. I faked engine problems and headed back to base. Once there, the major disappeared into the men's latrine as I went into the intel shop for the debrief. I never saw the major again, but my squadron commander did want to know "what the hell" I did on the mission that had the major so upset.

On July 1, 1971, I received official notification that I had been accepted into the Steve Canyon Program.

Smokejumpers to the Ravens Part Two—April Issue 🍄

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Seize the Impulse

by Pat Harbine (Missoula '51)

Rufus (not his real name) was quick! He was much too quick for his own good. The instructors at the smokejumper camp were frustrated by his tendency to forge ahead of their teaching and come up with a different philosophy. He had a very successful first season with a total of 12 jumps, but that was not enough. He wanted more jumps, to set a record, to be recognized!

He heard of a group that had bought an army surplus parachute and had a pilot who would take them up in a small plane. He was soon in touch with them and made an investment toward the chute and pilot's charges. The parachute had to be released manually with a handle. They had worked out a system that worked well. One jumper would jump from the airplane high above and the others would rush toward his landing. When his boots touched the ground, the others were scooping up the chute, separating the panels and lines to facilitate folding it on the field. By the time the plane rolled toward them they would have another jumper harnessed and ready to go aloft for his turn. They each got several jumps a day by repeating the program over and over. The process worked well in spite of the pelting of straw, sticks and stones that gathered in the packing process and were released with opening impact.

The size and configuration of the airplane were different than the one in which they had been trained. The door was too small to walk out and they had to stand supported on the wheel strut prior to leaving the plane. They would fall backward from this position into a full backward sommersault before they released their chute. The release had to be perfect to avoid entanglement or a sudden whiplash upon opening. A long 10 count was necessary to avoid disaster.

Rufus was wide eyed as he listened to the last minute instructions from a senior jumper. The plane soared overhead and soon the canopy appeared. It would be his turn next. He was excited as he struggled to remember the instructions.

They heard the clunk of the jumper's feet as they hit the ground and they hurried to catch the nylon panels before they touched. Working feverishly they packed the chute and had it attached to Rufus's back as the plane rolled up. Crouching under the weight and tension of the parachute, he waddled to the door and climbed in the tiny cabin. He struggled to calm his nerves as the plane rose from the field. Soon they spiraled high above the field and the pilot motioned him to the door. He sat heavily on the doorsill with his feet dangling in air. His mind raced as he viewed the distant supports he had been instructed to use.

They were over the field now and the pilot gave Rufus his final command. Time to jump! Rufus struggled but his

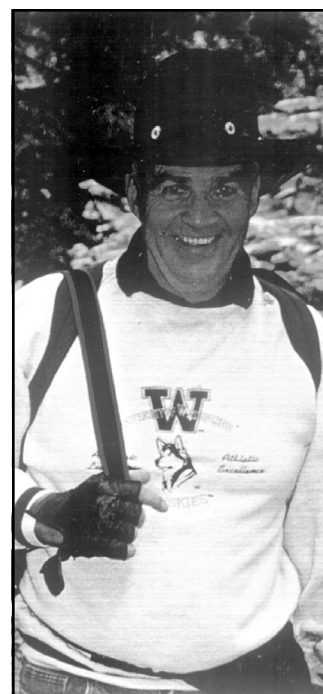
buttocks remained frozen to the floor and his hands clutched the door edges. Suddenly his mind thundered and he made the mistake of all mistakes. Impulsively he had released the chute inside the plane. The slipstream caught the folds of nylon and forced them into the cabin filling it completely and forcing the pilot's face against the windscreen as he struggled to gain control. Rufus clung to the cabin door with billowing folds of parachute encircling him and threatening to eject him. He clung desperately to his perch knowing that ejection could be fatal.

Those on the ground knew something was wrong when they saw the plane wobble and weave on its very steep landing approach. They rushed forward as it braked to an abrupt stop. They could see the pilot's face squished against the windshield and Rufus in the doorway surrounded by billowing nylon. Hurrying to Rufus's aid, they pried his clenched hands from the door and carried him clear of the plane where he collapsed in a quivering pile.

Inside the cabin, they could hear the muffled profanities of the pilot as he struggled through yards of inflated nylon panels and tangled lines. He emerged at the door threatening to kill the SOB who almost ruined his plane. When he saw Rufus lying in a fetal position, his anger faded and he asked, "Is he alright?"

His new friends now wanted to distance themselves from this Legend of Impulsivity; they promptly returned Rufus's investment. News of the incident spread and local pilots would no longer oblige those crazy jumpers who only wanted to increase their jump count. Rufus disappeared from his college classes and did not return as a second year jumper. His legend remains despite his absence. Knowing winks pass among older jumpers when they remember Rufus, The Man Who Seized The Impulse. He set the bar for nervous people everywhere!

If you missed Rufus at our last reunion, he was there! He showed up just a week too early! 🍄



Pat Harbine (NSA file)

Fond Memories—Those Old Green Trucks!!! Stake Bodies That Is!!!!

by L.A. “Chuck” Pickard (Missoula ’48)

A television advertisement for a certain Ranch Style salad dressing uses a green truck to emphasize its connection to a better time. That green truck reminds me of those better times. During the ’40s, the Forest Service used similar trucks to carry us over hill and dale. They were all “stake bodies,” mostly early ’40s models and all painted in the famous FS green; we called them “greenies.”

The trucks were tough and ran over mountain roads, through creeks, and on the highway, mostly carrying men. I remember one particular “greenie,” a 1939 model, still doing nicely in the latter ’40s. It had a 5-speed manual-shift transmission and could pull through two feet of spring mud with a full load of firewood in the rear.

For a long time, these trucks did not have seats in the rear. We would stand or sit in the rear and whenever the driver braked too fast, the cargo of Pulaski’s, shovels, saws and men would slide to the front, accompanied by a loud beating on the roof of the cab! Where was “OSHA” when WE needed it? Finally, someone decided benches should be installed. So, in spite of the splinters, things improved.

I remember riding in the back of those trucks in dry, dusty weather. At our destination, we’d jump off looking like ghosts, powdered with light-colored road dust. When it rained, we got soaked. At some point, one of the brighter light bulbs came up with the idea to cover us with tarps, which at least kept us dry during the spring rains.



The Old Green Truck (Courtesy Chuck Pickard)

In the late ’40s, the Missoula jumpers got a couple of new International stake bodies. **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) was wearing a grin; he was sure proud of those trucks. They were painted in a dark forest green, unlike the older lighter shade of Forest Service green.

One day Earl discovered initials carved into the rear tailgate on one truck. He hit the sky!!! There were only two known carvers, **Max Allen** (MSO-48) and

Stan Sykes (MSO-46). After investigating the matter, Earl was about to “can” Sykes until we told Earl what a good jumper and worker Sykes was. Sykes stayed but he had to sand off his work.

Driving over rough roads, the tailgates would frequently bounce out of their mounting holes and go skidding down the roadway, accompanied by a loud beating on the top of the cab. We eventually learned that the stake racks would generally stay put if we hung our heavy water bags on them.

We made a weekly run into Missoula to pick-up supplies for the Ninemile camp, always with the stake bodies. The Forest Service operated a warehouse on South Higgins Avenue where we’d pick up tools, supplies, and materials. The loading doors opened directly onto the Avenue. Higgins was a pretty busy road, even back then. The warehouse doors were designed to accommodate a Ford Model T and allowed a scant two inches on either side of the truck as we backed in. The driver would have to wait for a break in the traffic and then back in, using the mirrors for guidance. **Al Hammond** (MSO-46) could handle it and I could also manage it without a problem. Others wanted no part of the job since you had to see-saw back and forth, hold up traffic, and scrape the side of the door openings. Earl was pretty careful to whom he handed the keys.

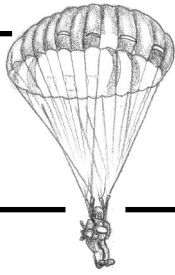
Sometimes we needed to stop at the Federal Building and someone would wash the truck before we left.

There was a “wood landing” a short distance up the creek from the Ninemile camp. A daily work crew would skid logs down the hillside for the camp’s firewood. Each morning, eight cross cut saws worked at full tilt cutting the logs into firewood - good conditioning for jumpers! As we completed the daily cutting, we’d load one of those stake bodies to the brim and take the wood down to camp.

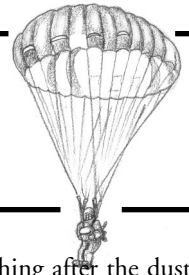
Some FS ranger stations didn’t have such conveniences as modern gasoline pumps. We had to hand-pump the gasoline up into a globe on top of the pump so the gasoline could then gravity flow down the hose into the truck’s fuel tank.

Those were the days, my friends. Frankly, I thought they would never end.

(Editor note/Denis Symes: In the early ’60’s, the town of Dixie, Idaho, had a summer population of 24 and supported two bars! The general store had a hand-powered gasoline pump with the glass globe on top. Why pump up the gas up to the globe and not just pump it into the vehicle’s tank? Well, there was no way to measure how much gas was pumped, so you’d ask for five gallons, and the storeowner would manually pump five gallons of gas up into the globe. Once you paid, he’d let gravity take over and gas would flow down into the tank - the gasoline cost 23 cents per gallon!) 🦉



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Jack Dunne (MSO-46) sent me a copy of a newspaper article from the Kalispell, Montana, news with an article covering the CPS-103 reunion in Hungry Horse in July of this year. “**Dr. Kauffman (David)** (MSO-45) is an old friend of mine. I don’t think the Forest Service ever had a better bunch of men (CPS-103 jumpers).”

Got a nice note from **Art Henderson** (MSO-50) saying he enjoys the magazine and being “kept up to date.” Art is living in Brookwood, Alabama.

Chuck Pickard (MSO-48) forwarded a copy of *American Profile* Midwest edition (July 27, 2004) that is inserted into the Sunday newspapers. The feature article and cover picture is about smokejumpers. **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74) and **Kasey Rose** (NCSB-89) were the featured jumpers.

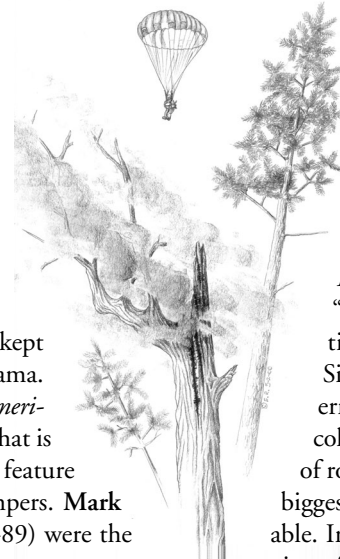
Alex Theios (CJ-65) has sold his house in Billings and moved to British Columbia.

“B.C., for the second year in a row, has had record warm temperatures, and we currently have over 300 fires in the interior. This is more than last year, which was a disastrous year for the province.”

I just had time to read a document written by **Kev Hodgin** (RDD-67) titled “Practical Firefighting.” My first reaction was I would like to walk around behind him on any initial attack. This document is a fundamental guideline to fighting wildfire. My second reaction is that it really is “Practical (Wildland) Firefighting,” therefore, something that would not be used in current wildland firefighting training.

I was talking to **Greg Whipple** (MSO-59) the other day on the phone. Haven’t seen Greg since we jumped together at Silver City in 1961. Greg is retired from the Border Patrol and living in Silver City. He asked, “Are you aware of any other jumpers that shoot **sporting clays**? I would like to communicate with any that are. It is ass-kicker difficult and I need to learn more about it. Just started in May and need all the help I can get. Plus it would be great to team up with somebody at some of these shoots. They are held all over the country throughout the year.” I know we have members who are involved. Give Greg a call at: 505-388-1674.

Wes Langley (MSO-68) isn’t bashful about expressing an opinion about the current grounding of the air tankers. “Can you believe that? P2V’s are still grounded. I didn’t find them to be very effective at all over five total summers on fires. If no one was below and you had some affordable way to drop a 100-gallon water balloon on a fire, it would kill it.



zip... and you could go fishing after the dust settled. Sheesh, at \$5 grand a drop, they could surely afford another \$300 for a balloon to drop it with.”

How many times have we heard of retardant being dropped on unmanned fires while jumpers were “held in reserve”?

Art Mindland forwarded an article from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 8, 2004 edition, titled “Closing in on a missing legend.” Some information as follows: “According to legend, the Lost Siskiyou Caves is a hidden complex of limestone caverns in Northern California. They contain fantastic colors and formations, underground waterfalls, a chain of rooms, tunnels and chutes—and perhaps one of the biggest undiscovered caches of Indian artifacts imaginable. In the early 1960s, a lightning strike in the mountains of northwest California started a small forest fire. *Smokejumpers* parachuted in and then contained the small fire, but while hiking out, accidentally stumbled upon the cave opening. They described a strong wind propelled from the cave entrance, enough to blow out the flame of a lamp. When the group reached the district office of the Forest Service, they offered to guide a ranger to the caves. But the ranger was busy and said he’d call them “later.” When “later” arrived, the smokejumpers could not be located. Neither could the caves.” True or legend??

Harvey Weirich (MYC-44): “On May 15th, 1944, I made my first jump from the Ford Tri-motor. Sixty years later on July 10, 2004 (when I’m 80 years old), I made my first jump with one them Square Ram Air Parachutes—\$150.00 - Training and Jump all in one day— it wassss greatttttt.”

Harold Flake (IDC-61) sent me this email (8/13): “The Porter Fire is in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. No Suppression efforts are in progress at this time. The weather hot and dry. How big does it have to get? Maybe can we have our Idaho Biscuit Fire?” I checked out the website that Harold sent me to. It pictures the fire at 1/10 of an acre on Aug. 5th with it growing to 450 acres on Aug. 12th. The little trickle of smoke on the 5th looks just like the pictures of the Biscuit Fire in 2002. We’ll see how this one goes.

From **Grady A. Smith**: In reference to your page (website) on George K. Sisler, winner of the Medal of Honor. Kennie and I were in the same platoon in infantry officer candidate school at Ft. Benning in 1965. Of interest to you: when we went to airborne school after OCS, the cadre knew he had a LOT of jumps in his logbook. They’d do pro forma harassment Monday through Friday during training, then they would meet Kennie down in the training area on weekends. Kennie would instruct them on sport

jumping and, I'm sure, on the special concerns of jumping into a fire zone. The army back then was just beginning to experiment with free-fall parachuting. I enjoyed browsing your site.

Steve Wilkins (RAC-65) sent along a copy of the July 2004 issue of *AOPA Pilot* magazine. It has a very good feature written by jumper pilot **Patrick Veillette** featuring a good **Mike McMillan** (FBX-96) photo. Check it out at your local library.

Bob Hooper (CJ-67): "I retire the end of this month (Sept), and hope to officiate at the U of Arizona for track and field, officiate high school wrestling, teach CPR Classes, and substitute teach plus care for my wife who is in a wheelchair." Congratulations on your retirement Bob!

Got an update on **Charlie Roos** (RAC-97) who is now flying. "Just a quick note to let you know that I did get hired by a company called Air Wisconsin (DBA United Express). They're considered to be one of the top regional carriers to work for, but it takes a while to upgrade to Captain. I don't start there until January (2005) and will still be interviewing with American Eagle (the feeder for American) just to see what they have to offer."

Don Smith (MYC-48) recently wrote a letter to the USFS Regional Forester complimenting the McCall Smokejumper Base that Don visited last summer. He was given the base tour by **Michael Cooper** (MYC-86). In Don's words: "I was impressed by the organization and professionalism displayed everywhere. A person could quickly spot those that were at the top of their game. They had an attitude that bordered on cockiness, they were good and they knew they were good. Such was the case at McCall. Thank you for all the Michael Coopers on your team who are helping you keep our forests as a National Asset. At my eulogy, I have asked these last words be tossed in: 'For a couple of summers, he was a smokejumper out of McCall.'"

Don Hertzog (MYC-48) emailed: "As usual you've done a splendid job with the latest issue of Smokejumper magazine. I particularly enjoyed several of the articles. The one on **Shep Johnson** gave me new understanding of the rumors I had heard about several smokejumpers who worked with the CIA in Laos and Cambodia. I read the book *The Ravens* and found that helpful, but the article on Shep really put that "secret" war in perspective. Little did I know that one of those CIA kickers was my jumping buddy, Paperlegs. You know you're getting older when you find names like, **Smokey Stover**, **Del Catlin** and **LaVon Scott** showing up in the Off-the-List feature and the special on Paperlegs. I trained or jumped fire with all of those guys in '48, '49 and '50 and will certainly miss them.

Ted Heard (Pilot-LDG, CJ, RAC): "Your article about Shep Johnson was extremely interesting. I've had the pleasure meeting and being around him and **Dave Schas** (MYC-48) in LaGrande and Redmond as they would reminisce about their activities around the world."

