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National Smokejumper Association

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2007

SMOKEJUMPER

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Message from the President



by **Doug Houston**
(Redmond '73)
PRESIDENT

FIRST OF ALL, I WOULD like to let everyone know that heckling and harassment are still alive and well in the smokejumper world. I was in Grangeville over Labor Day weekend on a fire assignment when the jumpers got a fire call. They did great, suited up quickly, ready to respond. However, the pilot couldn't be found. His trusty cell phone was called and, a few minutes later, in zipped the pilot on his mountain bike. **Nels Jensen** (MSO-62) had been out getting a little sweat in, but I don't think he was ready for the attention that he got as he showed up in his little spandex shorts. It was a feeding frenzy for sure as **Walt Currie** (MSO-75) and **Floyd Whitaker** (RDD-65) were relentless, to the point that Nels had to yell at them to shut up so he could remember how to start the Otter. It was a Kodak moment and reassured me that life is still good in the jumper world.

Working fires this summer also gave me the opportunity to put chutes on the backs of **Tony Navarro** (RAC-83) and **Michael Cooper** (MYC-86), observe jumpers on fires, assist them with air support, and see that jumpers were boosting around more than I have ever seen. It definitely showed me that we need more jumpers in the system at each and every base. The same

thing was stated in the Aerial Delivered Firefighter Study, years ago. However, numbers still have not increased. More jumpers are needed, especially as we experience global warming and see the huge dollars spent on large fires increase.

As for what's going on with the NSA and the jumper community, an auction for the Finn Ward Fund, held in Missoula, gained over \$30,000. The Bozeman Watch Company donated a smokejumper watch to Montana Governor Schweitzer, who in turn donated it to the NSA for auction, which is now underway and will close the first week of December. A smokejumper porter beer will be sold by Left Hand Brewing in Colorado, donating some proceeds to NSA and the trails program. Western Heritage is selling our merchandise, so click on the Store at our website and buy your Christmas presents. The National Smokejumper Center board is working on non-profit status and trying to appropriate some property in West Yellowstone for the "mini smokejumper base."

And, lastly, many thanks to all of the new Life Members and to the work that **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) and **John McDaniel** (CJ-57) have done in this effort. The numbers are approaching the 200 mark which will really help in assuring the existence of the NSA for many years to come. Thanks again.

William Shakespeare, Henry V:

From this day to the ending of the world/
We in it shall be remembered../
We gallant few, we band of brothers../
For he today that sheds his blood with me/
Shall be my brother.

Pick up the phone and call one of your brothers or sisters.

Until next time, the door is yours. There is 100 yards of drift and the whole world is a jump spot. You are hooked up and your arm is clear. Have a great one. No, make it a great one. 🍀

Poison Oak

by Wild Bill Yensen (McCall '53)

Of all my experiences in 30 years of smokejumping, the worst was catching poison oak.

In 1954, after my second season of jumping, I was back at the University of Redlands for my junior year. Near mid-October I had a date for a Friday night football game. Around noon I looked out toward the San Bernardino N.F. east of Redlands, and it looked like Hiroshima! A huge convection column was rising.

A fraternity brother, George Benson, had spent the summer with a fire crew in Mentone. The "fire people" had called him, he called me and we rounded up about a 100 guys who: (1) had boots and (2) wanted to fight fire and make some money.

At 3:00 p.m. a couple of school buses picked us up and

took us to the fire. Benson and I were crew bosses as we had fire experience. Earlier that year I was a sector boss on the Ball Canyon Fire on the Toiyabe N.F. northwest of Reno. I was given a company of Air Force servicemen and a mile of fire line to handle. The airmen knew nothing about firefighting tools, so I got them in a semi-circle and demonstrated how not to chop their feet with a pulaski or brush hook. I told them about a guy in McCall who had cut the hell out of his foot with a pulaski just after his squad leader, **Merle Cables** (IDC-48), had given him that demonstration and he didn't pay attention. He had about forty stitches and ruined a pair of Whites.

We were given a section of line to build that was too steep for cats. We built a line 30 yards wide down a half

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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 three 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, 2007.

Even though you would be obligated to three 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, 2007, 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 this page in listings to the left. The time to act is now!

mile of steep slope. As the fire approached, I had them spread out down the line to stomp out any sparks that jumped the line. We held the line and saved about a hundred houses.



Bill Yensen (NSA file)

The next day we went up the mountain and fought more fire. I walked through some smoke from burning poison oak and had one sleeve rolled up. We got the fire out and went home. I received a big check for being a crew boss, but boy did I pay! The part of my arm exposed to the poison oak smoke broke out in welts, and I went to the college infirmary. The doctor taught me a lesson that later saved me much misery. He said there is a resin in poison oak and that rubbing alcohol dissolves and removes that resin. His good advice came too late, and I suffered three weeks of itching and misery.

When I got out of the army in '58 we had a trip to Redding. My first jump was on the Shasta-Trinity N.F. near Mt. Shasta. I wrote this one up in the *Smokejumper*. Coming

off that fire we walked through some very small poison oak, and I didn't think much about it. I did get my lower legs exposed.

My next jump was on the El Dorado N.F. on the Rubicon River east of Auburn. The pack out was brutal! Seven miles up a dry river bottom with poison oak so big you could climb it, and then seven more miles up a trail with poison oak all over the place.

When I got to Auburn I went to the nearest drug store and bought three quarts of rubbing alcohol. I put all my clothes in a washing machine with lots of soap and Clorox. I took a shower and washed my whole body with alcohol. It was too late for the legs exposed two days earlier and I suffered the rest of the summer. My wife said I would scratch my legs in my sleep. I shudder to think what would have happened to me had I not doused myself in that alcohol.

A good friend, **Mike McCracken** (CJ-60), jumped two years at Cave Junction. He said poison oak made him absolutely miserable. His knees would swell up like basketballs. He came to McCall because of that in '64.

Last summer I went to Grandjean in the Sawtooth Recreation Area and did a corral job. In our bull sessions with a few cool ones, I related my poison oak experience to the crew. I told them for the next 20 years if there was a trip to Redding or Cave Junction and I was on the list, I would not go! I passed up the Big Sur Fire and several others. I said, "I would rather get beat up by 'Muhammad Ali' than get poison oak."

One of the crew members, **Bill Ruskin** (CJ-58), heard my words and now he and I are really brothers! The poison oak at CJ wiped him out! Bill Ruskin is a life member of NSA and deserves all the respect we can give him. He is one great guy! Anyone who has suffered from poison oak can see what a price Bill Ruskin paid to be a smokejumper. I tell you neighbors, I can. 🐼

NSA Offers Gift Membership

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Since you're a member of the NSA, you undoubtedly enjoy the benefits of membership in our association. Those include our quarterly magazine that provides you the latest news on issues of current interest to active and veteran smokejumpers plus a plethora of historic features.

NSA membership also gives you the chance to connect with old buddies at national and regional gatherings and to work with fellow jumpers on projects that benefit the national forests.

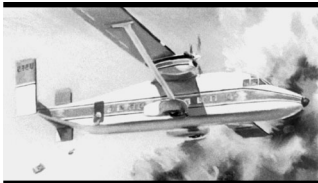
Now, through gift memberships, there's a way to share those benefits with *non-member jumpers*. As a result of an action by the NSA board, current members can now purchase one-year half-price memberships for fellow jumpers. This is

\$15.00 for a 1-year membership.

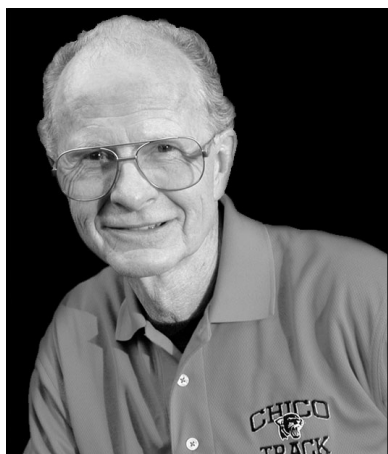
First Vice President Chuck Sheley said, "Once they sample the benefits, we'll probably gain them as long-term members." Sheley stressed that the gift memberships *are non-renewable at the half-price rate.*

They may be purchased by mailing a check to NSA membership coordinator John McDaniel, P.O. Box 105, Falun, KS 67442-0105.

The purchaser must provide the NSA with the new member's correct address. And, he said, the purchaser is also responsible for notifying the new member that he or she is making the gift. 🐼



Sounding Off from the Editor



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

THIS ISSUE COMPLETES the "Prisoner in Laos" story. As I have said in past issues, the time and effort spent on this story has been enormous. Cutting Phisit's 52-page narrative in half was the first challenge. Then came the questions created by his narrative that had to be answered. Filling in the blanks led to reading Dieter Dengler's *Prisoner in Laos*. I again want to thank **Fred Rohrbach** (MSO-65), **Johnny Kirkley** (CJ-64), and the people at the Air America Association for their help.

It's all in print and now I have the most important question created by this whole effort: What happened to our prisoners in Laos and Cambodia who were a result of the "Secret War?" I want to emphasize that I am not a follower of "conspiracy theories" and don't believe in Black Helicopters. That said, there is much documentation and historical evidence that we abandoned over 60 POWs in Laos and Cambodia when we left Vietnam.