I sent an email to **Jack Coburn** (IDC-53) acknowledging receipt of his membership and got a reply from his wife, **Elsie**, that added to our database information and also filled in some of the blanks in smokejumper history. Elsie's email

mentioned that she also liked reading the magazine as her brother and first husband were smokejumpers. I had to answer that email and find out some of the details. Elsie's brother, **Orv Varner** (NCSB-61), was a smokejumper. "**Lary Bentley** (NCB-60) was my husband. (Incidentally, Orv and Lary were very good friends.) Yes, the spelling of his name was LARY. Lary and I had married in Seattle in April of 1962 and left the next week for Fairbanks so he could report for duty at the smokejumper base. After the fire season ended, we moved to Boise, Idaho. He became the Alate Skydiver Club rigger, in addition to his two regular jobs as rigger with the Idaho Air National Guard and a fireman for the Boise Fire Department.

He was jumping a new parachute, the Crossbow, when he died on March 8, 1965. The main didn't open and the reserve opened as he hit. Everyone agreed that he was the kind of guy who lived life to it's fullest and, possibly, a bit 'on the edge'. From the first of our courtship, he had insisted that I should also find out what a thrill parachute jumping could be, and when our first child was only 6 months old, I went through the training offered by the Alate Parachute Club and made five static-line jumps. When Lary died, Valerie was two years old and April was nine months old. I married Jack Coburn nearly two years later He adopted the girls and they have presented us with seven grandchildren and one great-grandbaby. This last spring, our daughter, April, did a free-fall (buddy-type) to celebrate her 40th birthday!"

Congratulations to **Gary G. Johnson** (FBX-74) who retired from the BLM last April. While digging through his desk, Gary found a GS-5 Smokejumper job description from his days in Alaska. Some excerpts: "Is subject to hazards from grizzly bears. Living conditions involve rain and hail storms with temperatures ranging from 30 degrees to 100 degrees, mosquitoes so numerous and miserable that they cannot be described on paper and off duty recreation is confined to card playing and story telling. Flight conditions over fire include cargo dropping from 150 feet, risking a crash due to cargo snagging the tail or a sudden power loss." The author of this government job description must have been a victim of the long winter Alaska nights.

The Fall 2004 issue of *Montanan* (Univ. of Montana) has a good article on the reunion in Missoula last summer written by Vince Devlin. **Joe McDonald** (MSO-51) and **George Cross** (MSO-71), as well as others, are mentioned. In addition to being installed as the Auburn (CA) Chamber of Commerce President, **Spud DeJarnette** (MSO-49) did a tandem jump onto the 18th green at the Ridge Gold Golf Course. "We had a 30 second delay and then a mile ride to the ground. Fantastic!"

Starr Jenkins' (CJ-48) son, Stew, is running for the California State Assembly from his district in San Luis Obispo. The results are in by this time. Best of luck.

Bob "Rigger" Snyder (CJ-48) dropped me a note concerning the "Liberty" ships on which he served during WWII. "The life expectancy (lack of) of the Liberty Ship was not (totally) due to enemy action, but to a design flaw. At the end of 1944, I was on a convoy of about 130 ships from

Scotland to New York. Heavy weather all the way. We were told we lost 17 Libertys. In heavy weather many of them broke up and went down”.

Dean Longanecker (NCSB-68) has just stepped down as NSA Treasurer. **Charlie Brown** (IDC-56) will take over that position. We all owe Dean thanks for the years of service and time spent helping this organization.

Ron Thoreson (CJ-60): “Congratulations on the best ever issue of the Smokejumper! The October 2004 issue was exceptional in many ways. ‘Smokey’ **Alexander’s** reminiscence, *Smokey Remembers Jim Waite*, succinctly relayed more basic information on the start of the smokejumping program than I’d ever read in one place before. **Walt Wasser’s** creative, *The Legend of Black Water Canyon*, re-kindled memories of how the primordial forest can expand our imagination. The series of Air America articles (your

bio of **Shep Johnson**; *Air America* by **Barry Reed**; and *A Single Engine O-2* by **Gene Hammer**) gave excellent insight into the dedicated, quality people who have served and sometimes died representing America’s interests when secrecy has made it necessary to neglect giving them their due. The Interviews with smokejumpers from the 1940s reminded us of the contributions of so many interesting oldtimers whose stories can astound and amaze us. I had earlier been delighted to meet **Bob ‘Rigger’ Snyder** at the Missoula reunion and discover that ‘civilian’ merchant marines had been on the beach at D-Day. And finally, *Remembrance of June 6, 1944* by **Denis Symes** and *Paperlegs’ Goes Home* by **Ken Hessel** were each touching and proper tributes to good men no longer with us. Thanks for a super issue that will be hard to beat.” 🦋

Follow-up to Tom Decker’s Story: “The 20 Pound Rock”

by Denis Symes (McCall ’63)

Tom Decker (IDC-64) reported on his experience with “The 20-Pound Rock” in the July 2004 issue of Smokejumper. I’m sure we’ve all carried packs laden with rocks, but here’s my story.

Training was tough at McCall in 1963, at least for those of us with less than Herculean strength. I quickly realized that I was toward the bottom of the list in strength and endurance. During the various timed physical exercises (e.g., obstacle course, rope climb, running, etc.), the slowest guys would be called over and told that they were being dropped. To avoid standing out too much, I always moved to about 3rd or 4th from the end of the line and did my best. This way, I reasoned, I would not be compared with the faster guys, but would look better than the slower guys. As someone was dropped, I moved up one place, keeping 3 or 4 behind me. As a philosopher once observed, “Sounds like a plan.”

During the Obstacle Course Run, I always had trouble getting over the 8’ wall, so I’d back up and keep

trying, while being “encouraged” by the trainers. On the 2nd, 3rd or 4th attempt, I’d manage to pull myself over, facing the rest of the course.

Finally, we came to the training jumps, so the rest should be easy, right? After the 7th training jump, we packed our gear into “elephant bags” for the 3-4 mile pack-out back to the base. These bags were just canvas duffel bags with shoulder straps; they didn’t distribute the load onto the hips and they’d swing side to side as you walked.

After stuffing our gear into the bags, we were called aside by our head foreman, **Del Catlin** (MYC-47), who critiqued the final training jump. Finally he told us to get our gear and get back to camp quickly (we’d be timed!). When I lifted the “elephant bag,” it seemed much heavier than when I packed it! I started to open it to see what had happened when **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) yelled, “Symes, if you open that bag, just keep going. I’ll see that you get dropped.” I picked it up and struggled to keep moving, knowing that some of us would be

dropped after the pack-out. Looking frequently over my shoulder, I hustled to make sure that there were always 2 or 3 guys behind me; I was determined not to be last!

Upon arriving at camp, Wayne said, “OK, now you can open the pack.” I discovered several large rocks, which I weighed - they added more than 20 pounds to an already heavy load!

A few minutes later, we were assembled in the mess hall and were called into the back room one at a time. There, Del, Wayne and **Carl Rosselli** (MYC-48) gave us a final critique and told us whether we had made it. Del started off by saying that I was slower and weaker than others, and he did not know whether to accept me; Carl echoed the same sentiment. Wayne spoke up and said that he pushed for my acceptance since I never gave up and just kept going. Then, Del handed me my wings! Man, was I a happy camper.

As Tom wrote, we’ve all borne heavy rocks since jumper training. Each of us is stronger because of the rocks we’ve carried. 🦋

Spruce Cabin Project

By Karl Maerzluft (Fairbanks '67)

The following story recounts one of the trail crew projects in the summer of 2004 involving the moving of a barn on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. The barn had to be moved to save it from the river that was eroding the bank.

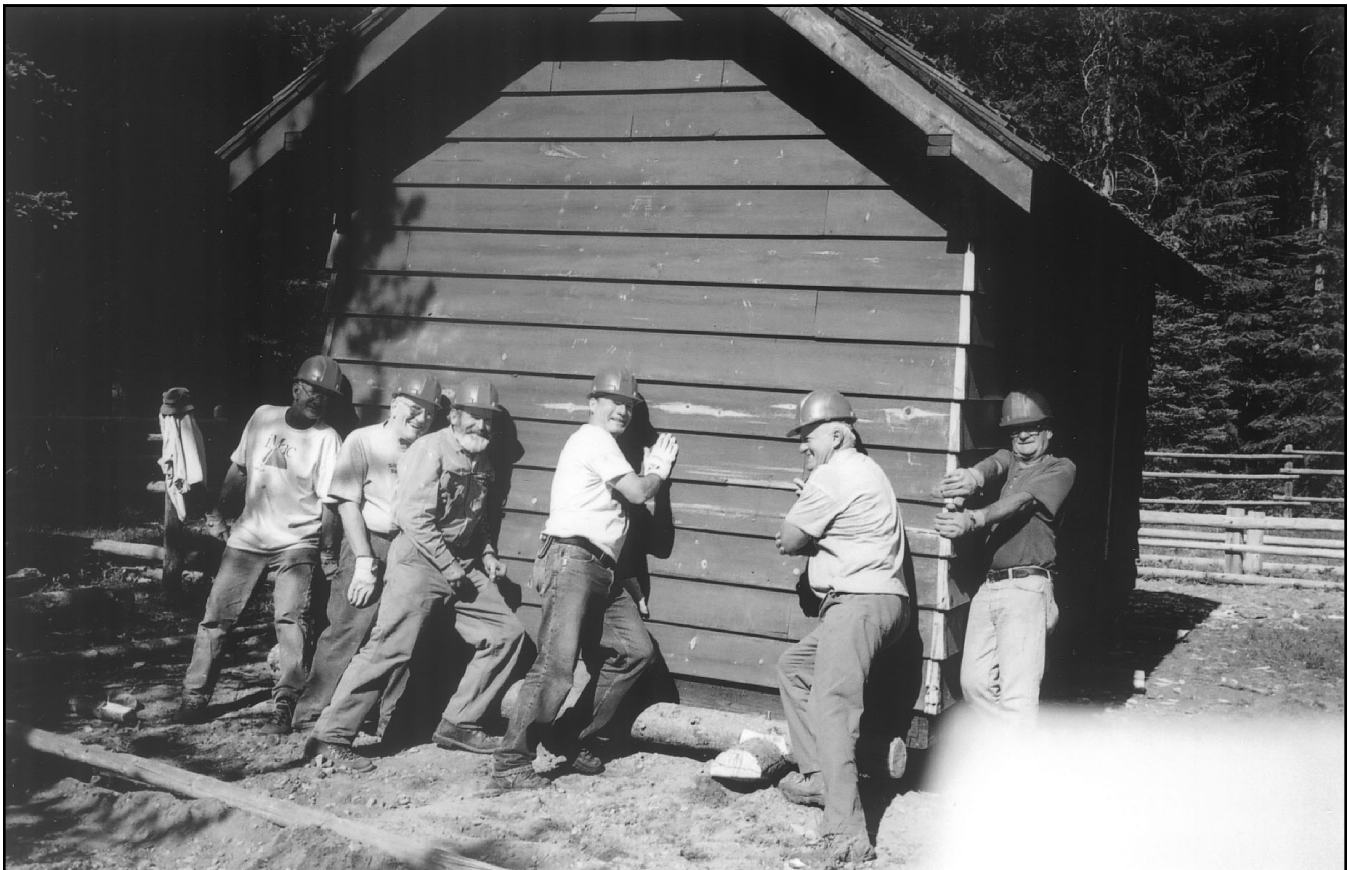
We arrived at the cabin site in good shape for a bunch of geriatric seniors. The day was warm and clear skies enabled us to snap a few pictures on the way. As we walked onto the site we could see we had a daunting task ahead of us. After setting up tents around the cabin, we felt free to scrutinize the task a little closer.

The barn/shed was full of stuff. One bear proof box full of oats for the horses must have weighed 400 lbs. All the tools were plentiful, but not heavy. The split firewood was another matter. It measured about a cord and could be stored under the eaves of the cabin. All the wood and spikes and junk stored in the rafters needed to come down. With the tent up and full of the important things, we stacked the hay where it could be covered with a tarp in the event of rain.

The shed was fragile. Not because of its age, but because it was built with short lumber. It was built with boards that had been brought in by mules. An initial assessment showed a lot of shoring needed to take place. Ultimately, we decided a sled must be built that will withstand the stress of pulling such a heavy building without damaging it. None of us had ever moved, raised or lowered a building before, but that never stopped a smokejumper.

The next morning we started at 6 a.m. The six little jacks were a real help, but it sure was slow. First, we had to dig down far enough to be able to place the jacks on something to spread the pressure of the footprint. At the end of the first 12-hour day we had raised the structure far enough off the ground to be encouraged.

Day two started at six but it was much cooler. Now we also began looking for timbers with which to fashion a sled. These timbers needed to be of green wood so they would be workable without complex tools. **Rod McIver** (MSO-64) was very instrumental in designing a suitable device to set the building on and move it. While some of us continued



Move that Cabin! L-R: Barrie Turner, Stan Linnertz, Rod Iverson, Ray Brown, Karl Maerzluft, Tom Oswald. (Courtesy Karl Maerzluft)

working on raising the shed higher, the rest concentrated on constructing the sled. Later that day it got really cold and it hailed for a while.

Day three was spent finishing the sled, taking down the old gate and getting the sled under the shed. It was after 7 p.m. that we made our first attempt to budge the building as encouragement for the next day. With much dismay we discovered the poor condition of the come-alongs. Both units had issues. One cable was so tangled we had to use the other to pull it free. Then we noticed a crimped cable and that only one check-tooth actually held. The other unit had frayed cable. Somewhat of an iffy situation.

Luckily, on the first attempt, the building moved and we were ready for the next day. Another 12-hour day successfully completed, but we were beginning to show the strain.

Day four began again as a clear and beautiful morning. In order to achieve the move with a 180-degree turn, we decided to first pull the shed to the left and away from the new site. This seemed to work as well as it did for the Egyptians. We too had rollers that made it easier to transport over the soft ground. Some of us did the pulley thing while the rest took down the old gate and began locating the place for the new one. After a mere 10 hours we called it quits and rejoiced over the amount of progress.

Day five held a lot of rain that came in waves, but we still got the shed into its new position and the holes dug for the new gateposts. Actually, three holes had to be dug, because there was the requirement for a third upright. This upright spun on a conical roller bearing in a metal cup. The top was crowned with a simple spindle pin that fit into a cup recessed into the cross member of the gate. While this made the task immensely more complex, we did wish to preserve what some purist of workmanship had put in place. During all that activity we had six visitors who provided a pleasant interlude along with a load of raft adventurers. Rain was an intermittent companion.

Day six consisted mainly of leveling the shed onto 6x6s for better support, returning all the items required to the cabin and completing the corral and its gate. The general cleanup of the area was part and parcel of the task.

Day seven broke clear and warm and we packed up and did a few last minute things. The packers with their animals arrived as advertised and a pleasant sight it was. Some of us started the walk a little early, but found ourselves at record pace. Two hours and 20 minutes to cover seven miles is not bad for a bunch of old guys. 🦋

Karl Maerzluf can be reached at karhma1@earthlink.net

NSA “Keepers of the Flame”

by Bill Moody (North Cascades '57)

One primary focus of the National Smokejumper Association is to preserve the rich legacy of smokejumping. Our goal is to preserve, maintain and share our history with the smoke-jumper/firefighting community, the public, and academic institutions. Our history is found in official historical documents, personal accounts, pictures, movies, videos, memorabilia, oral histories, the jump-fire equipment we've used, and the aircraft from which we have jumped.

For long-term preservation, it is imperative that professional archivists care for historical artifacts. Without proper care, documents, audio-visual media, and equipment decay so that its value is lost—forever. To ensure that our history is preserved, NSA has developed Memorandums of Understanding and working relationships with four organizations.

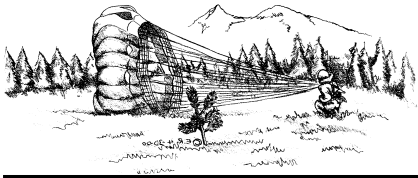
The University of Montana's K. Ross Toole Archives collects and preserves documents and audio-visual media. Included in this is an extensive oral Smokejumper history and more than 200 hours of video interviews that contributed to the two-hour documentary, *Smoke-jumper: Firefighter from the Sky*.

The legacy is shared with the general public through the display of equipment, aircraft memorabilia and visual media at three primary centers: (1) the recently dedicated Evergreen Aviation Museum's Smokejumpers exhibit in McMinnville, Oregon; (2) the Museum of Mountain Flying at the Missoula International Airport, and (3) the Forest Service Visitor Center at the Aerial Fire Depot in Missoula. Additionally, several jump bases have exhibits and base tours that educate the public to our history.