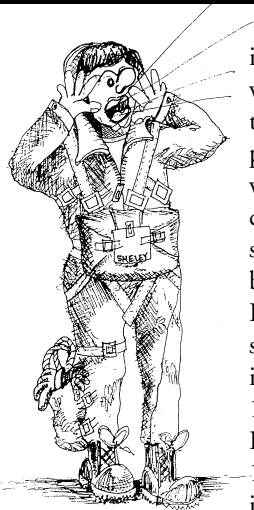
Today you can hardly drive a minute without seeing one of those yellow-ribbon stickers on vehicles that say "Support Our Troops." The more I read and researched, the more it came out that we did not and have not supported the people who were in Laos and Cambodia. We aban-

doned them.

When the Paris Peace Agreement was signed in 1973, Congress and the nation did not want to delay the return of our known POWs in Vietnam. In the rush to get out and clean up this mess, we ignored the POWs in Laos. After all, we said that according to the 1962 Geneva Agreement, we didn't have armed forces in Laos anyway. In February of 1973, the Royal Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao signed a cease-fire. The U.S. hoped that the POWs would be released under this agreement. Problem being, the Pathet Lao insisted they were separate from Vietnam, and we should negotiate directly with them. Since we wouldn't recognize the Pathet Lao, we wouldn't deal with them. Our Ambassador would not speak with the Pathet Lao Ambassador because we considered them to be an illegitimate government, a pretty poor attitude to take toward someone who is holding American prisoners. In much the same way we are handling our current foreign affairs, we wouldn't negotiate directly with those with whom we were having the problems. We seem to prefer to talk through third parties rather than sit down and deal with the problem face to face. Is this sounding like something from your elementary school days?

You can do the research, but it looks like there were 60+ American POWs held at various sites in Laos. After 1972, the numbers and accuracy of the reports fade. A pretty extensive review of the situation can be found on a web site by Roger Hall.

As the *Prisoner in Laos* work neared completion, **Ron Stoleson** (MSO-56) sent me a copy of some letters he received in 1996. It really involves some very sensitive issues and sat on my desk for several months. Without develop-



ing a cast of characters, I would like to cut to the bottom line. An ex-Marine and professional forester had worked for an international conservation organization for six years near the border area between China, Vietnam and Laos. Through various sources, he has come up with information indicating that 14 of the MIAs are still alive. Remember that this was in 1996. How accurate is this information? Who knows?

But the letter writer is an educated and traveled international forester.

Even if we wanted to get out of Vietnam in 1973, why couldn't subsequent administrations make an effort to clear up the Laotian POW issue? Now, when I see those "Support the Troops" stickers, I have a completely different mindset.

My wife and I recently had the opportunity to take a class on "Middle-East Diplomacy" put on by the American Foreign Service Association in Washington, D.C. We were fortunate to have speakers that included Ambassadors and foreign-service professionals (not political appointees) who worked in the diplomatic trenches for years. One afternoon session included the opportunity to be admitted to the State Department and get a briefing from a couple of very intelligent, young Ph.D.s, who work under Condoleezza Rice. After the briefing on the tense Iranian situation, I asked a question of the young man in the expensive suit. "Since we're dealing with nuclear issues and another potential war, wouldn't it be a good thing to sit down and talk directly with the Iranians face to face, rather than through a third party?" What is the saying about those not learning through history are doomed to repeat their mistakes? 🐼

Prisoner in Laos: A Story of Survival-Part II

by Phisit Intharathat (Associate Life Member)

Editor's note: On September 5, 1963, five people, including Phisit Intharathat and Gene DeBruin (MSO-59), parachuted from a flaming Air America C-46 over Laos. All were captured and became prisoners. Phisit was a prisoner for three years, four months and four days.

Dieter Dengler, whose story intersects with Phisit's, recorded his memories in a book called Escape From Laos. Below, I have interspersed edited passages from his book in an effort to flesh out some of Phisit's account, which I hope gives readers a better perspective on what transpired during those harrowing months. I hope it also gives readers a better sense of who Gene was as a person.

In the October 2006 issue of Smokejumper, the four Air America personnel had made an unsuccessful escape and had been recaptured. At this point, they have been imprisoned for over two years and are soon to be joined by two U.S. military pilots.—Chuck Sheley

Meeting Duane Martin

On the morning of December 3, 1965, a squad of Laotian soldiers brought in an American military prisoner. He was tall, slender and handsome but looked fatigued and weak—probably from severe beatings, as he had bruises and cuts around his eyes and face. He was especially glad to see Gene DeBruin, another American. He introduced himself as First Lieutenant Duane Whitney Martin, a copilot from a rescue helicopter based in Nakhorn, Thailand. He had been overseas only two months and was shot down in Laos near the Vietnamese border on September 20. Martin said he was shot down attempting a rescue of an F-5 pilot. The pilot was being hoisted through the trees, when he saw a platoon of Laotian soldiers shooting at them. The main rotor blade was hit, and the helicopter fell straight down, landing on its side. Martin was the last one to scramble out and did not see the F-5 pilot, the other helicopter pilot, the mechanic or the door gunner. He quickly ran away and hid in some bushes. The second helicopter pilot, who was supposed to provide cover fire, did so for a few moments and then flew away. Martin was quickly captured. We received the first news of the outside world in over a year from Martin. The fighting was escalating, and there was no information about a prisoner exchange. We all developed malaria and had fever and chills every day.

According to the Arlington National Cemetery website, 1st Lt. Duane W. Martin, had been aboard an HH43B "Huskie" helicopter operating about 10 miles from the border of Laos in Ha Tinh Province, North Vietnam, when the HH43B went down, and all four personnel aboard the aircraft were captured. Duane W. Martin was taken to a camp controlled by Pathet Lao. Thomas J. Curtis, William A. Robinson and Arthur N. Black were released in 1973 by the North Vietnamese, and were in the Hanoi prison system as early as 1967.

Meeting Dieter Dengler

Navy Lieutenant Dieter Dengler was shot down February 2, 1966, while flying a mission off the carrier *Ranger*. He was flying an A-1E propeller-driven aircraft that the Americans called the "Spad." Dengler had been captured for two weeks and was severely beaten up when he arrived to where we were being held.

At the end of April, we walked three days to a new prison.

Editor's note: The boldfaced, italicized paragraphs that follow are edited passages from Dengler's book, Escape from Laos.

About his shoot-down, Dengler writes: "Tree and plane met with a violent shudder. I came to, lying on my back about 100 feet from the crash. It was important that I put distance between myself and the aircraft. My first Pathet Lao was different than I had anticipated. He was small and had muscular calloused feet and carried a long-bladed machete. Slowly, I pulled the sleeping bag over my body for camouflage.

"As I began to think about the fix I was in, I nearly panicked. Escape and survival were not unknown to me. Since boyhood in Germany, thanks to the war and its aftermath, I had learned to fend for myself. I started north using a small compass attached to my watchband. It was hot, and dehydration and mosquitoes were driving me nearly mad.

"No matter which way I went, I could not get away from signs of village life. I decided to take my chances and forded a river. The water felt great, and I scooped some into my shoe, dropped in an iodine tablet and drank the yellow liquid. It was getting dark, and I was exhausted from the day and in complete despair. I fell asleep within minutes.

"Daybreak came, and I moved on, coming to some deserted huts. Hunger won over caution, and I entered one and filled my pockets with what looked like potatoes and headed west. I heard the sound of a Spad and ran to an opening in the jungle and tore off my shirt and waved it frantically. Still waving my shirt, I saw two more Spads and two Jolly Green Giant helicopters heading directly toward me. At that moment, I knew I had been spotted. Spotted indeed—but by the Pathet Lao. When they saw me, I saw them.

"One of them pointed in my direction, and I turned and ran at a steady pace. It was very difficult to avoid trails as I worked my way through the brush. Arriving at an intersection of several trails, I checked to make sure it was clear and started to run across the clearing. Halfway across I heard someone yelling, "Yute, Yute!" I turned my head and met the cold steel gaze of an M-1 rifle, pointed at my face."

The Eighth Prison: Ban Hoeui Het

We arrived at this prison on May 1, 1966. It was a new prison, and we were told that no one had ever been kept there before. As we walked there, we passed military installations,

AAA, tanks and even large tractors that were clearing a road through jungle and tall trees.

Dengler writes: *"How long have you guys been here?" I asked. 'Two and a half years for the other guys, nine months for me,' Duane [Martin] said. A guard opened their hut, and I watched the other guys come out. The fourth man appeared. He had on green trousers, worn at the knees. His beard was long and red. It was obvious that he was an American. His name was Gene DeBruin. Their clothes were old and worn, but there was something more than that. When they looked at me, I could see the years written on their faces. There was an animal look behind their slight smiles, and their sunken eyes were haunted and hungry."*

The prison was a fenced area about 24 yards square, with two cells made of logs similar to our other prisons. There were three tall guard towers outside the fence, and we had a new team of guards totaling 16. We were divided into two groups, one for each cell.