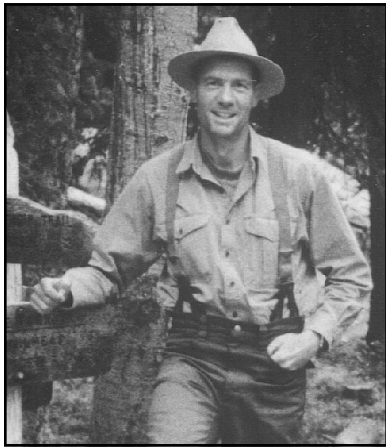
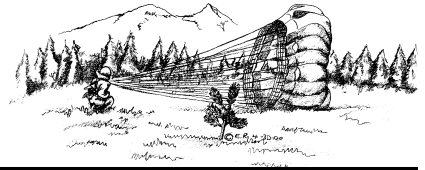
During its 100th anniversary in

2005, the Forest Service will participate in the two and a half week Folk Festival on the Mall in Washington, DC. A smokejumping display will be included in the exhibit.

Possibly, you have “acquired” or collected some jumper items possessing historical significance. Eventually it will “rot” or be discarded after you make the last “eternal jump”. I suggest you donate it to one of the centers so that it can be preserved and exhibited. Before sending the item, contact NSA's Historian or Bill Moody (telephone: 509-997-5971 or e-mail: bmoody@mymethow.com) to discuss the donation and how to transfer it to the appropriate institution. Acceptance of an item will depend on its significance, its condition, and the number of similar items already submitted for preservation. 🦋



Checking the Canopy



by Karl Brauneis
(Missoula '77)

Our Veteran Pioneer Congregation

I just had coffee this AM with a trooper from the past
He showed me his enlisted spurs; brass shank
with leather straps
Ray tried to join the Air Corps but they saw
his cowboy creed
So sent him to Fort Riley; an Officer of Cavalry to be
And then there are the aviators; usually sit the mid of row
Flew everything from Flying Forts to P-40 Hawks of War
Through time to a place called Viet Nam where "Migs"
could lock you on
For simply trying to observe their soldiers on the run
And don't forget those Navy boys when
the offering is passed
They launched old Herb straight off the deck in
a "Dauntless" air attack
The Marine Corps squad sits on the right still
lean and fighting trim
They used the M1 rifle; and Browning Auto Gun
To drive the Great Imperial Empire into the setting sun
My first true friend from days gone past; was a man
named Thomas Connell
Born at the town of South Pass City, the year of 19 ought
Then homestead at Burris; "cowboyed" the "Diamond D"
Called him "Old Man" in World War II some 50 years it be
A legend was Doc Wilmoth – who made his calls
on horseback
Through out the Windy Valley he doctored up the sick
Served in both the World Wars; so many soldiers saved
He pioneered the MASH to treat our fallen G.I. "braves"
Today they "ring" our Docs and Vets to treat both
man and beast

Eric, Lisa, Doug and Dan; Doc Jackie all on call
I can't help seeing Doctor Wilmoth; smiling standing tall

In a community of rifle men our church can boast top gun
He earned a presidential badge; a big bore champion
So quietly he works with us; to clear the walks of snow
Helps keep the Thrift Shop running smooth for shoppers
on the go

The ladies of our church you know, helped build
this valley strong

If they are truly praying for you, nothing can go wrong
I still don't understand all of that terror in Iraq
But I know our pioneering gals wouldn't tolerate their acts;
They'd be the first to put it down – I'll guarantee you that

But the part that really tickles me is the answers that I get
On local history you see, its all first person reference;
Just ask "Maggie" Appleby, the Hudson's or the Baldwin's
To learn about Butch Cassidy and his sweetheart,
Mary Boyd

You see *"Butch paid his last respects to Lander
and his friends"*

As William Thadeus Phillips about the year of thirty six'
Or see Stub Farlows cabin, that Wyoming Buckaroo
Who still sits high on Steamboat; yelling *"yippy eye yahoo"*

Fred Nicol talks of Chief Washakie his family tried and true
Great honor as a warrior matched as diplomat and friend
He made our valley what it is; a tribute to the faith
All of us God's children under his Amazing Grace

Or any number from today, I count my greatest blessing
To worship our Creator in the fellowship of those;
who set a Christian standard
At the First United Methodist Church; In Fremont
County, Lander

This poem is dedicated to the Methodist congregation of Lander, both past and present: and specifically to Jared Nessel, Wind River Valley Rancher, Rodeo Cowboy and brother in the LORD. As a fellow church member, Jared taught me the importance of recording the ordinary and the not so ordinary stuff of life in *"cowboy prose"*.

PS: If you haven't done so already, please, take a look around your congregation this Sunday and thank those men and woman in prayer who gave you the freedom to worship GOD according to your own conscience. 🙏

Karl is a member of the "Cowboy Poets of Wind River" Incorporated and can be reached at brauneisfam@wyoming.com

Fall Flight

By Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

The fall colors are a palette of orange, yellow and red when the Super cub on floats taxis out on Upper Trail Lake. Flashes of yellow cottonwood stream past as one pontoon and then the other breaks free of the lake mirror surface, and we head up Trail River toward Spenser's Glacier.

I take control of the Super cub, the first time I have flown a floatplane, and fly up the valley. There is something about flying in Alaska, especially flights in fall, that are magic. There are flocks of Sandhill Cranes and geese headed south. We pass flocks of mountain sheep on steep cliff faces and see tracks of an entire wolf pack on a sand bar in the river.

Fall colors are ablaze and the air is so clear one feels they can see the curve of the earth from this altitude. Although I have been fortunate to fly planes in five different decades, I have logged only a few hours in the last 25 years. So when I want to fly the mountains, I find a mountain pilot who will ride with me and let me do some fly-

ing. The idea is that of a doctor friend with whom I was smokejumping long ago. Even though he owns his own plane, he just doesn't put in the time to fly the mountains, so he gets another jumper buddy, who is a lead pilot for retardant planes, to go with him.

The last time I was on Trail Lake was August 30 when I paddled my kayak on a leg of the Seward Centennial ultra-marathon. Then there was another student in the plane getting his check ride. My pilot is Vern Kingsford, who this past summer certified 125 pilots on floats. He is a mountain pilot of merit and one I am comfortable flying with. That is the level of expertise I want. It is the level I have been privileged to fly with when I soloed in 1967 as a teenager and as a smokejumper and fire detection specialist in the 70s and 80s. I have been fortunate to fly with the best.

We fly over Grant Lake, an exquisite glacier lake that stretches for miles. I am staggered by the size and beauty

of this lake that I have never seen the entire length of nor been on. Vern points out a bull moose with large rack and we circle.

I am fortunate in that I climb and ski here as well as get an occasional flight. So while I am enthralled by the splendor of this mountain vastness that is my home, I am also looking for a mountain to climb and steep exposure to ski. We circle Sheep Mountain.

Just a few weeks ago, I traversed this mountain with two friends. It was a brilliant day, and we found a summit log that listed only four parties in four decades since it was first climbed. In Colorado, the summit logs have been taken down because there are so many who summit their peaks and the logs are filled so quickly. Here in Alaska, a record that spans four decades has just four entries.

When we climbed and traversed that glacier draped summit, my friend said he wanted to get some flight time in these mountains. My response was, "This is like flying." For me the high of climbing or skiing a new route is much the same I got from parachuting and now have piloting a Super cub. They are different expressions of flight. As we fly up the rainbow hued valleys, I remember my first flights as a teenager and the hours spent in open door DC-3 jump ships. With each move of the joystick, it comes back.

Vern takes the stick and we circle another bull moose. From this altitude, he can tell how many points it has, its age. It is superb what one can see a short flight from my home in Seward. This past summer I did a 1362-mile ultra-marathon across the Rocky Mountains. It was fabulous, and I saw much wild country and game, but not like this. It is staggering the amount of wild country that may be viewed from a small plane in such a short flight. Alaska is a place apart, and that perspective is best seen from on high. 🏔️



Historical Picture: Training 1941 at Nine Mile. L-R back row: Roy Abbott, George Honey, Jim Alexander. L-R front row: Francis Lufkin, Chet Derry, Fred Brauer, unidentified. (Courtesy Smokey Alexander)

To Hunt a Whale

by Mike Hill (West Yellowstone '95)

I have been staying in a guesthouse in the village of Lamalera. It is one of the last traditional villages around the world still allowed by the international community to hunt whale as long, as they keep using the products from the harvested whales for themselves. The whaling season isn't very long so I feel lucky to have made it here to this very remote location just in time to be allowed to join this deep sea hunting expedition.

The crew has given me a position in their long wooden sea craft just ahead of their rudder man behind five sets of native paddlers. I dip the traditional old hand-carved wooden paddle into the cold waters off the remote island of Solar in Indonesia and pull back hard. I've been doing this for hours and looking left across the narrow confines of this traditional whaling boat I can see that the sun is still low on the eastern horizon. This is really hard work and my right shoulder and arm are sore. In this village, families are a team who hunt together in the same boat. There are eleven of us and, for hours, we have been paddling together like a well-oiled machine. We dip our paddles in, pull back and lift them. It is surprising to believe that I am part of this massive team effort. I lean forward to dip my paddle into the sea once more, putting out exactly the same effort as everyone else in our paddling team.

The men are singing in Indonesian. I don't understand their words, but there is rhythm to each tune and we are rowing to that same beat. Down into the water, back hard, up and down again. I close my eyes and with these motions, it isn't very hard to picture myself far away from this boat and swinging my Pulaski behind the old fellows from my base: "Chicken Man" **Bill Werhane** (MSO-66), "Brite Eyes" **Bill Craig** (MSO-66) and **Chuck "Tuna" Flach** (MSO-68). We are all together working hard to build fireline again around a good-deal fire somewhere in eastern Montana. I decide paddling like this into the waves of the Timor Sea isn't much different than digging line.

I open my eyes once more looking only at the backs of five rows of paddlers. The synergy is perfect as we all work together taking this boat far out into the Timor Sea. Finally, the rudder man calls out for a halt. For me, it is a relief to swing my paddle back into the long boat and lay it down for a rest. My arm is numb but, reaching up with my left hand, I quickly massage my own tired muscles in this moment of rest. I turn my gaze and look across the rolling waves and back towards the now distant mountainous coastline of Solar Island. We are many miles off shore, and I survey the native guys dressed in their cast-off western t-shirts seated before me. Some of them are now carefully stowing their paddles away against the boat's ribs as others scan the sea surface back towards the island. I can only guess that they are looking for signs of whales.

The gray haired man seated directly ahead of me turns and points down at the massive ancient clay jar secured by ropes

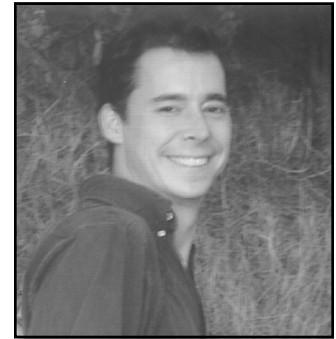
beside me. This object is filling much of the space between him and me. It must be a water jug, I guess? He is thirsty! A collection of cut-off plastic water bottoms are laying in a wooden tray attached near me, so I pick one of those and scoop up a cup full of water. The water sure is cool compared to this hot sun above. It feels

good and I pass the cup on to him. He smiles, and then gulps the cup's cool water. I lean down and scoop out another for him, but the break is suddenly over. A whale has been spotted far off to our left towards the island. I look in that direction and, sure enough, in the distance, puffs of white mist are jetting up from the sea.

There is no time for water now. I reach over and recover my paddle that has been laying against the clay jug. We have quite a distance to cross to catch that whale. I'm ready to get back into the paddling formation when everyone else on board suddenly stands. The long boat is large enough not to be rocked but, even so, I decide to stay put. What is going on? I notice the boat has a swivel mast pole system built into it, and the men are lifting that mast up and securing it in place. I duck my head and bend down to get clear of this operation.

The crew quickly finishes that task and turns their attention to the special side rack mounted off the whaling boat. It has been awkward for me to duck under that to paddle. Now I finally see what it is for. Cradled on the stand is a collection of long bamboo harpoon handles rolled up in a large brown sail. The mast has a rope pulley and the men pull on that to raise the coiled sail up from our boat's side. This sail takes my breath away. I never expected this sight. The sail is big and square and is crafted completely from hundreds of small blocks of woven leaves. This sail of leaves is robust and catches the wind just as any other sail would. The men resume their paddling positions, and we are launched out across these waves towards the distant whale in full flight under the power of our new sail.

We are jetting along with the wind, and it doesn't look like there will be any more need for my paddle. This ride has changed into bumpy, rough water as we head back towards the island chasing the whale. The men ahead of me bow their heads, and I watch them as together they recite a prayer. It is in Indonesian, but I hear easily some words of the prayer, "Maria, Jesus and Amen." These men are clearly nervous and preparing themselves for the worst. I ask myself just how wise



Mike Hill (NA file)

was it to come with them on this hunt? I begin to recall a notation I read back in the guest book where I am staying. This village doesn't get many visitors, but a German had left a note about the hunt he had joined years before. His boat had harpooned a whale that day, and as the villagers tied the harpoons off to the long boats, their whaling boat had been dragged underwater for twenty minutes, leaving them swimming in the bloody water with sharks close by.

I push those thoughts back as I look across the sea at the three other traditional sailing craft from the village also closing in on the unsuspecting whale. I can still see our whale laying on the surface with its big black back exposed to us, blowing out steady spouts of white mist. The whale is at least twice the size of each of our boats. We are all a good distance away when the men on all of our whaling boats stand up once more. They take down the sails and lower the masts on their pivots. The tasks are finished quickly, then a long bamboo handled harpoon is handed up to each young man in the front of the boat. We turned around before the other boats, and now we are all hunting the surfaced whale from different angles, surrounding it so it will be between us. These boats have narrow ramps constructed on their sterns, and as I watch the young harpooners mount the ramps, my heart leaps.

I feel a sense of dread as we approach the big beautiful whale. As we are all stalking it, my instinct is to somehow warn

Jake

I spent two wonderful years of my life,
Shooting over a retriever given to my wife.

Retrieve he did and upon command,
He'd lay on the floor, take food from your hand.

The weather tightened the lake as an omen:
Only one spot remained unfrozen.

I left Jake untied by the gate.
The sky was dark, the hour was late.

We heard the quaking of ducks once or twice;
I never thought he'd brave the ice.

During the night, as if by silent command
He made his final retrieve into the Promised Land.

You try to remain unattached,
But love has a way of throwing the latch.

I ask all my friends with hunting in their blood,
Next time you see your mutt (for Jake) give me a hug.

Looking in starboard it's not all sad.
Hey! Jake's retrieving for my Dad.

It'll give them some time to chum around,
Before my ship runs aground.

Hal Meili (CJ-52)

it. It must have been all of the excitement of the chase that had blocked this feeling. I feel terrible that there is nothing I can do for my whale friend except to yell out. Due to my current situation, however, the noise can only sound inside my head. Dive whale, dive, do it now! The whale can't hear me though and probably wouldn't know what to do. Sperm whales have very few natural enemies. I had come along to see this, so I just stand up to watch and get ready to jump out of the boat if necessary.

The harpooners are all in place as we approach the whale. On the boat directly across from us, my eyes are drawn to the man who will jump at the massive prey. He begins to shift around on his short ramp walkway- I can only guess that he is trying to build up his nerve. He is doing a little jig, his long bamboo spear is flexing up and down. Seconds turns to minutes, it now seems. Then that man is in the air and into his powerful leap, driving his harpoon down towards the whale's flesh below. I cringe at the sight. It is only a second before the space between all of our boats explodes with an incredible splash followed by the huge black fluked tail of the whale as it tosses the harpooner back up and high up into the morning air. The whale is gone then into the depths below, diving away from its hunters.

The whale escaped us this time and, to be honest, I'm glad it has. Whales are such beautiful, peaceful, creatures. Even so, I find that I am torn between the shock and thrills experienced on this rare adventure. This hunt will always be a proud memory for me whenever I recall it. The hours of paddling together, each of us pulling our own weight, focused on a common goal. I will always know that once I was part of the amazing teamwork that it has taken for us to hunt this whale. It reminds me of my years as a smokejumper and Hotshot: the togetherness, the common goals, the hard work, and the common way of life. I have come to realize even though the moments always pass, the memories of the times and efforts that we have spent together will always remain with us as we all in our own ways continue to live the dream. 🐳

Life's a Beech

by Tom Decker (Idaho City '64)

The Beech's throaty roar,
Harley Davidson
of old smokejumper aircraft,
and, my God, that distinctive noise

still vibrates memories
of wind blasts through open doors
and flaps-down approaches
to let out streamers and jumpers

over smokey drop zones.
Long Beach now with palm trees
instead of pine and aspen,
but overhead, the Beech is back!

LETTERS

Editor:

What a great time we all had at the 2004 reunion in Missoula. The only thing that was not up to par was the golf tournament. I have attended every reunion starting in 1984 and I have played in all the golf tournaments. This year I was finally on the winning team. We all had a good time in spite of the weather. It was a nice nine-hole course we played. However, there was no prize for the winners! At all the previous reunions they had really neat prizes. It would have been nice to take home something to remember our victory. Julio and Bob were a little bummed too.

“Wild Bill” Yensen (McCall '53)

Editor:

I came across an old jumper pilot living here in Bend (Oregon). His name is Dean Ford and he flew the DC-3 out of Redmond in the 60s. Dean was a colonel in the Army Air Corps. He flew the Burma Hump way back in the early 40s. I met him a few years back driving disabled veterans up to the V.A. hospital in Portland. In the winter they team-drove just in case of bad weather, chaining up etc. We teamed together.

Anyway, next time you're in Bend, maybe you could interview him for a feature in the NSA magazine. There's a lot of history behind him. He would be a good read!

Steve Wilkins (Redmond '65)

Fellow Smokejumpers,

Chuck recently asked if I would share some of my cowboy prose with the crew. I told him, yes, as long as everyone keeps a sense of humor. I learned from pioneer stockman and friend, Jared Nessel, the importance of putting down the everyday and the not so everyday events of life in cowboy prose. In particular, cowboy poetry is not affected by the politically correct and the latest “verbology” - except to poke fun at it. Cowboy poems get at the truth with humor and rhyme. I know that some high officials might not take kindly to the fun I direct at the latest in “management malfunctions”. I mean no ill will towards anyone, but only desire to record how life plays out on the ground. I will try and include a poem in each issue of the Smokejumper or until you all say “enough is enough.”

Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

Quadruple Supervision

-or-

“A Wyoming Rangers Lament”

Sometimes a good thing just don't work
When you're ridding for this outfit
Like Pinchot's way to “decentralize”
Now he got it right – for certain!

Where every man had just one boss
And all who work the district
Know of this fact; **Those District Rangers they all sat;**
Just a little left of GOD

Then out of Harvard did appear
A brand new way to manage
Centralize, consolidate; reduce your field time
Then schedule twice the work to do and cut your bottom line

Then soon the zone it did appear
As districts faded under
So now you drive... and drive... and drive
A days three quarter ride

First Black Rock; then the Greybull;
Clarks Fork, Paintrock, Teensleep;
Elk Mountain and Encampment; no longer
On the ledger; of forest ranger districts

Consolidate the Medicine Bow
With the Routt across state lines
Then throw in Thunder Basin
“Now there's a big out circle ride”

With all the driving that we do
This going to and fro;
We now, can start and stop our pay
For a new boss every day

There's one for every District that you're trying to appease
And now it seems the forest staff thinks he's
the bigger cheese
But the darndest thing I must admit; is
“mass computerized confusion”
The Regional staff in Denver writes; for your
personal communion

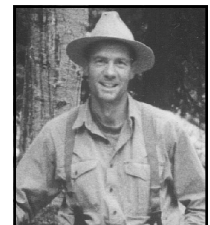
It's just the start what we all fear – more
supervisory obtrusion

And through it all the worst you see
Has happened to the service
With all the driving to and fro
There's nothing left to offer

I guess that's why the public;
Prints shirts and cups and hats
That labels this here outfit
A Forest Circus Act

Out circle: Cowboy term for riding the outside circle first and proceeding in during roundup.
“Forest Circus” U.S. Department of Aggravation paraphernalia can be purchased off the internet at www.forestcircus.com. Forest Circus merchandise is protected under U.S. Copyright laws.

Pinchot: Gifford Pinchot was the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service under President Theodore Roosevelt. He was later fired by President Taft for standing up to corrupt politicians and the “politically correct” of the Taft Administration. Roosevelt countered with the new Progressive Party. 🐿



Karl Brauneis (NSA file)

Karl is a member of the “Cowboy Poets of Wind River” Incorporated and can be reached at brauneisfam@wyoming.com



Items from the Fire Pack



The Saga of the Sagging Sill

I had a red log cabin on the western edge of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation where the floor was sloping at the front door. After ten years the slope grew and the door opened only 20 percent. The enormity of replacing the large 14-inch bottom log running the full length of the cabin was paralyzing.

I confided the dilemma to **Tedford Lewis** (MSO-43) expecting a polite brush-off. Ted is a long-time engineer and contractor, a man who has built schools on Pacific Islands for church organizations, a big time operator who could not be bothered with sagging cabin sills. In a week Ted was there with **Fred Rungee** (MSO-45), now an Alaskan homesteader and a jack-of-all-trades. I brought **Bill Carlsen** (MSO-43). I could see that this outfit (of former CPS jumpers) could fix anything! Ted and his mighty little jack went to work. Levels were read and flat stones were micro-positioned. Four years later the door of the cabin still works great.

Roy Wenger
(CPS-103 Administrator)

I Liked Everything in the Smokejumpers

My father ran a sawmill in Ohio where we lived in a community made up of Mennonite and Amish people. In 1942 I entered a CPS Camp at Marietta, Ohio. There were 70 fellows in the camp and 22 religious denominations. I wanted to go west and, within six months, I was on my way to Beldon, Montana. At Beldon, I asked to go to the smokejumpers and was the only one chosen. I liked everything in the smokejumpers. The training was tough, but I liked it. I was in the smokejumpers for one summer

before being released from CPS in 1946.

Dennis Miller (MYC-45)

We Developed the Static Line

It was during the summer of 1940 that we developed the static line. We took a 16-foot lead rope from the pack string and tied it to the plane and to our ripcord. When we jumped out, it would open our parachute and seemed to give us a little more confidence in jumping. After we had made several experimental jumps with the static line, we decided that this was the way to go.

Earl Cooley (MSO-40)

Special Delivery!

We headed west across the desert scablands of Spokane to Twisp in the Tri-motor. Our pilot was **Slim Phillips**, a skilled and daring flyer, comfortably at home in the goose. **Chuck Chapman** (MSO-44), **Loren Zimmerman** (MSO-43) and myself were to jump a fire after we dropped some supplies at a fire lookout on the way. Slim waggled his wings and dropped toward the lookout tower, pulling up over the mountaintop as the spotter prepared to drop the supplies. Very close, I thought, as the left wheel nicked a treetop and started spinning. I think those supplies landed right in the kitchen.

David Flaccus (MSO-43)

Bottom Floor Please

I aimed for a nice big spruce but overshot and started to tumble through the branches. Next I felt like I was falling down a 100-foot elevator shaft as the trunk of the tree flashed past me. I could see the log on the ground that I expected to crash on. Suddenly, my chute caught on a branch and left me dangling with my toes touching the log. I shifted my weight, unsnapped my

harness and stepped down onto the log.

Dick Flaharty (MSO-44)

POWs on the Fireline

Three of us jumped a fire on the Klamath N.F. It was much too big for us, and we were reinforced the next day by nine native-American Indians and forty prisoners of war. We got it under control in a few days and hiked 20 miles out to the nearest road where a truck took us to the Happy Camp ranger station.

Albert Bray (CJ-45)

Man, It Was Cold!

We had just finished training a military group from Alaska and the Forest Service had given them our sleeping bags. We got a fire call from Yellowstone Park just before evening and landed at about 8,200 feet elevation. We all slept close to the fire that night and **Harry Burks** (MSO-43) got his blanket scorched.

Bryn Hammarstrom (MSO-43)

More Young Men and Fire

Earl (Cooley) said, "Fellows, that's not all fog in the valley; there's a lot of fire down there." We jumped all eight and, before the first day ended, got 16 additional jumpers. There were fires, fires, and fires. We started at the stream on the flank and built line. The afternoons were exhausting as we struggled in the steep area. Everyday the fire grew in spite of all we could do! Finally on the eighth day we were told to hike out and some smokejumpers would mop up.

Lee Hebel (MSO-44)

Nervous?

I remember the first jump most vividly. The Tri-motor looked enormous and much too heavy to get off the ground. We sat in two

rows of four, trying not to look scared. This was silent, masked pretense, each one conjuring up his maximum machismo. **Dexter McBride** (MSO-45) sat next to me. Before being drafted, he had been the City Attorney of Norfolk, Virginia. He must have planned ahead, for he was reading a small paperback. I looked down to see the title: "The Release of Nervous Tension".

Nick Helburn (MSO-44)

Screen a Good Steak Through the Face Mask

It was a real boring season, and I was about ready to check out when **Jack Heintzelman** (CJ-43) told us we got a call from the Chelan Forest in Northern Washington. We drove to Medford where a Marine Corps DC-3 picked us up and flew us to Wenatchee. After being fed a steak dinner, we took off. About a half dozen Forest Service personnel went

along to see the jump. The air was rather bumpy, and I noticed that some of the men in green were turning a color to match their uniforms. It was almost funny until one of them missed the (barf) bag and that strong acrid smell reached me. I needed to get out of there quick and didn't care where I landed. On the way down, my facemask filled up with what was left of that good meal.

Calvin Hilty (CJ-43) 🦋

Smokeyjumper Milestones Update

"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 to: pegmark@juno.com or mail them to Mark Corbet, 1740 SE Ochoco Way, Redmond, OR 97756.

Multi-Generation Jumpers:

Father:	Paul Wilson (MSO-50)
Son:	Pat Wilson (MSO-80)
Paul's Brother:	Carl Joe Wilson (MSO-52)
Cousin:	Skip Stoll (MSO-51)

Youngest first year jumper:

Age 15 + 3 mos.-**Walter (Buddy) Stokes** (PNOR-45)

Youngest Smokejumper

by Mark Corbet (LaGrande '74)

Walter (Buddy) Stokes (PNOR-45) could not wait to join the service during WWII. Born on July 5, 1930, he lied about his age and joined the U.S. Army at age 14. The following year, as a member of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, he made four fire jumps. At this time, the date of his first fire jump is unknown, but the last fire jump by the 555th was on October 6, 1945. Buddy was no more than 15 years and 3 months old by that date. That should qualify him for recognition as the youngest smoke-jumper and the first smokejumper from the Pendleton, Oregon (PNOR), group to be recognized in Milestones. 🦋

NSA Needs Merchandising Person

NSA Merchandising is an important contributor to the funding and public awareness of the association. Under the volunteer direction of Chuck Sheley, the merchandise business has grown steadily. After many years of hard work, Chuck is ready to dedicate more of his time to other NSA interests. *WE NEED YOU* to "hook up" and help the NSA continue the success of this important revenue producer. NSA is looking for a motivated volunteer who can manage all aspects of the merchandise store. A great volunteer would have the motivation to grow the business and continue this important function of the NSA. You would need to: Receive and fill customer orders, manage inventory and forecast merchandise needs, develop merchandise flyer, work with Webmaster on web store, track & record all sales & shipments. Computer work is necessary. Volunteer work can be conducted from your home FOR INFORMATION CALL STAN LINNERTZ 1-800-288-8504x3218 or 402-560-3226 or Email Stan.Linnertz@usis-csd.com

Jumps and Letdowns with the 204-B

by Dirk Chandler (Redding '64)

I jumped for just one season. During that period, a myriad of experiences occurred. This was probably due to the good fortune (or just plain bad luck) of working for **Bob 'Black Mac' McDonald** (MSO-52). Just the fact that his nickname was Black Mac gave cause for concern. Once you really got to know Bob, you had a feeling that your concern was totally justified.

Associated with our jumper group was an ex-jumper, **Ralph Johnston** (RDD-63). That year Ralph jumped a fire and had the misfortune of having his chute collapse between two trees, resulting in two broken legs. As Ralph was unable to continue jumping, he was put in charge of a Bell and a 204-B helicopter that were attached to our base. His title is unknown to me, but I would classify it as Helicopter Experimentation Leader. I think Mac and Ralph concocted an idea that since there were a lot of new people around the base, let's see if we can scare the crap out of them.

Our first experience with the Bell was to simulate jumping on a fire at low levels, about six to eight feet. There was one large bush on the base and we made numerous jumps on it. At some point, the bush was not worthy of jumping into, so we went on to other endeavors.

Our first experience with the 204-B was a high elevation jump. The 204-B would hold eight parachute jumpers. As I recall, the D-ring was not much more than a quarter of an inch in diameter, and I was glad that there were a lot bigger fellows ahead of me to test it. One at a time we would attach out static line to the D-ring, climb out on the step, get a slap on the back from our spotter, and off we would go.

Everyone I talked to after the jump said it was the easiest and smoothest jump they had ever made. Not for me! As I made my departure, the pilot made a sharp turn to the left. When my chute fortunately opened, I found my chin attached to my breastbone. My chute had twisted so badly that I was unable to look up to see if anything good or bad was happening.

I am guessing that we jumped from about one thousand feet, and by the time I came free from my twisting/untwisting, I was on the ground. I knew the pilot quite well by this time and, afterwards, I asked him what was going on. He said something to the effect that he was just having a little fun. Bully for him.

Mac, in his infinite wisdom, decided to experiment with letdowns from the 204-B from an elevation of about 200 feet. This type of operation had not been done before, at least not to our knowledge, so it could possibly be hazardous to our health. With this in mind, Mac determined that we would make our letdowns over Shasta Lake. If something bad happened, we would land in the water and die with our body intact, rather than have it splattered all over the ground.



204-B Redding 1964 (Courtesy Dirk Chandler)

With swimsuit, harness, gloves and Sky-Jennie, eight of us boarded the 204-B and proceeded to the lake. At about 200 feet, one person would attach his static line to that little D ring I referred to earlier and climbed out on the skid. The spotter gave the go sign and the jumper would begin his letdown. When the end of the 150-foot nylon rope reached the water, the helicopter would hover and the jumper would continue down until he reached the water. I don't think Mac asked anyone if they could swim.

When **Tom Adams** (RDD-64) reached the water, the end of his nylon rope had swollen and he was not able to exit the Sky-Jennie. The pilot, not knowing this, took off. Tom was lifted out of the water and hauled around for a while before anyone (hopefully the spotter) realized he was in trouble. He was soon dropped back in the water near the shoreline, where he was able to pull the line through the Jennie and free himself.

During this time, Mac saw Tom return to the water and waded out to help him. Evidently Bob's 'Black Macks' got filled up with fish or his galoshes filled up with mud, because as Tom remembers, Mac had to have some help in returning to shore.

Ralph Johnston also did a lot of experimenting with the 204-B in regard to water drops at low elevations. This was done only at the base as far as I know.

It would be interesting to know if our 1964 jumper group was the first to try helicopter jumping and letdown or if military or other forest service personnel had done so before us. If our group was the first, even if only the first forest service unit, it might be something to retain for the smokejumper archives. 🍄



Touching All Bases



Send information for this column to Mike McMillan (FBX-96) at potfireimages@hotmail.com.

Silver City Base Report

by Wayne Williams (MSO-77)

Unlike past years, the Southwest (Region 3) experienced above average spring rains. The Gila National Forest was no exception. When the 21 detailers arrived on May 20th, the landscape was green with one of the biggest outbreaks of wildflowers in recent memory.

As in past years the crew was made up of jumpers from Regions 1, 4, 5, and 6 with Missoula being the host for operations. The crew had one of the slowest seasons since 1998 with only 14 jump fires, 46 fire jumps, three overhead assignments, and one para-cargo mission. The crew fire hours totaled 1,779. Project work was mostly fire training for the Gila type II crew (SWFF) and sewing projects for total of 327 hours. The crew participated in three RX burns and one WFU for a total of 2,100 person hours with 21,000 acres treated. The loft got some well-deserved maintenance with a new swamp cooler, two new heavy-duty screen doors, and two suit-up racks. Jumpers, while not on assignment, accomplished these improvements.

There were no booster crews this year. The monsoons finally set up around July 15th. The remainder of the 15 jumpers headed north to the emerging fire season on July 21st.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of a Smokejumper record: three fire jumps in one day. On July 19th, 1964, **Larry Eisenman** (MSO-58) and **Jim Crockett** (MYC-48) jumped three fires on the Gila National Forest: the Pine Fire at 0920, the Yellow Fire at 1530, and the Frank Fire at 1810, jumped out of Me Own airstrip. The story goes that Crockett was hurt on the second fire jumped. Crockett and Eisenman decided to hide the injury from **Dick Tracy** (spotter & base manager) in order to get the third fire jump and break the record. The aircraft was a twin beach with the first fire spotted by Allen, the other two by Tracy. The 1964 fire season was busy with 99 fires for a total of 253 fire jumps.

McCall Base Report

by Rick Hudson (NIFC-73)

Fire season 2004 was moderate for the McCall jump base. Milder temperatures and early summer storms brought enough moisture to keep even the Salmon River canyon



looking green throughout the fire season. Without the jump action on booster details to Alaska, the Great Basin and R-6, McCall had only a paltry 25 fires locally. With a list of 63 jumpers, McCall made 309 fire jumps nationwide.

Single resource assignments helped the list to rotate into fall season with some folks assisting FEMA recovery from the destruction in the "hurricane highway" of the southeast. Prescribed fire details to Gunnison, the Salmon/Challis, and the Payette are currently in progress as the burning window narrows. Ten McCall jumpers joined ten Redding jumpers in a cone collecting and fuels reduction project on the San Bernardino National Forest in September. Surfing lessons at the California beaches on a day off were the highlight

of the trip.

Frankie Romero (MYL-89), the new McCall Base Manager, reported to work October 17. He has been the FMO on the White River National Forest near Rifle, Colorado, for the last few years. His biggest challenge will be finding reasonable and affordable housing in the booming real estate market of McCall.