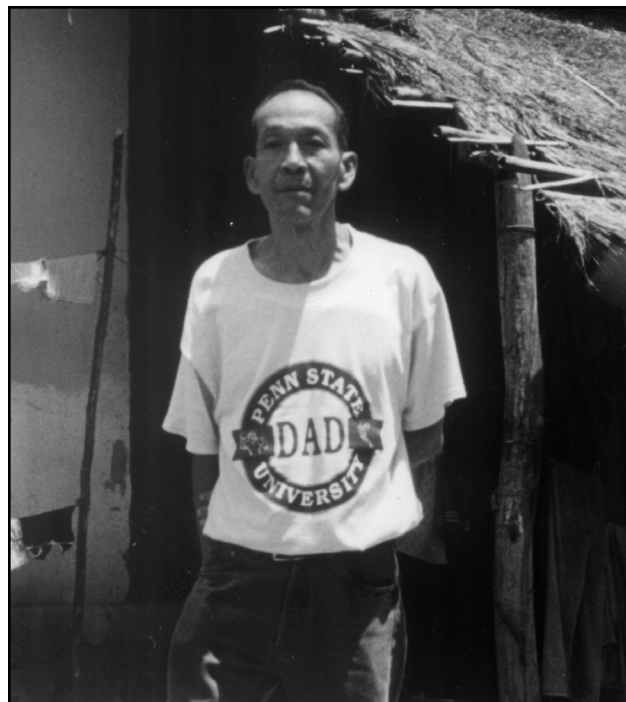
Dengler writes: *"Gene came over and introduced himself. As Gene and I talked, the others came over and also introduced themselves. Gene asked a lot of questions that morning. 'Hey,' he asked, 'Have they come out with stainless-steel razor blades yet?' I didn't know but was sure they had. 'Well, I'll be,' he mumbled, 'That's what I wanted to invent when I got out of this hellhole.'"*

Each morning, the guards would take all of us at one time to the stream, where we would dump out our waste buckets. Every three days we were allowed to bathe and wash our clothes. They didn't put us back into our cells immediately when we walked back, and we were allowed to stay within the perimeter of the prison until breakfast. Opposite the camp was a high mountain covered with a thick blanket of trees. We figured it would take about six hours to reach the top of the mountain, but we wondered if there was a way down the other side. The whole time we were at this prison we never saw any outside soldiers or villagers. The sounds of trucks eventually disappeared, and all that was left was the sound of aircraft 24 hours a day. We often saw aircraft drop flares and bombs, and the sound of gunfire filled the air. At times it felt like an earthquake.

Dengler writes: *"Gene brought me his blanket. I didn't want it, since I was sure it was the only one he had, but he kept insisting, saying that Duane was big enough to keep the two of them warm."*

We started to make escape plans. Some days the guards climbed the towers and went to sleep. Sometimes they left their weapons in the tower when they came down at mealtime; all 16 guards would eat together. We tried to be on our best behavior as we waited for the rainy season to arrive. As advance preparation, we dug and loosened the bamboo fence next to one of the guard towers. We did the same in the cell. Each day we poured drinking water and urine onto the base of the largest pole until we loosened it. We put it back into the hole and covered up all traces so the guards wouldn't notice anything and waited until the end of July and the rainy season.

Dengler writes: *"Gene slid over and covered the door so the guards couldn't see us, and we all took off our footlocks. What really surprised me was that they were able to get out of the*



Phisit Intharathat: May 2005 in front of the 1st prison where he was held in September 1963. The building used to be a French hospital. Now inhabited by locals. (Courtesy Fred Rohrbach)

handcuffs. One of the guards told us we're going to be released. I looked around the table and saw troubled looks on the guys' faces. Gene said, 'All the Pathet Laos are lying bastards, and nothing they told us before ever came true, especially when it came from that little no-good son of a bitch.'"

The Escape Plan

Each one of us had an escape plan that we believed was better than the others. We had to bring them all together and come up with something that was acceptable to everyone. Martin and Dengler thought we should escape at night, not taking any weapons and not harming the guards. They told us that when Americans were taken prisoner they had to try to escape; otherwise, they would be court-martialed when they obtained their freedom. I listened and thought it was funny. There was no way they would be court-martialed in either case. Later they spoke of the Geneva Convention, which stated that if they didn't harm the guards while escaping, the guards didn't have the right to kill them if recaptured. Based on our last escape, I thought we had to have the weapons. Without them we had no way to resist recapture, and the guards could track us without fear of harm. I said that if this escape did not include weapons, I wouldn't go with them; I would just wait for my own time to flee. After considerable discussion, everyone agreed with me.

My plan was to escape at about 1600 on July 31, while the guards were eating in the mess hall. We would divide into two groups, get out of the prison, obtain weapons from the tower and capture the guards while they were eating. We wouldn't harm the guards but would put them in the foot traps and handcuffs and lock them in the cells. After that we could get

shoes, rice and salt to take with us as we made our way to the top of the mountain. At the top of the mountain we would split into four groups and go our separate ways. We divided up as follows: Duane Martin and Dieter Dengler, Gene DeBruin and Y.C. To, Prasit Prahmsuwan and Prasit Thane, and me (alone).

Dengler writes: *"Prasit thought we should be in two groups, with at least one American in each group. Y.C. wanted us all to go together. 'It'd never work Y.C.,' I said. 'Hell, we can't get along even here.' I wanted to go with Gene and Duane, because we got along so well. Y.C. was insistent; he wanted to have an American with him."*

I also recommended that each group should head west and do most of the travel in the waterways. If anyone was rescued, they could direct searchers back along the rivers and streams looking for the others. Under no circumstances should anyone go into a village; otherwise, he would be captured. It was mid-June when we agreed on the escape plan. It had begun to rain a lot, and the water in the stream was rising. One month to go.

Dengler writes: *"Listen. Do you hear it?" Duane asked. I was drowned out by the noise of the heavy pounding of the first rain. 'Wow, listen to it. Wait until the monsoon season hits. It's even louder then,' shouted Gene. 'Come on, baby, pour, will ya?' Gene grinned from ear to ear as the rain answered his bidding."*

We offered suggestions about finding food in the jungle. Ferns that grew along the waterways were edible, as were figs that could be eaten green or ripe. The easiest animals to catch and eat would be baby green frogs and tadpoles. You would have to watch out for the baby black toads, which were poisonous. It would be hard to build a fire due to the rain.

Dengler writes: *"The guards brought in a mirror and wanted to shave our beards. Gene was first. [One guard] scraped his beard off with a little knife. Occasionally, Gene cried out and little red rivulets trickled down his face. Gene now looked like somebody else. His face was still sunken and white, but he looked much younger."*

The Escape

The guards became more lax and careless. When we emptied our waste buckets in the morning, only five guards went with us compared to all 16 at first. Even though we all had malaria and our bodies were in bad shape, we had hope. Y.C. To was in the worst shape, probably because he was the oldest. On July 25, Y.C. caught a fever so bad that he couldn't get up to eat. We began to worry that we would have to postpone our planned July 31 escape. Y.C. had a lot of spirit and even pleaded for us to move up the escape, as he felt he might not ever escape and would die in prison. We agreed to move it up to July 28.

Dengler writes: *"The escape plan had to be changed at the last minute because of Y.C.'s illness. He could barely move his legs. Prasit said that taking him along with them would be suicide. No one said anything, but I knew Prasit was right. Finally Gene spoke up in anger: 'Y.C., you're going with me! Don't listen to that damned Prasit. Prasit, you go to hell!'"*

"No," Y.C. said quietly. 'Thanks but no thanks. He's right.

You'll never make it out with me along.'

"The hell! We'll make it. Anyway your legs might get better."

"By tomorrow? You don't believe that," Y.C. told Gene.

"Then Y.C. very calmly said, 'Gene, if you mean it, we'll go together.' As Y.C. spoke, he watched Gene's eyes for a rebuff. Gene said, 'You bet!'"

On the morning of July 28, Y.C. was better and said he was ready.

Dengler writes: *"The three Thais were better adapted to survive in the jungle than we were. Prasit had been a paratrooper in Malaysia, and he really knew the jungle well. With the added burden of Y.C., we three Americans were now at a real disadvantage. I waited until the three of us were alone to bring up the topic again."*

"Gene, we just can't do it," I told him. He remained silent.

"Leave him be, Dieter," Duane said.

"Nah, he's right," Gene said, 'So we don't go with the two of you.'

"Don't be a fool. We want you with us," I said.

"And I want Y.C." Gene's determination was unwavering. Though the darkness hid his face from me, I could tell that he was worried but also dead set on his plan.

"Listen, you guys," he said, 'Y.C. and I will go together, and after we make it over one ridge, we'll lie in wait for air contact. If you guys make it out before us, be sure someone looks for us.' For a while all three of us remained silent."

After breakfast, we immediately began the escape plan. We rested and prepared ourselves mentally and at the appointed time heard the okay from Gene DeBruin. Dengler, Martin, Prasit and I got out first. Dengler climbed the tower and passed an M-1 rifle down to me, taking one for himself. Martin climbed up and grabbed a Chinese-made rifle with a bayonet. Prasit opened the cell for the others.

The Plan Backfires

I ran toward the guards who were eating in the mess hall. I yelled at them in Laotian, "Stop! Don't move!" They froze for a few seconds, but then one of them reached out to grab his carbine, and then some of the others started to run. I had to shoot the one who went for his rifle and then those who ran. Dengler and Martin appeared from the back and provided supporting fire. Our plan had not worked! We thought that they would be afraid to run when we threatened them, but the opposite happened. We tried not to let anyone escape and killed three of them, but the rest ran away. After taking knives and shoes from the guards, we waded the stream and ran up the mountain. After about an hour, we looked back and could not see any activity at the prison. When we split up, I stayed on the top of the high mountain.