Brett Bittenbender (MYL-88), who has spent the last few years jumping out of GAC, and **Eric Eastep** (MYL-00) have filled squadleader positions. **Joe Brinkley** (MYC-98) will detail into the Assistant Training Foreman position to help with the incredibly demanding hiring process. Rookies (NEDS), **Jake Class**, **Wes Gregory** and **JT Belton** comprised the entire graduation class. The APHIS climbing continued into the fall with two to Chicago and four to New Jersey.

Colors have arrived on the mountainsides, with cool frosty mornings followed by a few hours of warm sunshine in the afternoon. If you're out early enough, you can hear the elk bugling before sunrise. Though a hunter fire is not out of the question, most jumpers are trading stories involving fishing, hunting or looking further down the road- a good, season-ending snowfall.

Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan (FBK-96)

Alaska was dealt its biggest fire season on record in 2004. No corner of the state was spared from thick, choking smoke - paralyzing airports, highways and tourism, drifting south to the Lower 48 and far north into Russia. About six-and-a-half million acres burned. Despite a normal winter, drought conditions plagued Alaska, fueling huge fires and

denying the efforts of firefighters everywhere.

The first fire jumped was on May 20 – the beginning of a rash of lightning-strike fires burning out west. In June, **Jim Dibert** (FBK-99) led a planeload to 300 yards of driftwood burning on a beach in the Bering Sea. Former Alaskan **Jim Raudenbush** (FBK-82) called swiftly to correct claims of 'first jump on Stewart Island'. Apparently it was the second. Thanks, Jim.

As the interior was swept with dry lightning, the brunt of fire action soon focused on the Yukon Zone, where firefighters defended the oil pipeline, native villages, towns and wilderness. Three million acres burned in the Upper Yukon Territory alone. Several fires were jumped in ANWR, two of them near Arctic Village.

Finding water sources, even map-reading presented challenges. Lakebeds dried to clearings, swamps and streams had disappeared. Black spruce forests, trees rusty and drought-stressed, dominated the fuels burned - and the tundra was dry as toast. As of October 1, sixty fires still burned in Alaska, despite freezing temperatures and snowfall.

Air Operations were shut down in Fairbanks repeatedly in 2004, forcing resources into outstations and stranding firefighters on large, unstoppable wildfires with no air support.

State and Federal Fire Managers will likely review initial attack priorities within Alaska's Fire Management Plan. Several fires last year were plotted in monitor-only status, only to demand full attention later. Smokejumpers remain more dependable than weather forecasts.

The Alaska Smokejumpers, accustomed to stopping most fires during initial attack, faced relentless challenges in the urban interface and beyond. About one hundred boosters from the BLM and USFS joined our jump-list in 2004, the last boost arriving from Boise on August 28. More than 800 jumpers were dropped on initial attack incidents in 2004, with nearly the same number of training jumps being made. Jump kings with 13 were **Bruce Nelson** (FBK-81) and **Ryan Ringe** (FBK-01). During the past two fire seasons, the only jump injuries to Alaska smokejumpers were a broken pinky and a strained neck.

In July, a fire threatening the tourist-town of Bettles was at one point distinguished as the nation's top wildfire priority.

Alaska jumper **Mike Lambright** (FBK-99) was the incident commander - forming a Type-III team entirely of AK jumpers and operating essentially as a Type-II team with little support. Thanks to a misrouted box of "Tim McGraw Concert 2004" t-shirts sent to Bettles, the team was fitted with proper uniforms, complete with position titles scrawled boldly on their backs in black marker. We figure McGraw would be right proud he joined our war on wildfire. Flames gobbled 130,000 acres as crews protected structures, including the ghost town of Old Bettles.

Five Canadian Water Scooping CL-215's and CL-415's made a big splash in Alaska in 2004. Minimal turnaround times, tandem drops of 800-1450 gallons per load, and fire-savvy pilots made the 'Ducks' an invaluable addition to

Alaska's minimal air tanker fleet.

An exchange with Canada's Search and Rescue Unit was also beneficial last year. "Mission-wise and organizationally, their program and ours have strong parallels," said **Bill Cramer** (NIFC-90). Cramer credits the success of Alaska jumpers during difficult situations to the crew's experience level. Half of our 66 jumpers are Division Boss qualified, and more than one-third are IC-3 qualified.

The town of Central was again a hotspot. Several management teams came and went as flames threatened homes and the hot springs in Circle. Noted for exceptional leadership efforts are smokejumpers **Mike O'Brien** (FBK-98) and **Chris Silks** (FBK-91), both serving as division bosses on the incident. Residents vented frustration about the number of overhead teams rotating on the fire, each using varying tactics. More than one gun-toting local leveled threats at firefighters seeking access to the fire's path. Fortunately, folksy proclamations such as "I'm gonna' shoot that bastard in the belly," did not materialize. Other residents offered gratitude with food, drink, and assistance. Stress levels remained high as jumpers and crews worked tirelessly, saving all but one outbuilding.

Alaska's oil pipeline was spared despite being engulfed in flames. (See www.spotfireimages.com for photos.) Wildfires at the Yukon Crossing sent crews scrambling to save houses, villages, fish camps and the Hot Spot Cafe, a popular truck stop on the Elliot Highway.

Most jumpers in Alaska worked sixty days in the field. In August, two loads remained to catch spotfires on the Pingo Fire near Veneite. For weeks the crew was battered by cold northerly winds, whipping the camp cargo-canopy loudly overhead. Late one evening - with chill and delirium setting in, the conversation briefly turned to the subject of animal intelligence - then changed again. Minutes passed and the group fell silent. Several jumpers walked into the dark toward their tents. Boise jumper **Scott Morrow** (RDD-98) sat and stared blankly at the smoldering campfire, then quietly spoke. "KoKo can talk." Nobody replied.

The jump base became memory lane last summer for a handful of former AK jumpers scabbing assignments in God's country. Spotted in the garden shaking his head was **Rod Dow** (MYC-68). **John Gould** (FBK-81), **Steve Nemore** (RAC-69), **Al Biller** (FBK-82), **Craig Irvine** (RDD-75) **Mike Clarkson** (RAC-65), **Jeff Bass** (MYC-77), **Tom Boatner** (FBK-80) and **Tom Romanello** (FBK-88) were also on scene. **John Dube** (RAC-70) continued his archeological digs on the North Slope.

In August, booster **Chris Young** (GAC-92) discovered and unearthed a mammoth tusk near the Yukon River. Intact at six feet long, 150 lbs., and perhaps 10,000 years old, the tusk immediately became an object of controversy. A lively game of "Science Fair meets Keystone Cops" ensued, as various agency officials jockeyed to stake their claim. In the end, the Alaska Smokejumpers were awarded custody of the relic, on the condition it is preserved and publicly displayed within a year. Let it be done. Good eye, Chris

EMT Supervisor **Paul Lenmark** (FBK-96) accepted the

fire program manager position in Dillon, MT. Good luck, rookie bro! **Steve Theisen** (FBK-86) accepted the FMO position on the Buffalo N.F. in Arkansas. Steve will wear the Park Service colors well and will be missed. The return of **Buck Nelson**, **Jon Larson** (FBK-89), **Bruce Ford** (MSO-75), and **Mitch Decoteau** (GAC-78) is questionable for 2005. Their contribution and dedication to the Alaska Smokejumpers through the decades is immeasurable.

Nelson plans to produce more of his popular hunting-adventure videos, found at www.bucktrack.com. Larson will return in the spring to retire. Ford will likely revisit the Russian smokejumpers and continue painting.

We have high hopes that Decoteau will return in 2005, simply to redeem his last paracargo mission on September 17. After spotting eight jumpers on the Pingo Fire near Venetie, the heaviest supplies were targeted for the creek bank. A box containing ten gallons of gasoline landed in hot ashes, and was quickly aflame, hissing at approaching jumpers. "KaBOOM!" is how **Chris Silks** described what happened next. Another explosion immediately followed, sending black smoke and rolling flames mushrooming skyward.

On the same fire, two creative quarter 'flips' designated **Mike Lambright** as the jumper who had to speak like a pirate the entire day. **Mike O'Brien** won the opportunity to haul all fireline paracargo to the helispot on his own. Both jumpers did their duty with dignity, mate.

Overall, the paracargo shop had a stellar year, delivering 298,000 pounds on fires, training and project missions. When reached for comment, the consensus of the cargo crew was simply, "PC rocks, dude." New on the PC roster this year are **Jon Kawczynski** (FBK-96) and **Jeff Stark** (FBK-03), both doing a great job. **Charlie Brown** (FBK-88) and **Steve Theisen** completed their Air Tactical Group Supervisor training, and **Chris Silks** and **Doug Carroll** (FBK-94) both shined as first-year spotters.

Planning marriages are **Robert Yeager** (RDD-92) and Deborah, **Jason Jordet** (NCSB-00) and Irene, **Jeff McPetridge** (MYC-93) and Mia, **Jeff Stark** and Laura, **Paul Lenmark** and Trina, and **Doug Carroll** and Hillary. **Branden Petersen** (FBK-01) and wife, Lynn, had son, Caleb. **Frank Goodson** (RDD-95) and wife, Rebecca, had daughter, Madilyn Skye.

Ex-jumper **La-Ona DeWilde** (FBK-99) earned her Master's degree in Biology from UAF with honors last spring. **Mike Silva** (RDD-72) retired as FMO of the Yukon Zone. Heavy use of smokejumpers in recent years has immortalized the territory in our minds as "The Silva Zone." Good luck, Mike.

Late in the summer, Dow, the godfather of 'The Big Flip', emerged from a pickup truck to a rowdy ovation before taking his turn at the table and the official silver quarter. The Big Flip was ultimately won by rookie **Jason Gibb** (GAC-04), who had not yet jumped a fire. In light of Gibb's generosity, his jumpless status was easily forgiven. Jason donated nearly his entire winnings to several smoke-jumper welfare funds, including the **David Liston** (FBK-98) Memorial Fund, which actively seeks contributions. Thanks,

Jason. Please visit www.alaskasmokejumpers.com for more info on the Liston Fund.

In late August, it rained long enough for management teams to pull the plug, completely demobilizing large incidents just before fire season kicked back into gear. In turn, the jump base was again empty long enough for more boosters to arrive. This earned many AK bros long-awaited reprieves in the form of hunts and fishing trips. Moose, caribou, sheep and salmon were slaughtered as a result.

In September, **Rob Allen** (FBK-93) and **Chip Houde** (FBK-88) served as BLM liaisons to FEMA, traveling to Alabama to deal with Hurricanes Frances and Ivan.

Many thanks to **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65) for heading up last issue's TAB column with no notice. I accosted Murry by satellite phone while I was on fire assignment, and he came through once again. Sounds like Taylor may be hanging up his racing gloves. His exploits on the dirt track can be enjoyed at www.jumpingfire.com.

North Cascades Base Report

by Matt Desimone (RAC-97)

It's October 1, and the fire season continues to linger here in the North Cascades. To date we have staffed 75 fires with 357 jumps. The NCSB crew had another tremendously successful year with no lost-time injuries. Kudos to the bro's for staying focused and making safety our priority.

In the news, **John Button** (NCSB-75) was selected as the new base manager here at North. Congratulations to him on the promotion and a big thank you for his patience and dedication to the job. Also with new promotions were **Tim Lum** (RDD-91), **J.P. Knapp** (NCSB-96) and **Matt Desimone** (RAC-97) to GS 7/8 squad leaders.

With the arrival of fall, our project-work season has ramped up to high gear. **Nan Floyd** (RAC-00) and **Ryan Taie** (NCSB-00) are currently in New Jersey continuing tree-climbing work for APHIS. Five folks are part of a Region 6 jumper crew assigned to helping out with Florida FEMA hurricane disaster relief. We have four jumpers in Dorena, Oregon, taking part in EC4 Arborist Heavy Rigging training, and two folks dedicated to maintenance of the local ATV trail system. The remainder of the crew is being kept busy with prescribed fire duties and climbing for mistletoe on the local districts.

On September 11th, the crew had the honor of taking part in the opening ceremonies at a Seattle Mariners ball game. The crew, joined by the players, took the field on the 3rd base line for the National Anthem and in remembrance of fallen emergency services personnel. The opening pitch was thrown by, you guessed it, The Honorable Mr. **Dale Longanecker** (RAC-74).

Grangeville Base Report

by Robin Embry (GAC-85)

It's been close to twenty years now that I've been a smokejumper at Grangeville and nary a fire season has ever passed when I haven't heard discussion of the dreaded "August Singularity". This mythical event normally pops up in conversation and doomsayer's predictions as soon as we

get so much as a sprinkle here in August. For folks who have never heard of the “August Singularity”, it is defined in the following: “During the normal weather pattern, July and August are usually the driest months of the year in the Selway Bitterroots and the Clearwater Mountains. During the third week of August, there is the *chance* for enough precipitation to significantly reduce the likelihood of large fires in the area.” When that “chance” becomes realized, that is an “August Singularity”.

As long as we’re discussing definitions, I’ll just throw out the definition of a “season ending event”. The first season ending event can be defined as: “three consecutive days with one half inch or more of precipitation.” We’re not really concerned as to the second definition since the first one works just fine.

Our “August Singularity” started Aug. 22 and didn’t end until Sept. 19, putting an abrupt end to our fire season. With the exception of a few weeks in late July/early August, it was a fairly slow year for us locally. Fortunately, the “national shared resources” part of the plan seemed to be working well, and we were able to send boosters out to Alaska, British Columbia, Winthrop, Redmond, Grand Junction, and Carson City.

As mentioned in the previous base report, **Walt Currie** (MSO-75) jumped a fire on the Elk City/Red River District of the Nez Perce N.F. for one last look at the Salmon River Breaks. Walt is planning to hang up the boots next June, and we will certainly keep folks posted on when that party’s going to be.

Brett Bittenbender (MYL-88) will be leaving us next month for a squadleader position back in McCall. We’ll certainly miss him here and wish him the best of luck in McCall.

It’s pretty quiet here these days. We have people in Florida, passing out “blue tarps”, people in New Jersey climbing trees and looking for beetles, and we’re also doing a lot of local project work: burning, marking timber, and trailwork amongst other things.

Redmond Base Report

by **Tony Sleznick** (RDD-92)

Redmond finished the fire season in fine order, considering the relatively tame burning conditions in Oregon this year. We accumulated 224 jumps on 56 fires. It’s not over as we enter a warm dry fall with active hunter and mushroom picker activity in our local woods from October until the snow flies. Every fire that we jumped out of Redmond this year was caught...lucky or just good?

Some milestones hit were 300 *fire jumps* for **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74). At 300 total jumps are **Mark Gibbons** (RAC-87) and **Dirk Stevens** (RAC-91). 100 total jumps made by **Brandon Coville** (RAC-00), **Mark Hentze** (RAC-00) and **Jeff Shipley** (RAC-01). Shipley recently soloed to get his private pilot’s license, a possible job transition?

Our 6 rookies survived and thrived this summer. Three detailers in the rookie class wonder how to finagle another jump season next year. Jump Hog honors this year, totaling 11 fire jumps, were shared by two rooks and some salt:

Heidi Bunkers (RAC-04), **Randy Lamb** (RAC-04), **Dirk Stevens** (RAC-91), and **Mark Hentze** (RAC-00). Only one injury occurred from a hard landing that resulted in facial lacerations from the impact of the facemask. The incident, though unfortunate, will hopefully spur on the evolution of a better helmet & facemask design.

Along with the overhead changes, **Mike Jackson** (RAC-86) was appointed operations foreman. **Tony Johnson** (RAC-97) is filling in as training foreman and continues as temporary squadleader and Rookie Spotter duties as does **Tony Sleznick** (RDD-92).

As the Asian Longhorned Beetle continues to ravage the east coast, **Brandon Coville** (RAC-00), **Josh Cantrell** (RAC-97) and **Ralph Sweeney** (RAC-01) brought their tree climbing skills to New Jersey. **Ron Rucker** (RAC-76) + 11 from Redmond have helped FEMA with Hurricane relief efforts in Florida. Some local Rx burning and mistletoe climbing should round out the year... and a great year it was.

Moving on were **Rene Lamoreaux** (RAC-89), who took a prevention tech position on the Deschutes NF, **Ben Machin** (RAC-01) claimed a life back in Vermont, taking **Jim Huthmaker** (RAC-02) back to the swamps of South Carolina with him! They say it may be their last season. We all know how that goes...

On the horizon for next year? **Bill Selby** (RAC-91) is feverishly working on the final position upgrades for the Redmond Base, which would include adding a loadmaster foreman position and up the total smokejumper crew numbers to 50, which would better staff our two Sherpa aircraft during 7-day coverage, yet still have jumpers available to fill single resource orders and project work requests. Redmond is leading the Forest Service Smokejumper bases to get these needed position upgrades. Budget, time, and patience will prove the reality.