Dengler writes: *"Duane and I kept running. We heard the sound of someone coming to our left and ducked into the bush and froze. The familiar red head appeared, and there were Gene and Y.C. We started to move off together, but Y.C. held us back. Then Duane ran on ahead, while I stopped and took hold of Gene's hand."*

"Go on, go on," he said. 'See you in the States.' I looked into Gene's face and got all choked up. I tried to say something, but

the words wouldn't come. I pumped his hand, began running, then stopped and waved at him and Y.C."

Now What?

The next morning, I hurried alone down the trail on the back side of the mountain. I reached a stream at the base of the mountain by about 1200 hours. The stream was in very dense jungle, which is what I wanted. My plan was to float downstream at night and rest during the day. I wanted to avoid leaving tracks and put as much distance between me and the prison as possible. I was wearing a pair of torn jeans with no shirt and had sandals taken from one of the guards. I had also taken an M-1, a knife, some salt tablets and 24 rounds.

The first night I did not want to make any sounds constructing a raft, so I decided to grab a clump of bamboo and float downstream. The water was very cold, but I had to endure it. The advantage of floating was that I could travel fast without leaving any tracks. I could also save my strength. The big disadvantage was that the streams went by villages. I had to be very aware of crowing roosters and barking dogs, because that meant the presence of a village. The soldiers always kept a fire going when they camped near a stream. I floated until about 0400, when I heard the squawk of a chicken. Then I climbed onto the bank and into the dense bush and fell asleep. I woke up about noon.

Trouble On The Fourth Night

My drifting went well until the fourth night. I was hugging a log and heard numerous voices and could see a campfire in the distance. I let the log go and quietly climbed out on the opposite bank. The next day I walked slowly through the jungle and bypassed the place where I had heard the voices the night before. It was difficult to get my bearings as the jungle was so dense that I could not see the sun at times. I walked throughout the day and tried to rest that night. I couldn't sleep. Mosquitoes and leeches were all over the place, and I had chills and fever from the malaria.

I started walking again the next morning, looking for vegetables and grass to eat. There was plenty of water, and pools filled with tadpoles. I ate tadpoles every day. I would scoop them up in my hands and let them swim down my throat. They were easy to find, easy to eat and were not poisonous. Salt became very important as the body loses it through perspiration. If the body doesn't get salt, one becomes very weak and begins to shake.

Traveling In A Circle

Traveling was extremely slow. It was raining all day. I couldn't see the sun and didn't know which way was west. I walked on guesswork and gut feeling. Finally I decided that travel was useless and looked for a good place to spend the night. I saw a large tree and headed for it. When I got there I realized it was the same place where I had spent the night before. I had wasted a whole day traveling in a circle! My body and soul were weak, and I admit that I cried and was very disheartened. I had the feeling that my life was going to end. I thought about my father, mother, brothers and sisters. My father used to travel through the jungle alone just like I was doing

now. During World War II, he was a member of the Free Thais and had walked from South China through Laos to North Thailand all by himself. I never believed in fate. I never asked for help from the supernatural. I would help myself.

Dengler writes: *"I pushed the brush aside and looked across the creek. Several abandoned huts sat in a clearing, and something about them rang a bell in the back of my memory. I knew we had been here two days before. Heartsickness and despair overcame me, and I wanted to hide the truth from Duane."*

I fell asleep. When I woke up I was covered with leeches and spent considerable time pulling them off. They left sores that continued to bleed, and my body was completely red. Regardless, I started walking and came to another stream. I found a large log and waited until night before floating downstream. As before, I got out of the water when I heard a chicken. I rested during the days and traveled at night. Sometimes there was a village, and I would travel around it in the jungle rather than try to float by it. I traveled like that for three weeks.

Dengler writes: *"Duane's malaria grew steadily worse. 'Go on, leave me alone. I want to die by myself,' Duane rasped. 'Dieter, I'm going down to the village to get some food.'*

"That's a sure way to get killed,' I told him.

"I'm going Dieter."

"The trail turned left and suddenly a little boy was standing a few feet away. Seconds later, somebody yelled 'Americali,' and a villager appeared before us clutching a long machete over his head. I was on my knees, and Duane was also kneeling—holding his prayer-folded hands toward the man. The villager slashed at Duane's leg, the blade disappearing just below the groin. The next blow buried the blade deep into Duane's neck, and he fell forward.

"The villager was swinging the machete at me, and I ducked and ran back down the trail and hid in the brush as five villagers ran past me on the trail."

I figured that I had put considerable distance between me and the prison camp. My strength was gone, and all that was left was skin hanging on bones. The rifle and knife were a burden to carry, and I had run out of salt tablets. There were more villages, so it was harder to travel by water. I also felt that I could no longer take the hours in the cold water anymore. Many times I got so cold and cramped that I thought I would drown. I also heard gunfire at times and thought that I had gotten close to Laotian Rightist territory. If I had a map and compass, I would surely have completed my escape, but now I didn't know where I was. What was certain was that I was a long way away from the Ban Hoeui Het prison camp!

Day 22 Of The Escape

It was almost impossible to determine direction, and I decided to find the best possible hiding place and rest for an extended period of time. I headed into the jungle toward the base of a nearby mountain, where I found a dry spot protected by a rocky overhang. There were banana trees to make a shelter with, and I was able to rest 24 hours without worrying about anything. When I started to walk the next day, the terrain started to change as the jungle thinned out, and there were more plains and groves. I had to stick to the mountains, as I would be easily seen if I walked through the open areas. The



Phisit Intharathat: January 1967 just after rescue by Laotian Rightists forces. (Courtesy Phisit Intharathat)

best place to travel was through the mountain passes, as there were food sources and water to be found.

Dengler writes: *"I waited all day, but not a single plane flew over. I wondered if it was a Sunday or national holiday and if all the pilots were off work. I decided I would not take another step and would just lie in the jungle and die of starvation. The next morning I was no longer resigned to death."*

The malaria hit me every day. My body was in terrible shape, full of scratches and sores. My feet were swollen to the point where I could hardly walk. The rifle and knife were so heavy I almost threw them away. My pants were now a mere loincloth. In short, I was a walking corpse.

Dengler writes: *"They were all armed and were Viet Cong, not villagers. I could tell they were excellent trackers, because they were following my path exactly—even though it had been days since I had been there. I had lost my fear, and it was strange and interesting to watch my trackers track me."*

"On day 23, a slip sent me tumbling into the shallow river, and I cracked my head against a boulder. In a bowl-shaped depression, I saw a coiled, brilliantly colored snake. Not caring if it was poisonous or not, I snatched the snake and, as it coiled around my arm, stretched it out. I took the head in one hand and the tail in the other and bit it in half. The long brown liver hung from the body, and I began to eat it and kept eating it until half the snake was gone."

"The noise I heard was a plane, and I realized that it was a Spad. I jumped from one boulder to another signaling the plane. A second Spad was now circling. First I could hear them, and then I saw two helicopters. A shot echoed down the canyon, and I knew it was a race between the choppers and the Viet Cong."

"The tree-penetrator slowly descended, and I again heard shots echo in the canyon. I was woozy and distant and finally pulled down one of the penetrator's three arms and sat across it. I held on with a death grip, and when I opened my eyes, a huge man was towering over me in the doorway of the helicopter. I grabbed his leg and hugged it, refusing to let go, afraid that he might go away."

Day 26 Of The Escape: Soldiers

Late in the morning of the 26th day of my escape, I heard numerous voices and people walking toward where I was hiding. There were seven of them, and they were wearing pale khaki Vietnamese Army uniforms and carrying AK rifles. They chatted continuously as they walked. I could practically hear my heart beating. They were only about 10 yards away when they turned to the right and headed away. When they were out of sight, I started walking again in an attempt to put distance between myself and them.

Day 27 Of The Escape: Jets

When I came out of the mountains on the morning of day 27, I saw a broad cornfield. Since I could not walk through it, I had to climb slowly through the mountains that surrounded it. I would climb for 10 minutes and rest for 20 minutes, because I was so extremely tired. I spent the night at the crest of the mountains in the rain and cold. Late that night, I heard the sound of vehicles and saw trucks traveling the ridgeline. The engines stopped, and the lights went out. About a minute later, jet aircraft approached, and I heard the sound of the explosion of rockets and saw the flashes of AAA and machine guns firing back. After about five minutes, the aircraft left, and everything got quiet. Then the engines started, the lights came on and they continued to drive off in convoy style. I began to worry about getting across that road, as there would be a lot of soldiers on a supply route like this one.

Day 28 Of The Escape: More Jets

On day 28, I awoke and discovered that the road ran along the base of the mountain and would be blocking the path of escape. I had heard a lot of gunfire near the road the night before, so I knew there were soldiers in that area. I retraced my path to the edge of the cornfield, where I spent the night. During that night, a large aircraft dropped numerous flares, lighting up the whole area. Soon the jet aircraft appeared and began strafing like the night before.

Day 29 Of The Escape: Close To Death

On the 29th day, I headed back through the mountain pass that I had come through on day 27. I tried to stay parallel to the road, skirting along the edge of the jungle. I came down with the fever again. My eyesight was blurred, my ears rang and I was so weak I couldn't stand and could only crawl. The rifle and knife were even heavier. I was confused and feeling close to death. I

was able to move very little on the 30th and 31st days.

Day 32 Of The Escape: I Couldn't Get Up

I felt better on the 32nd day than I had the previous three days. The fever was finally gone. I reached the edge of the road before the sun came up. After watching for a fair length of time, I crossed the road and headed for the jungle and another mountain. I came across fresh footprints and tire tracks and tried to move quickly away from that area. It was still before noon. I remember falling and trying to get up but not being able to move. The ground, sky and jungle were spinning. I don't remember what happened next.

Captured Again

When I came to, I was sitting on the floor of a house with my hands and legs tied around a post. The house was filled with Laotian Communist soldiers and villagers. One of the soldiers said, "Why is this little dog so hard to kill?" An older man brought me some water, and the soldiers didn't say anything. I was no doubt a long way from the prison I had escaped from, and they did not know who I was or where I had been. I learned that I had been found by a female villager who was cutting bamboo sprouts. The villagers had carried me back to the village and informed the soldiers.

The Kind Old Man

Late that morning, the same old man brought me some hot rice gruel with salt along with a cup of boiled water and tree bark. It was the first hot drink that I'd had in two years! I got chills and fever again, and the old man asked the soldiers to untie my hands so that I could lie down. They did what he said. He then covered me with an old rice sack and I slept until dark. When I awoke I was given a large amount of sticky rice with peppers and a cup of boiled bark water. I vomited and defecated until there was nothing left, probably because I hadn't had much to eat in the last 30 days, and my body wouldn't accept it. I drank some more of the astringent bark water and fell asleep until morning. The old man brought me more food, and this time everything was normal. I then slept for 24 hours. A new group of soldiers replaced the ones who were originally at the house, and I saw the leader go over and talk to the kind old man. The soldier called him "Phor Taseng" (a term of respect for the Administrative Zone Chief). I would probably have reached my time to die if I had not met someone so kind as this old man.

The next day, as the soldiers were preparing me to travel, I prostrated myself at the feet of the old man in thanks. He rubbed my head and gave me this advice, "Don't complain, don't try to escape. Just endure, and you won't die."

Yet Another Prison

We traveled for three days until we reached the headquarters of a large military unit, sheltered in a cave below a large mountain. From there I was taken to another large mountain, which contained a large prison constructed in a cave. Within the cave I was put into a cell made of clay, near the cave's mouth. The floor was split bamboo, about 20 inches above the

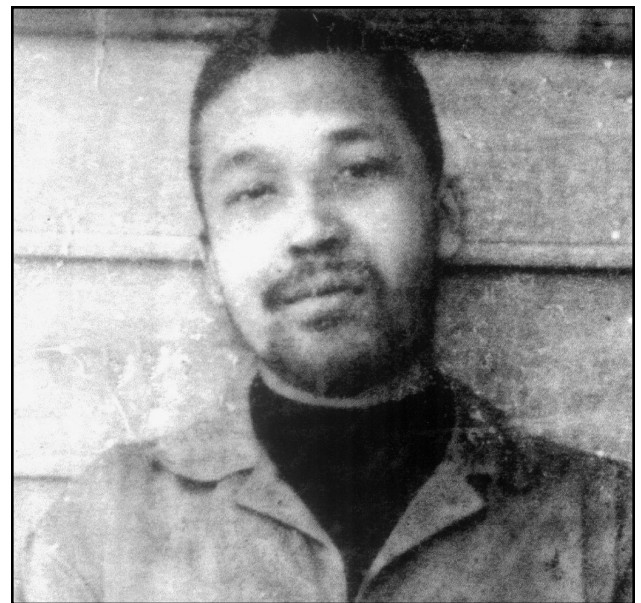
ground. I was put into foot traps and stayed there for three months without being interrogated. There was no opportunity to speak to anyone else, and all I could do was glance at the other prisoners as they were let out to work each day. I would catch the fever twice a day.

All of the prisoners were Laotians, and two of them were Laotian Rightist officers who had been captured when their unit had been overrun in Savannakhet. They had been here a year and were allowed to work outside. When they found out that I was a Thai, they were very nice to me. They would sneak me leafy vegetables or fruit and medicinal vines for my malaria. The vines also helped keep away the fleas and ticks.

At the beginning of the fourth month, a Laotian Rightist battalion commander was put into my cell. He had been beaten severely and just laid there moaning. When the guards unlocked the foot traps the next morning, he was dead. My feelings were hardened, and I prepared myself to die. I told myself that I would not die in prison. I would take a gun away from a guard, even though I would be shot in the process. All I wanted was a chance to shoot some of them as well.

Digging Out

At every chance, I started to dig my way out of the cell. I had been put in this prison in September 1966, and by October 1966, the hole I was digging was ready for escape. I needed to find a way to speak with the prisoners in the large prison in order to find out the trails outside the prison camp. The two officer-prisoners still chatted with me and brought me a piece of parachute cord and taught me how to make a fish net. One of the officers sold the net in the village and bought me a piece of cloth with which to make a pair of pants. The cloth was purchased from a communist soldier and was canvas that had been used to cover a tank. My health had improved, and my fever was down to once a day. Maybe the medicinal vines really helped me. My spirits were good, but the condition of my body was a different story. At the time we were shot down in



Phisit Intharathat: First night after rescue. (Courtesy P. Intharathat)

1963 I weighed about 150 pounds. Now I was lucky to be 90 pounds. But no matter what, I was going to trade everything, even my life, to get free.

I found out that most of the soldiers had moved north and that most of the villagers had fled into the jungle, because they feared the aircraft. For the whole year that I had been at this prison, aircraft had come to drop bombs and strafe every day, several times a day. This also resulted in beatings from the Laotian soldiers, as they would take their anger out on me. During a nighttime air attack, I would crawl out through the hole that I had dug and travel west to an area where there were both Laotian Leftist (Communist) and Rightist forces fighting.

Rescue

On January 9, 1967, at 0400, aircraft circled and dropped illumination flares and bombs not far from the prison. A few minutes later, I heard the sounds of automatic weapons and light machine guns. I quickly undid the foot traps and handcuffs. Next I heard the sounds of feet racing toward the gate and the order to break the locks and release the prisoners. Someone yelled, "Which cell are the foreign prisoners in?" The cell door was opened, and someone ordered the prisoners to follow him. We ran about a half hour and crossed a wide stream, traversed a hill and moved onto a flat barren plain. We had reached Route 12. I was given a green army shirt that was still wet with blood and had a bullet hole on the right side. We ran along the road for a long time until we got into the mountains, where the leader of the group set up a radio and immediately sent a signal. I was dead tired, and my feet were bleeding.

It was just starting to get light, and we could look out over the wide plain and see the Communist forces following us. Just then, four Phantom Jets showed up and opened fire on our pursuers and then left. When the jets left, four T-28s showed up and continued to strafe and bomb.

Our rescue group was led by a non-commissioned officer named Sergeant Tae. He said that he was the leader of a Cobra team of Laotian Rightists from Savannakhet. The sergeant had orders to attack the prison and rescue the prisoners. In all, there were 53 of us prisoners. I was the only foreigner (Thai) in the group. The others were villagers and Laotian Rightist soldiers, including the two Laotian Rightist officers who had befriended me. Twenty two people asked to go off on their own, as they had families in the area.

Sergeant Tae gave me a pair of sandals and some rice crisps and then ordered the remaining 31 of us to move out. He ran us part of the time and walked us part of the time. He sent out point men and set rear guards in a professional manner. His team knew the routes well. I learned later that two members of his team were from this area. We continued to travel until almost 1700 hours, when Sergeant Tae sent out another radio message, and helicopters approached and passed over us. After about 15 more minutes of travel, we arrived at a wide, rocky field and saw two helicopters and a platoon of Laotian Rightist soldiers.

The pilot was an American and asked, "Who works for Air America?" I introduced myself, and he shook my hand. He said his name was Jerry McEntee, and he was an Air America pilot from Udorn. I accompanied the soldiers who attacked the prison onto the first helicopter and took off at about 1730.

There were 14 people total, including the two pilots and mechanic. The mechanic, who was Filipino, walked over to me and gave me a cigarette. I smoked, wondering if this was a dream. Was I really saved and not dreaming?

Twenty minutes later, the copilot told me that the remaining soldiers and prisoners had been overrun by the pursuing forces. I just cried and let the tears flow.

They Were Shocked When They Saw Me

When we arrived at Savannakhet, I was picked up by two Americans in a vehicle.

I recognized one of them as Tom Fosmire, who was my radio instructor with Air America. They took me to the Laotian Rightist headquarters, where I received medical treatment. Among the soldiers were two of my friends from childhood. They were shocked when they saw me. I got a bath and new clothing to wear. After dinner and a debriefing, I went to bed but couldn't sleep. I still believed that this might not be true and that I was just dreaming. On January 12, I was flown to Udorn and spent the night at the Air America Company. Later, I flew to Bangkok and was treated at the Bangkok Christian Hospital.