So stay tuned! Lot’s of improvements have been made at Redmond. Come by and see us if you are in our neighborhood. The ice cream freezer is always full!

Missoula Base Report

by **Michael Goicoechea** (MSO-99)

Things here in Missoula are slowly starting to wind down. Currently, we have a 20-person crew in Florida assisting with hurricane relief efforts. Led by **Margarita Phillips** (MSO-88), latest intelligence reports tell us the crew rode out Hurricane Jeanne, (called Hurricane J-9 here in Missoula) somewhere in West Palm Beach, FL. **Wayne Williams** (MSO-77) is also on assignment in Florida as an information officer. Pre-positioned in Southern California is the Great Northern Crew led by **Bill Miller** (MSO-99). Helping fill out the crew are six Missoula Smokejumpers.

In New Jersey, we have four Missoula smokejumpers assisting APHIS in the latest outbreak of Asian Long-horned Beetles. And just last week a load of smokejumpers were requested to standby at the Kalispell Airport, when an Airplane carrying Forest Service personnel crashed in the Great Bear Wilderness; however their assistance was never requested due to initial reports of “no survivors” and

unfavorable weather for conducting jump operations.

As for the rest of the gang, they either went back to school to continue studying law or medicine with hopes of getting a real job someday or headed overseas to travel the world.

And some thrill seekers even ventured north to Alaska on a hunting expedition. Leading the party was expert hunting guide/smokejumper squadleader **Dan Helterline** (GAC-89).

Waiting anxiously here in Missoula to join Dan next week is Assistant Base Manager **Jeff Kinderman** (MSO-75). Jeff has officially announced he will retire after the first of the year if Dan can get him a world-class caribou to hang in the loft. The remaining Missoula foremen eagerly await the results. As for those left here in Missoula, we are helping local districts with fuels projects and prescribed burning. Several are gearing up to head to New Jersey in October to assist APHIS in the hunt for the Asian Long-horned Beetle, and Operations Foreman **Andy Hayes** (MSO-79) is waxing his skis daily in anticipation of first tracks down Grizzly Bowl.

To recap the 2004 Fire Season, Missoula Smokejumpers spent a majority of the season assisting in Smokejumper Operations in the Great State of Alaska. Alaska experienced the worst and longest fire season in the state's History. However, many Missoula Smokejumpers also spent time in California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Idaho, Montana and yes, believe it or not, North Dakota.

For the first time in smokejumper history, smokejumpers were dropped on an emerging fire in the Little Missouri National Grasslands of North Dakota. Led by **Kevin Lee** (MSO-79) the smokejumpers were used to set up a Type III organization and fill the critical overhead positions required in a Type III fire organization.

Before seasons end, the Missoula Smokejumpers stationed in Miles City jumped North Dakota two more times on Type III emerging fires as well as several other Type III emerging fires in Eastern Montana.

And if North Dakota wasn't enough for the history books, Missoula Smokejumpers spent time in Fort St. Johns, British Columbia, assisting the Canadian Para-Attack. Statistical totals for Miles City are as follows: One para-cargo mission, five proficiency jumps, four crew action fires, two single resource assignments, and 10 fires jumped by a total of 77 smokejumpers.

The Missoula Base had a relatively slow year (50% of average) when compared to the last five years. Two booster crews brought in from out of region jumped a total of 30 fires. All in all, the season would best be called "average" if we were to start comparing oat harvesters, with those making the trip to Alaska leading the race.

Off the injury report, only two Missoula Smokejumpers spent time on the injured reserve list, a cracked femur on a rescue jump and a dislocated shoulder on a fire jump being the culprits.

And last but not least, our hearts and prayers go out to all those serving our country in the Armed Services: Missoula Smokejumper **Rob Ellis** (MSO-99) is currently

serving with the 14th Marine Expeditionary Unit in Iraq. Rob was mobilized and deployed in July of 2004.

West Yellowstone Base Report

by Tyler Robinson (FBX-88)

Our fire season started in July and ended shortly thereafter. The 2004 season produced nine fires allowing 38 jumps from West Yellowstone. We also blew up two horses and two moose with fireline explosives to reduce human/bear conflicts.

The jumpship, a Dornier 228-200 piloted by **Randy Leypoldt**, is off contract September 22, 2004. At present we are busy farming jumpers out on various assignments. These include **Hans Oaks** (WYS-04) return to the Bozeman District, **Brian Wilson** (WYS-98) to Dubois, Wyoming, to pick cones, **Melanie Pfister** (GAC-00) to New Jersey to climb trees with beetles, **Mike Nelson** (WYS-04) and **Ernie Walker** (RDD-01) to burn in Ashland, MT.

The bros put on a nice retirement party for Base Manager **Greg Anderson** (MSO-68). Many stories, gifts and beers were exchanged. Pilot Randy Leypoldt brought in an excellent cook to roast a pig. As the pig was cooking a young grizzly bear strolled through the base to check out Greg's gathering. Greg will be officially retiring January 3, 2005. We don't know who will get the base manager position but we know they will be hard pressed to fill Greg's shoes.

Most recently **Mark Duffy** (WYS-98) received a temporary GS-7 promotion. **Melanie Pfister** and **Brian Wilson** also received GS-7 promotions. Since **Chris Young's** (GAC-92) departure for GAC, **Hardy Bloemeke** (MSO-77) has been running the loft until we fly the position this fall. We will also be flying a training position at the GS-9 level this fall as well.

The slow fire season allowed plenty of slash piling and burning around the base. Other activities included fishing when time permitted, and it is looking like **Charlie Wetzel** (WYS-92) is going to win the big fish contest.

New bins now line the ready room and were crafted by jumpers this summer. So for those visiting in the future, please note the craftsmanship the bros provided. This past season also allowed many visits to the local watering hole, Strozis, which has become known as Rotary. As you can imagine many visits to Rotary have been completed.

With direction from **Billy Bennett** (WYS-98), jumpers gathered to build a fence for the local Ranger District. The finished product turned out great and led to nail pounding contests.

We also really appreciated all the help the BLM detail provided this past summer. **Hector Madrid** (MYC-89) kept the troops busy with project work as well. **Mark Belitz** (WYS-01) and his wife, **Jennifer Belitz** (MSO-01), are soon expecting their first child. **Casey Dunning** (WYS-02) is also expecting his first child sometime next year. We will keep you posted.

As of this writing, snow surrounds the peaks of West Yellowstone, and if you wake up early enough, you can hear the elk bugling.

Redding Base Report

by Nate Hesse (RDD-01)

A sign of the season slowing down is the talk amongst smokejumpers of their winter travel plans. The reins seem to be tugging on our fire season as cooler temps knock at our doors.

Our contracted DC-3 has headed back to Indiana for the off-season. However, we still have a contingent in south zone getting production done on a fuel break, while geared to tackle a blaze if we have a repeat of last seasons devastating fires. We still have jumpers available to take care of Northern California in case we get some lightning or a careless hunter is out and about.

We are making calls to line up some winter work, climbing, burning etc. **Rico Gonzalez** (RDD-99), **Bob Bente** (RDD-88), and **Justin Horn** (RDD 03) traveled to Saipan and Rota to help with the disaster relief as a result of a recent typhoon. In addition to our local Doppler, the weather folks upstairs have been updating us on the latest hurricane that is giving Florida a good thrashing. Checking the smokejumper status report shows troops already en route.

Kyle Dornberger (RDD-01) has designed and built an impressive display cabinet dedicated to **Big D Golik** (MYL-74) to house historical books and jumper gear from yesteryear. **Chris Joyce** (RDD-01) has enlisted in the California National Guard to do his part for our country, Chris plans to return to jumping in 2006. **Scott Smith** (RDD-02) is expecting his first baby boy in a couple of months.

Finally, there has been a jumper who has created a modern-day Gobi in the form of a little lawn ornament resembling Happy from the seven dwarfs. The unnamed dwarf, standing over a wishing well, apparently boarded a plane in RAC and took a short flight to Redding. He says he'll watch over the Sherpa and likes the enjoyable climate here in Northern California. This little treasure doesn't seem to want to leave...

Boise Base Report

by Kurt Atkins (NIFC-03)

2004 was one of our safest seasons on record (knock, knock). The 78 jumpers here at Boise jumped 169 fires, pounded 13, and helitacked two through the assorted outstations. Nevada had 64 fires, followed by Utah with 59, and Colorado with 54. Our outstations have been officially closed and their equipment stored away for the winter. Here in Boise, we've begun shifting gears from IA to Rx and various winter projects.

It's that time of year when people are trickling in and out for hunting trips and other vacation/leave. Four are in Twin Falls, Idaho, for a three-month paramedic school and several are preparing for the fall university semester.

We filled 33 Detail assignments in 2004, and 49 Single Resource assignments thus far. A few detailers are still out and about. **Michael Boomer** (NIFC-01) is currently acting as Smokejumper Coordinator at Western Great Basin.

Jerran Flinders (NIFC-04) is a foreman for Lone Peak IHC. **Deb Yoder** (RDD-00) is at the Great Basin Training Unit here at NIFC. **Matt Loe** (RDD-97) is at Las Vegas Dispatch. **Grant Beebe** (NIFC-90), our beloved Base Manager, is in Australia with Larry Hamilton, ironing out the firefighter exchange program. **Mike Tupper** (FBX-85) is attending the Colorado post-season meeting.

On October 7, four jumpers left to fill single-resource positions in assistance with disaster relief from Hurricane Ivan in Florida. **Wally Wasser** (MYC-79) and "Super" **Dave Zuares** (RDD-91) are division supervisors, **Dennis Terry** (RDD-90) is in operations, as is **Michelle Moore** (MSO-99). Michelle and **Dan Zach** (RAC-00) were recently married. **Zach** is our medical unit leader. **Frank** "The Tank" **Clements** (NCSB-88) will be heading to Long Island, NY, in late October as an instructor for Rx 300.

Dave Vining (NIFC-97) and wife, **Mel Dunton Vining** (MYC-99), had a healthy baby boy, Wiatt Alan, on September 24. He weighed 6 lbs. 10 oz. and is the grandchild of **Al Dunton** (FBKS-67). **Tim Shaeffer** (MYC-92) was promoted to our Rx assistant manager and **Paul Hohn** (MYC-00) to assistant fire training specialist.

Our Jump King had 19 fire jumps and it seems that 12 was about the average. **Wally Wasser** (MYC-79) hit *300 fire jumps* on June 29 and now has 311, his last on September 15. The crew party went off without a hitch on October 1, where we celebrated a safe, productive, and enjoyable season. 🙏



Four-man stick in Alaska (Courtesy Mike McMillan)

Smokejumping Has a Rich Legacy in Alaska Ski Racing

by Mike Durtschi (Fairbanks '79)

The picture is of Alaskans that participated in the 2004 Chevy Truck U.S. National Championships at Alyeska Resort, Alaska. The event brought together skiing champions from the past and present in a fun fund raising event.

Starting on the left is Hilary Lindh, daughter of **Craig Lindh** (MSO-59). Hilary took the silver medal in downhill at the '92 Olympics and the gold medal in downhill at the '97 World Championships. Next is **Mike Durtschi** (FBX-79). I wasn't a champion, but just liked firefighting in Alaska. They drug my rusty carcass out because I had spent two years on the U.S. ski team. One more body was needed to even up the teams and I lived here, so they didn't have to buy me a plane ticket. Beside me is Mike Makar, '90 World Junior downhill champion. Next is Tom Moe, son of **Tom Moe** (MSO-63). Tom won gold in downhill and silver in super-G at the '94 Olympics. Beside Tom is his wife, Megan Gerety, two time Olympian and 4th place finisher in the downhill at the '99 World Championships. On the far right is Paul Crews, patriarch of Alaska skiing. Paul was the first big gun to come out of the state, back in the late 60s, and just retired from 20+ years of coaching.

It was a fun event-beautiful weather, great snow, four champs (two of whom had jumpers for dads) and a good friend. I was the lucky one that day.

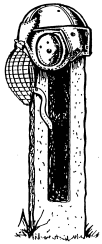
A lot of jumpers have passed through the Alaska ski scene over the years. **John Gould** (FBX-80) rode herd on a pack of rug rats at Big Mountain, Montana, one of which was the younger Tom Moe. **Lee Englesby** (FBX-77) jump- started a



Christmas holiday training camp with his U.S. ski team coaching experience in '83. **Rob Jones** (FBX-80), **Jim Olsen** (FBX-78), **Jim Raudenbush** (FBX-82) and **Rod Orr** (RAC-83) took advantage of free lodging, food, and beer to help haul poles, fences, and 11 tons of salt to set up and harden the race courses for the Alaska hosting of the '89 World Junior Championships. Probably the least known was **Tom Boatner** (FBX-80), who spent the winter traveling the ski race venues of Europe from the Alps to the Pyrenes. Each has made a contribution, each contribution has been

appreciated, and I am sure all had fun along the way.

Be careful when you strap skis on those kids. 🧠



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. Please

phone, write or e-mail the editor (see contact information on page three of the magazine). We'll take it from there.

Oliver L. Huset (Missoula '44)

Oliver died March 27, 2004. He grew up on a family farm in North Dakota, graduated from Crosley High School in 1939 and from the University of North Dakota in 1948 with a degree in civil engineering. Oliver was a member of the CPS-103 smokejumpers and worked the 1944 and 1945 seasons.

He worked in New York City as an engineer on various construction projects before returning to the University of North Dakota to take an instructor's position in mathematics and civil engineering in the 1970s. Oliver returned to the family farm and worked until retirement in 1997.

Dale A. Entwistle (Missoula '44)

Dale died January 16, 2004. He was a member of the CPS-103 smokejumpers jumping the 1944 and 1945 seasons. Dale lived in Missoula, Montana, and worked as a signal maintainer for the Milwaukee Railroad for 30 years. He moved to Nakomis, Florida, in 1985.

Richard A. Dillingham (Missoula '59)

Dick died July 28, 2004, after a courageous three-year battle with lymphoma. A native of Valparaiso, Indiana, he graduated from the University of Montana in 1960 with a B.A. in forest engineering. His professional career included work as a forest engineer for the Northern Pacific Railway in Missoula and positions in Washington state as a forest and civil engineer for the Scott Paper Co.; Island and Spokane counties; the City of Chelan; Rader, Leonard and Associates; Seiler Engineering; and Washington State University. He also owned his own business, Dillingham Engineering and Surveying Company. Following his retirement in 1996, he bicycled from coast to coast. He also enjoyed kayaking and traveling with his wife.

Paul L. Dominick (Cave Junction '51)

Paul died July 31, 2004, at age 78. He served in the South Pacific and Europe with the Seabees during WWII. After the war, he joined the 82nd Airborne before going to the Cave Junction smokejumpers in 1951. After he left smokejumping, Paul spent 50 years in forestry and retired as a foreman for the Department of Parks in New York City. He was also a former Captain for the Pocatello (NY) Fire Department and was instrumental in starting a judo camp for the YMCA that has been in operation for over 30 years.

Richard A. Faurot (Missoula '52)

Richard died June 26, 2004. He jumped at Missoula in 1952 and 1953 and was an NSA member. No details or obituary has been forwarded. If anyone can help, it would be appreciated.

Steve McDonald (Associate)

Steve died September 12, 2004, at the Glen Rose Medical Center Nursing Home in Glen Rose, Texas. On June 16th of this year, I received an email from Steve: "Chuck: FYI, I have gotten a terminal diagnosis with melanoma cancer. I wanted to let you know and be sure that you know how much I have appreciated our relationship. I don't know how much time there is but I start radiation treatments tomorrow—will see." Steve was the author of *Bitterroot* and *Baker 30*, both of which we carry in the NSA store.

Steve left the Forest Service in 1996, where he had been Line Officer in all Forest Service Divisions and had Senior Executive Service rank. He had a Master's Degree in Forestry from the University of Idaho and a Ph.D. from Colorado State University. "I did many things. The most interesting ones had to do with fire. Fire people are special, and the elite among them are smokejumpers. I'm proud to be an Associate Member of the NSA."

Asked about his books in a prior interview, he said, "It's virtually impossible for a new writer to break through with the major publishing houses. So, I self-published. I always wanted to write, but earning a regular paycheck came first, until now. My books are about the west, natural resources, forestry, aviation and things like that. They are fiction, so I can put a "human face" on the characters and have them say all the things that we said in private, but not officially. The two books I have out now - *Bitterroot* and *Baker 30* - draw on my own experiences. I try to make the stories entertaining."

Albert H. Devoe (Cave Junction '47)

Al died at the age of 81 on September 15, 2004. He was a licensed Land Surveyor, who taught at Sierra College, and was a member of the Blue Devils 88th Infantry with whom he served in North Africa & Italy. Al participated in the Sacramento Valley Soaring Society and was an NSA member. He also belonged to the Carmichael, Calif., VFW, Post 5324, and his dedication in the last years was to the Historical Folsom Chinese Cemetery.