After Phisit Intharathat's rescue in 1967, he returned to work at Air America, where he was the assistant manager of Security Operations until 1974. With the U.S. withdrawal and the fall of Indochina in 1975, Air America shut down operations. After that, Phisit worked for a Thai company in Bangkok and is currently retired in Bangkok.

*After returning to the United States, Dieter Dengler was sent to the U.S. Navy Hospital in San Diego for recovery. The doctors said he was so malnourished that he was close to death when he was rescued and would probably have lasted only one more day. He weighed only 90 pounds, down from his normal 160. He also had malaria, worms, fungus and many other infections. After his release from the Navy in 1968, he went to work with TWA as a flight engineer. He retired to Sausalito, California, and died in February 2001 of ALS (commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease). Dengler wrote about his captivity and flight in the book *Escape from Laos*, which was published in 1979 by Presidio Press. A movie version of Dengler's life, *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*, was made by German filmmaker Werner Herzog and screened at the Mill Valley Film Festival in 1997. The movie later appeared on Cinemax and was nominated for an Emmy in 1999.*

According to the Arlington National Cemetery website, nearly 600 Americans, including Duane Martin and Gene DeBruin, remain imprisoned, missing or otherwise unaccounted for in Laos. Although the U.S. maintains that only a handful of these men were POW status, over 100 were known to have survived their loss incident. The Pathet Lao stated during the war that they held "tens of tens" of American prisoners but added that they would be released only from Laos, meaning that the U.S. must negotiate directly with the Pathet Lao. Because the Pathet Lao was not part of the agreements that ended American involvement in Southeast Asia, no negotiations have ever been conducted with Pathet Lao for the prisoners it held.

Y.C. To, Prasit Prahmsuwan and Prasit Thanee are still missing. ☹

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

IN LATE JULY, THERE was an ugly incident involving Montana Republican Senator Conrad Burns and the Augusta Hotshots. The Augusta Hotshots were waiting to catch a flight at the Billings Logan International Airport after working the 92,000-acre Bundy Railroad Fire near Custer, Montana. Senator Burns, who was also awaiting a flight after meeting with ranchers and landowners affected by the fire, engaged in what the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation described as an "altercation." According to the DNRC report, Burns approached the firefighters and told them they had "done a piss poor job" and "should have listened to the ranchers," referring to the fact that firefighters had kept landowners at bay when they tried to pitch in and help fight the fire. According to Dan Jiron, a spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service in Washington, D.C., the Hotshots "listened and then went on their way."

Tom Roach, a Division Group Supervisor on the Bundy Railroad Fire, stated that he was walking across the airport tarmac past Burns, who was staring at the NRIMT logo

on his shirt. Burns began following him and then began yelling, "Are you from Boise? Are you from Boise?" Roach replied, "No, sir." The Senator responded, "Good, your life has been saved." Roach then walked away.

Paula Rosenthal, an employee of the Montana DNRC, went to the airport after word of the confrontation was relayed to her and met with the senator, who was described as "sitting alone with his laptop computer." Burns expressed frustration that "the government needs to listen to these ranchers" and described the fact that firefighting operations are coordinated by the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, as "ridiculous."

Rosenthal stated, "The toughest part of the conversation was the point where the senator was critical of a firefighter sitting across from us in the gate area." According to her report, Senator Burns pointed to the firefighter and said, "See that guy over there? He hasn't done a goddamned thing. They sit around. I saw it on the Wedge Fire and in Northwestern Montana some years ago. It's wasteful. You probably paid that guy \$10,000 to sit around. Its gotta change." Rosenthal's report states, "I offered to the senator that our firefighters make around \$8 to \$12 an hour and time-and-a-half for overtime. He seemed a bit surprised that it wasn't higher."

Matt Mackowiak, a spokesman for the senator, said he didn't think Burns met with any of the fire bosses who managed the firefighting response. Much to their credit, the Augusta Hotshots ignored the Senator and declined numerous interviews back in Virginia before being dispatched to another fire in the West.

It was noted later that one of the farmers and ranchers Burns met with

was a long-time financial supporter and political activist who owns a hobby ranch in the fire area. Earlier in the year, Time Magazine named Senator Burns one of the five worst Senators in Congress.

At our deadline in mid-October, Senator Burns was in a very close race with Big Sandy Rancher Jon Tester. By the time you read this, the election will have been over for several months. If Burns lost, pundits will point to this incident as one of the reasons he was voted out of office. If he won, the experts will say the incident had no effect on the election.

On April 24, 2006, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies and Native Ecosystems Council filed legal action to stop a proposed "Fuels Reduction Project" proposed by the Gallatin National Forest in the main Boulder drainage south of Big Timber, Montana. On August 22, 2006, the lightning caused Derby Fire broke out 15 miles south of Big Timber, Montana. 207,115 acres were burned along with 26 residences and 20 outbuildings. Smokejumpers were on the fire early. Extreme fire behavior was the norm with reported 300-foot flame lengths and numerous blow-ups and big runs. September rain and snow finally allowed for containment. The Derby Fire, The Jungle Fire, and the Paradise Complex were reminiscent of 1988 when snow in late October and November finally ended the fires in Yellowstone. 🌲

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Remembering Chuck Dysart: The Smokejumper Years

by Don Halloran (Missoula '53)

We met for smokejumper training in 1953 at a rustic camp, some 20 miles west of Missoula. I was a scared, deadly serious, inexperienced kid of 19 with a thick Boston accent. Along with six other “new men,” we were delivered to the camp in an old truck driven by **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41), who regaled us with jumper stories in between sprays of tobacco out the truck window. While his tales only heightened my fears that I might “wash out” during training, his smile and laughter suggested otherwise. Hauling my duffel bag into the barracks, I was immediately surprised when a tall, lanky kid bounded over to shake hands with another “new man” who had been in Brauer’s truck. “**Bill Calder!** How the hell are you? I didn’t know you signed up for the jumpers!” Bill and I first met on the ride to camp, and now Bill was introducing me to **Chuck Dysart** (MSO-53), the tall, lanky kid. Bill and Chuck had worked together the previous summer in Idaho. The three of us bunked together, survived training together, and, over the years, cemented friendships that lasted a lifetime.

Chuck grew up in the mountain west, understood the ways and humor of westerners, and could joke and laugh easily, even during the most arduous days of training. He was a wonderful antidote to the deadly serious qualities I harbored. During that long, hot summer, his example enabled me to laugh heartily at the scary events of firefighting. His practical ways and confidence inspired me.

The fire season of 1953 was the most furious since the inception of smokejumping. Fire crews, large and small, were scattered far and wide over the Inland Empire for the exhausting work of fire suppression. We dug fire lines with hand tools, endured choking smoke, survived on WWII C-rations, and then packed for the long hike out. As fate would have it, we never jumped on any fires together that season. However, between fires and during meals at our Fort Missoula base, we talked endlessly of our aspirations and adventures – the things that deepen a friendship.

Chuck had two fire jumps before I was called to jump. His humorous understatement that his fires were “a piece of cake” slightly reduced my apprehension. He was on hand at Hale Field when my first fire call came. The time was late morning and realizing that I’d miss lunch, he said, “Give me some money for food!” The next image was Chuck running to the lunch counter in Johnson’s hanger. We were loaded in the Ford Trimotor plane when he returned with my lunch – five chocolate bars! I downed the bars during the flight to the fire and almost immediately developed a bellyache,

followed by cramps, which led to disorientation and a miserable jump. On the ground, I cursed Chuck for making the lunch selection and realized that my first fire was not going to be “a piece of cake.”

The pace was frantic the rest of the summer. Life became a blur of flights, airsickness, frightening jumps often into dense timber, hard labor building fire lines, tasteless C-rations and long hikes out with heavy packs. There was little rest as each of us was called to a fire every two to three days. Somehow, fortified by our youth and stamina, we managed to drift into Missoula during the brief time between fires. The less adventuresome were satisfied with a movie and a visit to a malt shop while others of us discovered Woody Street with half a dozen rowdy bars (no ID’s required), poker games and perfumed women. Our night in town usually ended with a midnight burger at the Oxford Café, where one could always find another jumper with a car for a ride back to Fort Missoula.

The summer was punishing and even the hardiest were drained of energy. Chuck developed a nasty persistent cold in August forcing him to terminate a few weeks early. Fires raged on into late September until cool weather and rain brought the fire season to a close. Without any fanfare or barely a goodbye, we quietly scattered to our homes across the country. Our record-breaking fire season of 1953 would not return to the mountain west for many years.

Chuck and I joined many of the jumpers from 1953 for the 1954 fire season. We were exuberant that it would be a repeat of 1953. It was not to be. Cool, rainy weather meant that we were sent on “good deal” work projects. Chuck and I joined Bill Calder, **John Brothers** (MSO-53), **Tom McCullough** (MSO-53) and **Bob Meier** (MSO-53) in accepting Fred Brauer’s “good deal” to spend the summer at Kelly Creek Ranger Station in the Clearwater National Forest of Idaho. We felt our tasks of painting buildings, cutting firewood, and filling a ditch in Cayuse Landing strip were below our status, and we longed for Missoula and a hot fire season.

Chuck took on the role of social chairman and morale booster. His upbeat spirit and inventiveness made our wilderness incarceration bearable. Following each boring day of painting buildings, he prodded us to swim in the freezing waters of Kelly Creek.; however, his location was an impressive cliff. We all gathered and had second thoughts about leaping off the cliff. A moment later, fully clothed, Chuck yelled, “What the hell!” and leapt into the icy waters. From below came the call, “You’re all a bunch of chickens!”



Chuck Dysart (Courtesy David Dysart)

We followed like lemmings that evening and many more as a great relief from our mindless painting projects.

One Friday, while cleaning a campground some five miles west of the ranger station, Chuck spotted a case of beer in a creek and was convinced that some campers had abandoned it. Rather than carry it back to the station, he suggested we hike there the next day for a Saturday night party. With a few tins of food and blankets, we headed out in high spirits for our beer bash. Chuck announced, expectantly, "There might even be girls camping there for the weekend." Alas, no beer and no campers of either sex. We ate our meager rations, spent a miserable night in the rain and arrived back at the station wet and hungry with nothing to look forward to except more painting on Monday.

At one point, four of us were sent to Cayuse Landing field to put up firewood and fill some rather extensive drainage ditches on the field. Black bears frequented our garbage dump and, rather than bear-proof the dump, we preferred to harass the bears with firecrackers. Our two-room cabin contained a bunkroom and kitchen. One Friday, Bill Calder and I hiked the five miles to Kelly Creek Ranger Station to spend the weekend with Chuck. As soon as we arrived, Chuck suggested we hike back to Cayuse that

night as we could have a better time there with the other jumpers. Besides, he said, there might be fishermen with beer to sell and that would make up for his bungling the earlier beer bash. On the return hike, we told Chuck about the dump bears and the fireworks. He responded that we were lucky the bears didn't break into our kitchen for food. As we neared the cabin, Chuck had an idea, "Hey! Lets pretend we're bears, break into the kitchen, mess up the place and scare the crap out of the others." We couldn't resist. At the kitchen door, we scratched vigorously, grunted and pushed into the kitchen. After scattering food tins, tipping over chairs and growling excessively, we began scratching on the bunkroom door. There was a great commotion on the other side. We returned outside and looked in the bunkhouse windows – the sight was hilarious! The jumpers, in their underwear, had on their hard hats and were brandishing shovels or pieces of firewood in one hand, while with their free arm, they were trying to barricade the kitchen door with a cot and furniture. We howled with laughter, watched these antics for a few minutes, and then stumbled into the bunkroom still doubled up in laughter. We certainly scared the crap out of our buddies, but they seemed so relieved we weren't bears that they forgot to beat the crap out of us. Incidentally, no fishermen arrived for the weekend and, once again, no beer.

Over the three-day Fourth of July holiday, Chuck and I hitched a ride to Missoula, cranked up my '40 Ford and headed for Spokane. Chuck finally made good on his promise of beer and women. The weekend events are a bit hazy. I do remember dancing on a floating ballroom floor in Idaho, having our fill of beer, and spilling a platter of food on my date. When we were slightly sober, Chuck took me to visit his family and on a tour of Spokane. All I remember of Spokane is there was a big waterfall somewhere downtown. Sometime during that lost weekend I must have mentioned that next month I would turn 21 on the third of August. That would come back to haunt me. That weekend was enough of the "outside" – we were glad to get back to the pines and cedars of Kelly Creek Ranger Station.

August 3rd arrived and I made no mention of my birthday. After dinner I was relaxing on my bunk, engrossed in AB Guthrie's book, "The Big Sky." Suddenly, I was aware that all was not right – there was whispering, followed by five jumpers pouncing on me. Wriggling loose was impossible. I left the bunkhouse feet first, like a dead man, on a beeline for the frigid waters of Kelly Creek. There was a nasty little rapids just below camp and that was my entry point. They paused, began the obligatory three swings and away I sailed into the head of the rapids. By the time I hauled my somewhat battered body from the creek and ambled back to the barracks, the other jumpers were reclining in silence, pretending to read. "Just had a refreshing dip in the creek," I said, "Now it's time to get back to my book." Silence prevailed, then giggling, and finally war hoops of laughter as they related how dumb I looked flying into the water. Chuck had struck again.

As a wet August unfolded, everyone wondered if there would ever be a fire season that year. We all needed the

money to return to college, and work boredom was setting in rapidly. John Brothers hatched a plan to visit Mexico where you could camp on the beaches, have exotic food, drink, and, the clincher, enjoy the señoritas! Ole! The plan required a car, my car, specifically. Eventually, only Brothers and I remained enthusiastic about the Mexican Escape. On a rainy Friday, we hitched rides to Missoula, checked with Fred Brauer to make sure we weren't jeopardizing our return the next year, packed the '40 Ford and headed south.

I was not to see Chuck again for 32 years. The rest of the crew got a couple of fires that 1954 season, and, in 1955, Chuck worked for the Forest Service at Sullivan Lake, Washington. He was hot on the trail of a woman that would eventually become his wife of 43 years. That's proof that there are some things more attractive than smokejumping, but not many.

In 1986, I was working as a naturalist in Glacier National Park when suddenly there was a pounding on my cabin door. It was Chuck and Phyllis Dysart! Same tall, lanky, smiling "kid" with his greeting, "Hey, fire call!" Earlier that summer I looked up Dysart in the Spokane phone directory; however, it was his father's number and he informed me Chuck was out of town. I told his dad that I would be in Glacier all summer and would like to hear from his son. True to his spontaneity, Chuck skipped the phone

call and simply drove over with Phyllis for a grand reunion.

The amazing thing about our reunion in 1986 was how similar our lives had been during the intervening decades. We both were drafted into the US Navy, but served on different coasts. We both returned to graduate school and became teachers – an ideal profession with abundant time off for adventures. We both became pilots and even owned the same home-built plane; an open cockpit, wood and fabric high-wing Pietenpol. The smokejumping experience with its high adventures, can-do attitude, and replacement of fear with confidence lasted us a lifetime. That can-do attitude and confidence served Chuck well when he flew with his brother in an open cockpit biplane across the country, and when, with his young family, they cleared a site and built their own home. He also taught himself to sail and took me on a few white-knuckle excursions.

We visited often over the past 20 years until the horrible disease of ALS took him from us all too soon. It was inevitable that during each visit, our conversations would drift back to smokejumping, the time of our coming of age. We realized those intense events of our firefighting summers, so long ago, allowed us to develop confidence, independence, and a deep concern for nature and humanity. Chuck played a key role in helping me shed the constraints of my youth, for which I am forever grateful. 🙏

Miss New Mexico Records Wildfire Safety

Steve Hall (MSO-70) knows there's no glamour in fighting fires—not with the smoke, dirt, sweat and sleeping on the ground many nights in a row. He also knows it's a lot of hard work.

His daughter, Christina Hall, however, has parlayed hard work into a spot on the national stage. She was named Miss New Mexico for 2006 at the contest in Alamogordo June 10. Christina now prepares for a trip to the Miss America pageant, slated to be aired on Country Music Television (CMT) in January.

Miss America officials hadn't announced a broadcast date as of this issue's deadline.

Christina Hall is a graduate of Eastern New Mexico University with a degree in vocal performance. "She's a hell of a singer," her father said.

Already, Christina has recorded several radio spots focusing on wildfire prevention, and sang the national anthem at a home game of the Albuquerque Isotopes Triple-A baseball team. Indeed, one of her career ambitions is to sing for the Santa Fe Opera.

Steve Hall works for the U.S. Forest Service as the INFRA program manager for the Southwestern Region (R3). 🙏



Christina Hall (Courtesy S. Hall)

Alaska Fire Control Aid Jumpers

by Larry W. Vincent (Fairbanks '62)

It was sad to read of **Orville Looper's** (CJ-49) passing in the April 2006 issue of *Smokejumper*. Memories of Fairbanks in 1962, 1963 and 1965 come to mind and the people I worked with at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Fire Control Station at 3-Mile Airport Road.

In early April 1962, a group of us were hired as Fire Control Aides, and we were not intended to be jumpers. During our training, however, the fire control overhead, perhaps Orville and **Phil Clark** (CJ-51), decided that this bunch of ground-pounders could be trained as smokejumpers: to take over a fire after initial attack, to act as fire bosses, if necessary, and to complete the paperwork. This meant we would jump with the jumpers on the initial attack and remain on the fire to serve as fire bosses if it wasn't fully suppressed.

We trained under the supervision of Orville and Phil with some efficient help from **Gene DeBruin** (MSO-59) and **Gideon "Gid" Newton** (CJ-55). They were good instructors of whom I have great memories. I almost washed out trying to get the hang of the Allen roll. Gene and Gid took me to the training area during off-hours and we discovered that, by myself, I had no problem with the rolls. I was just not able to get it right in front of the whole crew. I was grateful for their taking the extra time and effort to not ground this rookie before he took his first step out of the Grumman Goose or the DC-3.

There are many good memories, but some memories are a bit hazy after the years spent as a Professor at the Universidad de Los Andes in Venezuela. Now, back in my native northern New Mexico and retired, I have time to think about those days and to see how much I can recall. Some of the other rookie crew members were **Howard "Tryg" Forsythe** (FBX-62), **Tom Crane** (FBX-62), **Walt Vennum** (FBX-62), and **Dick Malchow** (FBX-62). We were called "gyppo-jumpers" by the veterans from Missoula, Cave Junction and Redding. There were others I don't recall. I'd appreciate some help from those who might remember.