Avery "Jack" Nott (Missoula '47)

Jack passed away August 14, 2004, at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. In 1945 he joined the Navy after graduating mid-term from high school. Jack later received his college degree in animal husbandry and jumped at Missoula for three seasons. At the end of the 1950 season, Jack and Jim Brown (MSO-46) arrived in Fairbanks with no jobs and "one silver dollar between them". That began his 54-year life in the land he loved. Jack worked for Alaska Airlines retiring as station manager in Fairbanks in 1990. 🕯

Interviews with Smokejumpers from the 1940s

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

In an effort to record more smokejumper history, I wanted to film short interviews with as many jumpers from the 1940s as possible at the National Reunion in Missoula during June 2004. There were 50 of these gentlemen registered, and I sent out letters to all of them asking for some of their time. Jill Leger (NSA Associate and copy editor for Smokejumper magazine) from National Geographic agreed to fly in and handle the filming while I did the interviewing. Jill's flight out of D.C. was cancelled due to inclement weather leaving me to go to another plan on short notice. I was able to get help from Larry Lufkin (CJ-63), Jim Cherry (MSO-57), Denis Symes (MYC-63), Karl Maerzluft (FBX-67) and John Helmer (RDD-59). The interviews were done the old fashion way with pen and paper. Chris Sorensen (Associate and Smokejumper magazine columnist) stood by all day and took the "mug shots". Thanks to all of these gentlemen for taking time out of the reunion to help the NSA perform one of it's basic goals-the recording of smokejumper history.

K.C. Cole (MSO-48)

by Karl Maerzluft

K.C. came from humble beginnings to achieve greatly. Home was near Darby in the Bitterroot Valley. As a young man he stayed close to home but did join the Army Air Corps in 1944 for a two-year stint. Training consisted of going to gunnery school in Kingman, Arizona. Not being assigned to a permanent unit right away, he volunteered for training in aerial photography. This lengthy training prevented him from being shipped overseas.



K.C. Cole

In his youth, K.C. worked fires, drove truck and was part of a brush crew. This led him to sign up as a Forestry major in college. His roommate, Jack Dunne (MSO-46), talked him into seasonal smokejumping by persuading him with the argument, "you don't have to walk to the fire." The three years of jumping came to an end in 1950 and was followed by a career in academia.

He started as a teacher, principal and Elementary School supervisor for the State of Montana. In 1972 he quit and went to work at an institute sponsored by C.S. Mott. This organization endeavored to change the educational system with innovative approaches.

After obtaining his PhD from Wayne State, he continued

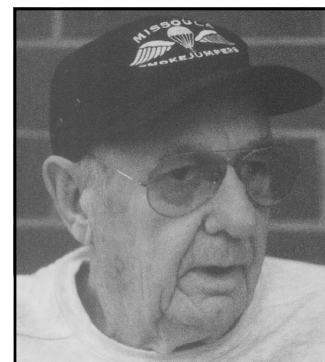
in education for the rest of his career. He taught in Oregon and supervised the conversion of general degrees to teaching degrees until 1986.

Casey credits smokejumping with giving him the courage to make changes in his life, in education, and in his community where he continues to be involved. He presently lives in Cedar, Michigan.

Homer W. "Skip" Stratton (MSO-47)

by Jim Cherry

Skip was born and raised in Missoula, so he knew about smokejumpers from the beginning of the program. In the fall of 1941 he began college, majoring in forestry. He signed up for the civilian pilot training program and the aviation cadet program at the beginning of WWII. He was called to active duty in 1942 and served as a test pilot and engineer.



Homer W. (Skip) Stratton

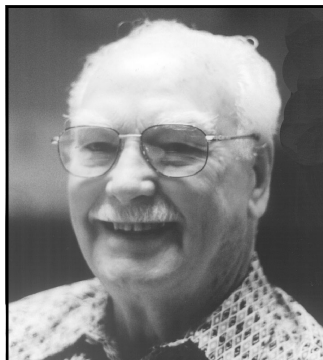
Following the war, Skip returned to college and began his smokejumping years. At that time he was married and had one child. He jumped during the years 1947, '48, '49 and '50. He received his BS in forestry in 1949 and his MSF in 1950. Following his smokejumping years, Skip began a highly successful career with the USFS, where he served as Asst. District Ranger on the Ceour d' Alene NF, District Ranger on the Clearwater, Asst. Forest Supervisor on the Bitterroot, Region 1 Branch Chief for Safety & Training, and Asst. Chief Region 1 Division of Fire Control. He retired in 1973 with a red card rating.

In 1949 Skip was part of the crew that flew from Missoula to Washington, D.C. to make a demonstration jump at the capital. He was the first man out of the plane on that jump. It was in that same year that Skip had his toughest assignment as a squad leader for the rescue/recovery on the Mann Gulch fire. It involved location and recovery of the bodies of the fire victims, building cairns to mark the location of each person recovered and then, in the fall of the year, returning to the site to place wooden crosses that would be replaced by cement crosses later on.

Bill Gropp (MSO-46)

by Karl Maerzluft

Bill started with the Forest Service early in life. Between 1940 and 1942, Bill worked as a smoke chaser, a lookout, on trail maintenance and anything else that came along. Fun was always on top of the list, even if it meant making conference calls on weekends with the old crank phones they had on the lookout towers. All this fun was interrupted by WWII. Bill joined the Marines and spent time in the Pacific, on Iwo Jima and in the occupation Army in Japan.



Bill Gropp

After the service, he got interested in jumping through Earl Cooley (MSO-40), but when his brother drove him to Missoula he was hooked on the idea. He jumped for one year with jumps from the Tri-Motor and one jump from the DC-3.

During the winter, he attended a small technical school to learn the body and fender business. He and his brother wanted to start a shop in that line of work. Instead he wound up working for a small power company for 14 years. Most of the time it was night shift work, and when a position came open at Bonnierville Power for daytime work, he made the change and stayed there from 1962-1983.

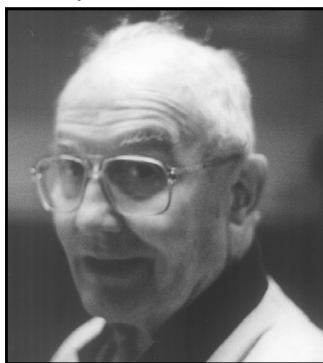
Shortly before retirement he remarried Ruth, the love of his life. Together, they have seven children. She is a very important feature in his life. Together they started camping with a pick-up, then with a fifth-wheel, then a small RV, then a big RV. Now they're back to a pick-up.

Theodore A. "Ted" Dethlefs (MSO-47)

by Jim Cherry

At the age of twelve, Ted paid \$0.75 for a 12-minute ride in a Ford Tri-Motor with a touring barnstorming pilot, and he knew from that moment that he wanted to become a pilot.

Ted learned of the smokejumper program while he was a forestry student at Washington State. Although he had no prior fire experience, he was hired as a smokejumper in 1947. He did, however, have a pilot's license and during WWII he had been a naval air navigator, having served in the Navy from 1943-46.



Theodore A. "Ted" Dethlefs

His most memorable jump was a two-man fire. Both men were rookies and although they had seen the smoke from the fire at the time of the jump, they were never able to find the fire. They weren't alone. A total of four different groups attempted to find that fire and failed. When it finally was located, it turned out to be a punky stump with on-again, off-again smoke.

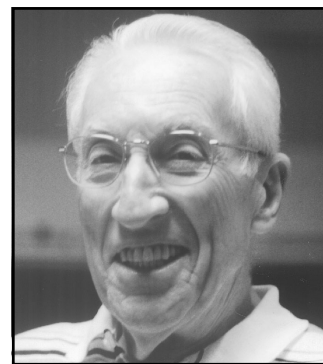
His biggest fire was near Hungry Horse and involved 25 jumpers. The most memorable flight was into the Dixie Landing Strip – it was a 'tight flight'. By the time his season was over Ted's six fire jumps had landed him in two states and on five national forests.

Although Ted enjoyed the variety of work projects he was assigned to while jumping, he began to realize that forestry was probably not for him. Following his smokejumper experience, he changed his major when he return to college as he found himself more interested in using his 'people skills' with a focus on public relations. He went on to earn a B.A. degree in business economics and then a M.A. in Recreation at Washington State. The years following college found Ted in Kellogg, Idaho (1 year) with the YMCA, then with the City of Tacoma at a Community Center and with the State of Washington at the Western State Hospital as a recreation therapist. For the next 40 years Ted was with the State of Oregon as Recreation Director for the Institution for the Retarded and then with the Oregon State Parks as a Community Consultant.

Ed Ladendorff (MSO-46)

by Karl Maerzluft

Everyone from Butte seems to have had a modest beginning with very hard working parents. During high school Ed worked for the Forest Service road construction crew. Then, WWII came along and he joined the Army Air Corps serving from 1943-1945. During those two years he was stationed in England and flew 29 incredible missions in B-17s.



Ed Ladendorff

After returning home, Ed was looking for a summer job and there were openings in the smokejumper program. He had enough of airplanes and turned down the position until his buddy, John Frankovich (MSO-46), talked him into it. Smokejumper money allowed him to go to college in the winter.

Ed got hurt on his first fire jump when his chute oscillated into the hillside. His buddy, Frankovich, was also injured. Ed had to walk out on a bad ankle to get a horse to evacuate Frankovich. Rain put out their fire. Being off the jump list, there were other things to do for him. One assignment found him on the recovery crew for the Mann

Gulch Fire. He jumped from 1946-1949 until he graduated from Business School at the University of Oregon. From there he went to Harvard Business School to gain an MBA in 1951.

One of his first jobs was as a salesman for Congoleum Floor Co. Soon he became a manager, but he lost interest. In 1956 he started consulting for Booz, Allen and Hamilton until 1963 when he joined the Lipton Tea Co., where he stayed until his retirement in 1990.

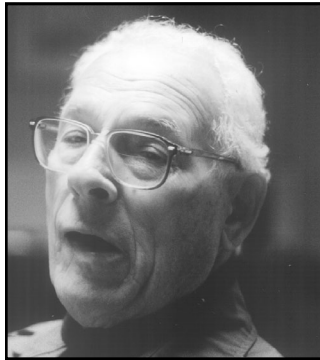
For a short time after that, he taught at New York University and then moved to San Antonio, Texas, where he spent a few happy years with his wife who died in 1999

Now he exercises the skill he learned as a smoke jumper. He does a lot of volunteer work, enjoys helping people and preaches three tenets of life: the benefits of hard work, the value of keeping in touch with old friends and helping others.

Max Aiken (MSO-47)

by Karl Maerzluft

Life started uneventfully for Max. His first big outing was a tour with the US Army in 1945-46 at Ft. Lewis.



Max Aiken

Although Max jumped for only one year, he went on to build a legacy of helping people. He attributes that kind of courage to the training and confidence he got from smokejumping. His roommate in college tried to talk him into jumping and after attending a fire exposition at a camp at forestry school, he was sold on the idea. One of his instructors was **Earl Cooley (MSO-40)**, who was as ornery as anyone he can remember. A rookie partner claimed that, after training, he would hire 100 Chinese coolies and name them all Earl.

There were no memorable jumps, but there was one memorable girl that caused him to veer into a different part of his career. He continued in forestry for another eight years. Then, trained to be a Chaplain at Oregon State Hospitals, he wound up being a Chaplain at Juvenile detention Centers instead.

Looking for a change, he began working with the local Employment Office training folks to become employable. He retired in 1987.

There is some fishing in his retirement schedule, but mostly he still works with Meals-on-Wheels, helping people in Salem Oregon.

Jim Brown (MSO-46)

by Chuck Sheley

I had the pleasure of meeting Jim at the Friday portion of

the reunion at the Missoula Fairgrounds. He was not able to make the Saturday interviews but we have been in touch via the U.S. Postal Service and that information gives us a good picture of this gentleman.

Jim graduated from Washington State University in 1939 with a degree in Forestry. As a student he spent summers employed by the Forest Service doing Blister Rust control, mapping, surveying, cruising timber and firefighting. With such an extensive background, he was accepted for smoke-jumper training in 1941 but that was interrupted by WWII.

When he started jumping in 1946, Jim jokes that **Earl (Cooley)** appointed him superintendent of firewood. In addition to splitting the firewood, his job was to get up very early and have the massive-iron cook stove hot and ready for the cook at the Nine Mile Camp.

One fire-jump that stands out in Jim's mind was on the Flathead Reservation. The fire rations were a "bit short". The ground troops sent in to help included a half dozen Indian boys who were "very good workers". They also happened to have a couple rifles in their firepacks and, in their spare time, solved the food problem by providing "fresh elk for all hands". The boys from the reservation also brought along some young Indian ladies to help with the camp chores and the cooking. "I heard later that the fire was difficult to mop-up and took some time." Sounds like another "good-deal" fire to me. Too bad the jumpers didn't stay.

At the urging of Earl Cooley, Jim took the Civil Service Forester exam and was offered work with the Forest Service at the professional level. However, the construction industry was booming in Alaska and Jim opted to set up his own company in that state.

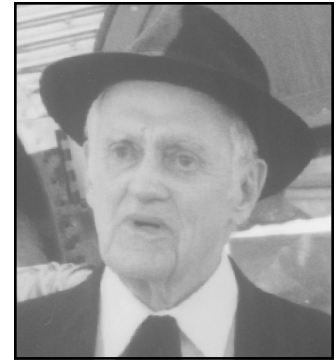
After the 1950 fire season, Missoula jumpers Chuck Ward, Jack Nott, Dave Burt, Bill Edlund, Jack Long and Burt Collins went north to work with Jim. Some of are still there. Jim retired in 1964 and is living at his ranch in Dover, Idaho.

Bob Scofield

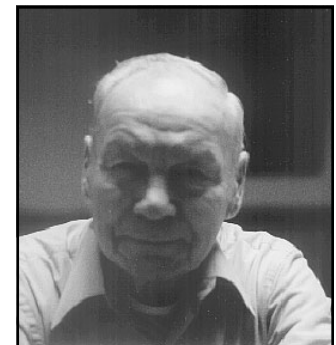
(CJ-49)

by Chuck Sheley

Bob started working with the Forest Service at age 20 and had two seasons working on the Siskiyou N. F. in Blister Rust Control and two as a lookout before he went to



Jim Brown



Bob Scofield

the smokejumpers. He was a student at Oregon State in Forest Management and, being very familiar with the Siskiyou, Cave Junction was a natural for him to enter the smokejumper program.

Bob jumped the 1949 and '50 seasons, but at the end of the 1950 season he didn't go back to school and was drafted. After returning from the military, he jumped three more seasons on the Gobi and as a squadleader.

In 1956 he graduated from Oregon State with his degree in Forest Management and started a career with the Forest Service, retiring in 1984. **Al Boucher** (CJ-49), **Orv Looper** (CJ-49), **Bob Sweet** (CJ-48) and **Bob "Rigger" Snyder** (CJ-48) were names that came up when I asked him about fellow jumpers. When he came back from the military, Bob did his refresher training along with rookie and future astronaut, **Stuart Roosa**. He remembers Roosa as "sharp, a go-getter". Foreman **Cliff Marshall** (CJ-46) also stands out in Bob's memory. Marshall, **Charley Clemensen** (CJ-48) and Bob jumped a fire. Unknown to the other two, Marshall broke his leg. The ex-Marine told Bob and Charley to take care of the fire indicating that he would be along later.

Bob lives in Kinnear, Wyoming, and has three children and six grandchildren.

Clyde Hawley (IDC-48)

by Chuck Sheley

Clyde grew up in Salmon, Idaho, and started working for the Forest Service at age 15. As seen with other jumpers of the 1940s, it was not uncommon to start working at this age due to the lack of available manpower caused by WWII.

Clyde graduated from the University of Idaho in 1958 with a degree in Zoology, but went to work in the Nuclear Energy industry after taking a job offer from Phillips Petroleum. After spending two years with Phillips, he spent 25 years with the Atomic Energy Commission retiring in 1980. There was a two year break during that period in which he worked for the International Energy Agency in Vienna on the "Plowshares" program using nuclear energy for other purposes. Clyde did consultant work for the nuclear industry until 1987. He retired in Salmon, Idaho, and moved to Nampa in 2001. He has four children and two grandchildren.

Clyde jumped for seven seasons over a ten-year period. As with many others, he was drafted in 1950 and spent two years in the military. He was one of the initial ten jumpers to go with "**Smokey**" **Stover** (MYC-46) to Idaho City and build that base. Clyde remembers **Bob Caldwell** (MYC-46), and pilots Claire Hartnett and Karl Bryning. He has attended all of the McCall reunions and has lifetime friends from his days as a smokejumper.



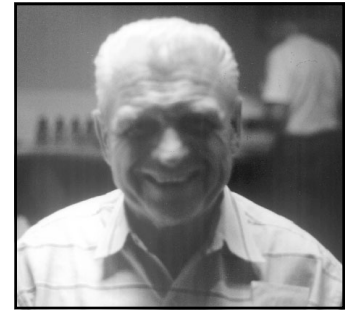
Clyde Hawley

Jerry Linton (MSO-48)

by Chuck Sheley

Jerry went in the smokejumpers at age 19 having already worked four seasons in the Blister Rust Control program for the Forest Service. He was born in Priest River, Idaho, and jumped the 1948 and '49 seasons. In the off-season, he attended Montana State University and was married in 1950. Jerry then picked up training in the field of refrigeration and air conditioning. Those skills led to a 30-year career with Sears Appliances in Spokane, Washington. He retired in 1988 in Spokane and has four children and 11 grandchildren.

Jerry remembers **Chuck Pickard** (MSO-48), **Jack Mathews** (MSO-48) and rookied-trainer **Bob Manchester** (MSO-46). In retirement, he likes to fish and golf and currently splits time between Spokane and California and Arizona for the winters. Jerry is an NSA Life Member and says the NSA is a great vehicle for keeping old friendships and contacts. Jerry attributed his great physical appearance to attitudes and work from his early jobs with the Forest Service and smokejumping.



Jerry Linton

Dick Peltier (MSO-46)

by Chuck Sheley

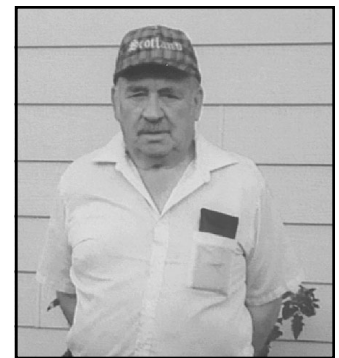
Dick was registered for the reunion but, due to some health problems, had to cancel. Fortunately his wife, Dixie, sent me a good bit of information that took the place of the interview.

Dick, like many of his generation, started work with the Forest Service at an early age and did some firefighting on the Kootani N.F. in 1941

before going into the service in WWII. He served with the 11th Airborne in the South Pacific.

Dick jumped three seasons (46-48) and was married in 1949. He then worked at a variety of jobs ranging from ranching, packer, aerial observer and ski lift operator. He and Dixie lived at Libby, Montana, for 33 years where Dick worked in the woods as a faller and dozer operator.

Dick has had three heart attacks, but still manages to get out hunting and fishing. Just a month after his first heart attack, he and his grandson both got their elk. His daughter, Kathy, also lives in Kalispell. Dick and Dixie celebrated



Dick Peltier

their 50th wedding anniversary in 1999 just before moving to Kalispell.

Marvin "Bus" Bertram (MYC-47)

by John Helmer

Bus was a little surprised, in 1952, to be invited back. His earlier jumping career had ended on a sour note.

Bus and seven other jumpers had attended a doghouse reunion (wrestling matches) one evening, stayed late, seriously overindulged, and returned to base just in time for an early morning fire call.

The full Ford-load of eight had to endure a very long, bumpy ride from McCall to the Salmon River country, from one side of Idaho to the other. All succumbed to violent airsickness and took turns using the Tri-motor's open door. At only 50 MPH, the trip seemed endless.

When the Ford finally arrived over the fire, spotter Dale Fickle (MYC-45) declared it too windy to jump. Faced with the prospect of a long, miserable return ride to base, Bus insisted on jumping the fire, and the other seven joined him.

Once on the ground, the exhausted, hung-over jumpers decided to catch a little shut-eye in order to restore themselves before attacking the fire, and that's how the local ranger, arriving unexpectedly on horseback, found them. "Naturally, he wrote us up. Guy's name was Zuberhuler. I still remember it."

Bus was called back into the Air Force for the Korean conflict. Earlier, he had been a tail gunner and crew chief on a B-26 in the latter stages of WWII for the 9th Air Force in Europe. One of his 11 missions involved a box formation of 16 B-26s, all equipped with centrally controlled 50 caliber machine guns, that was jumped by a formation of the ME-262s, the Luftwaffe's new jet fighters. The jets were new, but so were the pilots, who, poorly trained, mistakenly attacked the formation from the rear. Nine of the eleven jet fighters were shot down.

The Korean War version of the B-26 was equipped with *twenty-eight* forward firing 50 caliber machine guns. "You could really mess up a Chinese convoy." Eighteen months and 26 strafing missions later, Bus found himself back in McCall in July 1952, where he ran into Del Catlin (MYC-47), who had trained with him. Del told him that the base, depleted by three injuries, was short-handed. The Zuberhuler incident was mercifully forgotten, and Bus was back as a jumper.

Bus eventually went into the concrete business. He opened a redi-mix plant in La Grande in 1956, selling out in 1982. He went back into the business in 1985 in Leavenworth, Washington, before finally retiring in 1993.



Marvin "Bus" Bertram

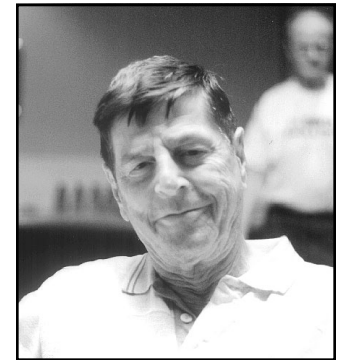
Bus never gave up his love affair with airplanes and jumping. He was active in sky diving, logging 2,880 jumps (three complete malfunctions). To hold down expenses, he purchased an airplane and learned how to fly it, spending 25 years as a skydiving pilot. He organized the Moses Lake Sky Divers and was Vice President of Operations for the Parachute Club of America (now called the U. S. Parachute Association) in 1972, under President Paul Tag (MSO-60).

Bus' parachuting career, which concluded with jumps in squares ("They're here to stay."), began with Forest Service Eagles, a total of six memorable times. Renowned for their bone-crushing opening shock, they were usually avoided. But now and then, Bus recalls an Eagle would be secretly strapped onto the unsuspecting back of a carefully selected and usually deserving jumper. As he was being slapped out the door, the spotter would shout in his ear, "You're wearing an Eagle!"

Lloyd A. "Chuck" Pickard (MSO-48)

by John Helmer

Seventeen-year-old Marine Lloyd Pickard lost his sea bag during the invasion of the Mariana Islands in the South Pacific. A friend, Charles Armstrong, gave him a spare combat jacket with the name "Chuck" stenciled on the back. The young Marine wore it everywhere, even in college after the war. Soon, everyone was calling him "Chuck." They still do.



Lloyd A. "Chuck" Pickard

Born in Brockton, Massachusetts, September 29, 1925, Chuck was a contemporary of Rocky Marciano. "Same neighborhood, different gang. It was an Irish-Italian thing."

Interviewed by *Smokejumper* magazine in an otherwise quiet alcove of the spacious atrium of the Holiday Inn Parkside in Missoula 60-plus years later, Chuck's booming still-Boston-accented voice filled the big enclosure.

He quit high school in 1942 to join the Marines, spending 27 months hopping from one Japanese-held tropical island to the next. Familiar names like Saipan, Tarawa, Kwajalein, Eniwitok and Tinian, and the not-so-familiar: Nuku'alofa and Funafuti. Once the Japanese were supposedly chased off an island, Chuck's anti-aircraft battery was brought in to protect American airfields, bombers and their crews from Japanese nighttime bombings. The reality was that his battery was regularly attacked by fanatical Japanese soldiers bypassed by the Marine assault forces. Chuck's best friend from high school, who had joined the Marines with him, was killed in action.

Discharged exactly four years after Pearl Harbor Day, Chuck enrolled in Massachusetts State College, studying forestry. The summers of '46 and '47 found him working

for the Forest Service in exotic (especially for an Easterner) places like Priest River Falls in the northern tip of the Idaho panhandle. He visited the last of the big Rocky Mountain logging camps in their heyday. Diamond Match Company drove huge white pine logs hundreds of miles down rivers, across lakes, and, where necessary, through spectacular flumes to mills in Newport, Washington. It was the old Wild West, and Chuck saw it all.

Chuck joined the Missoula jumpers in 1948, making squad leader in his first year. In 1949 he trained all the jumpers that perished at Mann Gulch. "They were college kids that arrived late for training, and that's why I got them."

Late one season Chuck and one other man jumped a hunter fire in a beautiful place called Big Prairie. "Snow all over the place." He spent the night huddled in a sleeping bag, surrounded by a ring of coyotes.

Another time Chuck's crew jumped the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41) offered Chuck a choice of hiking out 18 miles to Yellow Jacket or attempting to raft down the river, using war surplus rubber rafts that would be dropped in. Sliding down the steep slope of the canyon toward the river, Chuck hoped that the rafts would

arrive intact. They did, and the first rafting trip down the Salmon was soon history.

Chuck left jumping in the fall of 1950. He and a buddy traveled to Florida to visit an aunt. Three weeks later, he was wearing the uniform of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. "Badge #25. Lots of gunplay." After six months he donned the plain clothes of a detective. Thirteen years later he formed his own private detective agency, selling out in 1977. Retirement finds him a resident of Vero Beach, high and dry after the 2004 hurricanes.

Chuck's fond memories of jumping were not exclusively those of falling out of airplanes. He would occasionally visit downtown Missoula, often in the company of **Gar Thorsrud** (MSO-46), to mingle with the city's café society. "Bunch of red-nosed loggers and cowboys would play in a string band on the street outside the Silver Dollar. Some of them were pretty good." Another haunt was the Flame Lounge, presided over by the white-jacketed Cliff.

And what about the Great Northern Hotel, Chuck? You and **Fred Barnowsky** (MSO '42)? "Never went there. Neither did Fred."

We believe you. Here's to an eventful life, Chuck. Cheers!



NSA Life Members— Thanks for your support!

#	Last Name	First Name	Rookie Base	Rookie Year				
1	ALLEN	JAMES C.	NCSB	1946	20	DANIELS	DOUGLAS E.	MSO 1961
2	ANDERSEN	ROLAND H. (ANDY)	MSO	1952	21	DAVIS	JOHN T.	NCSB 1966
3	BAKER	DONALD A.	MSO	1965	22	DAYTON	ROBERT L.	MSO 1965
4	BEARTUSK	KEITH L.	MSO	1969	23	DELONG	STAN J.	RDD 1965
5	BELTRAN	TONY G.	IDC	1969	24	DEMMONS	JACK	MSO 1950
6	BENNETT	DAVID W.	MSO	1961	25	DERRY	ROBERT L.	MSO 1943
7	BLAINE	JAMES E.	MSO	1963	26	DIXON	JERRY S.	MYC 1971
8	BOUCHER	ALBERT N.	CJ	1949	27	DOLLARD	JIMMIE F.	CJ 1952
9	BRAUER	FRED O.	MSO	1941	28	DOMINGOS	C. LESTER	NCSB 1964
10	BROWN	CHARLES W.	IDC	1956	29	DONNER	FRED	MSO 1959
11	CABLES	MERLE L.	IDC	1948	30	DUNN	ROBERT H.	MSO 1958
12	CAHILL	JOHN W. (JACK)	MSO	1958	31	DUNTUN	ALAN J.	FBX 1967
13	CARPENTER	PETER F.	RDD	1959	32	DUTTON	DELOS M.	MSO 1951
14	CHERRY	JAMES L.	MSO	1957	33	EASTEP	ERIC	MYC 2000
15	CLATWORTHY	JAMES F.	MSO	1956	34	ERIKSSON	RICHARD C.(DICK)	MSO 1960
16	CONNER	WILSON B.	NCSB	1948	35	FILLER	MERL C. (BUD)	MYC 1952
17	COOLEY	EARL E.	MSO	1940	36	FRAKES	JAMES M.	RDD 1965
18	CROSS	GEORGE W.	MSO	1974	37	FRICKE	CHARLES A.	MSO 1961
19	CUPLIN	DAVID R.	MSO	1948	38	GASTINEAU	ORVAL W. (BILL)	MSO 1963
					39	GERSBACH	RICHARD O. (RICH)	RDD 1979
					40	GOLIK	DENNIS M.	MYC 1974

41	GONZALEZ	GREG (GONZO)	CJ	1976	85	PETTY	PHILIP D.	MSO	1968
42	GORSUCH	ROBERT V. (BOB)	MSO	1947	86	PHIFER	GREGG L.	MSO	1944
43	GOWEN	GEORGE W.	MSO	1954	87	POPPIE	WILFORD D. (BILL)	MSO	1958
44	GREESON	MIKE J.	MSO	1959	88	PRESTON	MILFORD M.	RDD	1974
45	GUTKOSKI	JOSEPH J.	MSO	1950	89	QUILLIN	ROBERT L.	FBX	1971
46	HALLORAN	DONAL W.	MSO	1953	90	RABIDEAU	CLARENCE J. (JIM)	NCSB	1949
47	HARPER	RONALD K. (KENT)	RDD	1975	91	RABORN	WINCEL E. (DUB)	MSO	1959
48	HARTMAN	STEPHEN M.(STEVE)	MSO	1967	92	RAHN	PERRY H.	MSO	1961
49	HELMER	JOHN C.	RDD	1959	93	RATHBUN	JAMES F.	MYC	1958
50	HENDERSON	WALLACE D.	MYC	1946	94	REID	ROBERT E.	MSO	1957
51	HENSLEY	DANNIE M. (DAN)	MSO	1957	95	RHODES	STEVE A.	NCSB	1958
52	HINKLE	GENE E.	MSO	1947	96	ROHRBACH	FRED G.	MSO	1965
53	HOOPER	ROBERT B.	CJ	1967	97	ROST	MAYNARD T. (SAM)	MSO	1958
54	INDRADAT	PISIDHI			98	ROTROFF	LOREN C. (BUD)	RDD	1967
55	KOVALICKY	TOM J.	MSO	1961	99	SATTERWHITE	NEIL E.	MYC	1965
56	KREITZBERG	RICHARD A.	MSO	1952	100	SAVAGE	ROGER L.	MSO	1957
57	LAI	CONSULTANTS	INC		101	SCHLAEFLI	ROBERT		
58	LAUBER	ADAM L. (KNOBBY)	RDD	1999	102	SCOTT	JONATHAN L.	MYC	1948
59	LINNERTZ	STANLEY W.	MSO	1961	103	SEALE	MIKE		
60	LINTON	GERALD J.	MSO	1948	104	SHEARER	THOMAS P. (PAT)	MSO	1967
61	LIPSCOMB	LEE G.	MSO	1958	105	SHELEY	CHUCK	CJ	1959
62	LITTELL	WALLACE W.	MSO	1944	106	SMITH	STEVE		
63	LITTLE	GENE R.	MSO	1947	107	STEPPE	MICHAEL E.	IDC	1961
64	LONGANECKER	DALE K.	RAC	1974	108	STINSON	DOUGLAS P.	CJ	1954
65	LONGANECKER	DEAN M.	NCSB	1968	109	STOLESON	ROLAND M.	MSO	1956
66	LONGLEY	LARRY D.	NCSB	1972	110	STRATTON	H.W. (SKIP)	MSO	1947
67	LUFKIN	FRANCIS B.	NCSB	1940	111	SUNDT	MATTHEW A.	RAC	1983
68	LUFKIN	LARRY C.	CJ	1963	112	TAYLOR	MURRY A.	RDD	1965
69	MACPHERSON	COLE L.	MSO	1955	113	THOMAS	ROGERS M.	MSO	1965
70	MAERZLUFT	KARL H.	FBX	1967	114	THOMPSON	THOMAS J. (TJ)	MSO	1955
71	MANSFIELD	CHARLES R.	CJ	1959	115	TOBIN	JOHN J.	MSO	1959
72	MCBRIDE	JON H.	MSO	1954	116	TWISS	JOHN C.	RAC	1967
73	MCCULLOUGH	MICHAEL D.	MSO	1956	117	UPHILL	THOMAS R.	MSO	1956
74	MCDANIEL	JOHN R.	CJ	1957	118	VOELZ	JAMES F.	MYC	1971
75	MCINTOSH	JOHN W.	MSO	1960	119	WALKER	ROBERT A.	ANC	1971
76	MILLS	WILLIAM H. (BILL)	MSO	1965	120	WARNER	SCOTT A.	RDD	1969
77	MOODY	WILLIAM D.	NCSB	1957	121	WELCH	GARY E. (TEX)	CJ	1960
78	MURPHY	JAMES L.	MSO	1948	122	WERHANE	WILLIAM L.	MSO	1966
79	MUSQUEZ	BENITO O. (BEN)	MSO	1956	123	WHEELOCK	MICHAEL D.	CJ	1976
80	OLESON	H. JAMES	CJ	1953	124	WILSON	DICK	MSO	1948
81	OSIPOVICH	RAYMOND	CJ	1973	125	WOODWARD	HOWARD R. (RANDY)	MSO	1967
82	PAWLOWSKI	NORMAN E.	CJ	1957	126	WOOLWORTH	WILLIAM	MSO	1968
83	PEPPARD	LEE E.	MSO	1962	127	WOOLWORTH	BRIAN		
84	PETTERSON	JON E.	MYC	1964	128	YENSEN	WILLIAM A.	MYC	1953