My first jump was something! When the chute opened I *think* I remembered to check the canopy. I was so awed by the feeling of floating up there with no perception of height (my worst fears were jumping from the shock tower where you *do* appreciate the height), that I forgot all about the guidelines until I got in range of Orville's bullhorn (or maybe just his unaided voice) indicating, not so gently, that I was headed in the wrong direction. I landed, Allen roll and all, in a large puddle across a fence from where I should have been. A slight breeze caught my chute before it collapsed, dragging me headfirst through the puddle. I remember water gushing through my facemask and, when I stopped, some kids coming up to me saying, "I guess you made a booboo?"

The year 1962 was a pretty slow year for fires. We volunteered for some extra practice jumps, I guess to exercise the chutes. I don't remember how many jumps that year, only that in the three seasons I had a total of 33, of which 13 were fire-jumps.

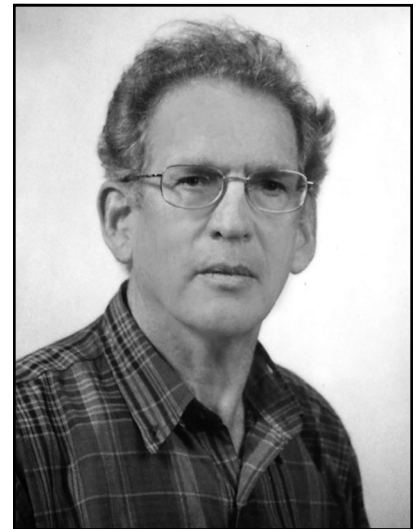
Jumping in Alaska was soft compared to what we heard from the "old timers" who

trained and worked in the Lower 48. Landings were usually soft in the tundra. Let-downs were rare since black spruce usually doesn't get as tall as the length of the chute. Even the white spruce along rivers weren't much of a challenge. I never used my 50 ft. letdown rope. I carried a 44 magnum in my PG bag for assurance against grizzlies. Fortunately I never had the opportunity to find out what I would do with the damn thing had the occasion presented itself. I also remember including some onions, garlic, and such to spice up the C-rations.

At the end of the fire season in 1962, I stayed on to work on a BLM catastral survey crew until November, so I got a taste of fall and almost winter in Alaska. We worked ten days on and four off, flying to and from the daily work in a helicopter.

In the spring of 1963 I drove my old (even at that time) 1951 Chevy from Taos, NM, to Fairbanks for refresher training. The Chevy managed to get us all over road-accessible Alaska before we were sent to McGrath, and I was separated from my wheels and weekend adventures. Gene and Gid had left for some high-paying cargo-dropping jobs overseas. We learned of Gid's fate later that summer and Gene's later in the fall.

There are many things that might be worth telling. I wish I could remember the words and melody, for that matter, of the jump song we put to a well known folksong, "The wreck of the old ... ? Casey Jones?" Orv Looper once asked me to use an old Leroy lettering set to make some desk name-plates for him and others, including Phil. I made two for Orville, one with a humorous touch that I wasn't sure he would appreciate. It was "Looper" with eyebrows



Larry Vincent (Courtesy L. Vincent)

over the two "o"s and pupils looking to one side. I'm almost pretty sure I didn't make them cross-eyed. Orv got a kick out of it and actually put the humorous version on his desk. I appreciated that. I may also have made one for George Kitson, the dispatcher.

I would be happy to share memories of those years with others. Most of my memories are good, but I am greatly

saddened by the loss of good friends. I'd like to convey my condolences to Orville Looper's family, also the families of Tom Crane and **Dan Lynch** (NCSB-58), and very late ones to those of Gene Debruin and Gid Newton. 🕊

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Smokejumping and Ski Jumping Walt Anderson, an early advocate and developer of Smokejumping

by Ken Frederick and Doug Frederick



Historic Photo: 1940 training jump at Seeley Lake Ranger Station. (Courtesy Jim Alexander)

Thanks to one of its early developers, smokejumping may owe as much to the ski as it does to the parachute! The explanation lies with one of smokejumping's lesser known pioneers, Walter E. Anderson.

Walt Anderson was born on a homestead near Easton, Washington, in 1896. He joined the Forest Service after serving in the Navy during World War I and completing a two-year college course in business administration. Based on historic photos, Walt evidently did some casual firefighting

for the Forest Service in the early 1920s. He started his formal career as a fire guard at an isolated guard station in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State in 1924.

Walt was a hard worker and quickly earned the respect of his supervisors and colleagues. He was what we'd call 'woods wise', having grown up in the central Cascade Mountains. Starting while they were boys and on into their teens, Walt and his brothers grew up taking care of stock, hunting, fishing, trapping and hiking all over the woods. They were

also extremely fond of what we now call back-country skiing (using home-made skis). Walt was strong, healthy, and very competent in the woods.

Building on his experience as a fire guard, Walt rose quickly through the Forest Service ranks. His next two Forest Service jobs were District Ranger positions on two Wenatchee National Forest districts. After just six years with the Forest Service, at the age of 34, he was named as the fire control officer for the Wenatchee NF. After six years in that job (in 1936), Walt transferred to the Chelan (now Okanogan) National Forest headquarters in Okanogan, WA, as the chief of fire control.

In 1939, opportunity knocked on the door of Walt's career. That summer, the Forest Service announced it was moving the Aerial Fire Control Experimental Project from California to the North Pacific Region. This project had been conducting fire control experiments with water and chemical bombs, but the Forest Service's Assistant Chief for Fire Control, David Godwin, wanted a new focus. Godwin wanted the project to shift to looking at using parachutes to deliver firefighters into remote and inaccessible fires.¹

The Chelan National Forest was selected for the new research site because it was considered to be "aerial-minded." Because it encompassed a lot of rugged and isolated portions of the North Cascade mountains, the Chelan NF had been tinkering for several years with techniques of dropping supplies to firefighters on remote fires by parachute. The Chelan NF also owned an airport surrounded by a forest diverse in both its vegetation and topography, and the Forest had the kind of personnel needed to support the project.

Shortly before the aerial firefighting experiments were scheduled to begin, however, the veteran Forest Service official assigned to oversee the project, Lage Wernstedt, was incapacitated by a medical condition. The region needed an experienced fire manager to assume those duties and there was Walt!

In his work with the program, Walt was responsible for directing the study so that it would meet three primary objectives:

- Determine the feasibility of landing 'smokechasers' from airplanes by parachute into rough terrain at high altitudes and in timbered areas.
- Develop and test protective clothing suitable for safe landings in timbered areas, rocky areas, on steep slopes, and into other hazardous jumping sites.
- Make preliminary investigations into the devices and procedures and the application of the methods devised, if practicable, including communication, reaching the ground after being lodged in the trees, retrieving parachutes, personnel and equipment.

Walt helped evaluate the parachutes and other equipment proposed for smokejumping, and he had a hand in determining the final configurations of equipment and procedures to be used in smokejumping.

Walt made another historic contribution to the field. He is credited with coining the term "smokejumper" during the

experiments to describe the new kind of airborne firefighter. Pioneer smokejumper **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40) recalled a group of the project personnel sitting around a campfire discussing the project while they waited for coffee to boil. As they mulled over what to call the new brand of firefighters, Walt observed that since the term 'smoke chaser' was used for ground firefighters, why not call the new firefighters 'smoke jumpers?' The name stuck.

Walt didn't merely do his job from a desk. Along with several other administrative and support personnel associated with the program, Anderson (who was 43 years old at the time) took three parachute jumps himself as part of the feasibility study. According to his son, Hal Anderson, on his third jump Walt tried to land on his feet. Unfortunately, the landing didn't turn out as Walt had hoped. He hit the ground hard, suffering a concussion for his trouble. But the knock on the head didn't diminish Walt's view of the tremendous utility of smokejumping.

What would entice a middle-aged, career Forest Service manager to try the relatively little-known practice of parachuting? After all, parachuting in 1939 was barely removed from aviation's barnstorming era. It was still regarded in the United States² as a daredevil, crackpot activity in those days.

The answer could lie in Walt's hobby of ski jumping. As a dyed-in-the-wool Swede (Walt's Swedish parents had immigrated to the United States), Walt had practically grown up wearing skis. In his 20s, Walt won several ski jumping tournaments, and he helped start and lead several ski clubs in Washington State in the 1920s and 30s. Starting in 1928, he was the driving force behind the construction of the large ski jump in Leavenworth, Washington—where a ski jumper named Torger Tøkle set a U.S. ski jumping record in February 1941. Perhaps the allure of floating through the air and executing a perfect landing on skis suggested to Walt that parachuting would offer a similar thrill. He certainly had enough grit to give it a try.

Walt must also have applied his abilities as an innovative thinker to the smokejumping experiments. He was known for taking multi-day, mid-winter back-country ski trips carrying only a 20 to 25 lb. pack, and these experiences must reflect a person who knew how to get the most use from the most basic set of gear. Walt also tinkered with skiing equipment and wrote newspaper articles on the subject in the 1930s. He also wrote a fire equipment article that appeared in *Fire Control Notes* (the forerunner of *Fire Management Today*) in 1941.

Walt and the rest of the Winthrop experimenters succeeded in proving that smoke-jumping was a feasible method of getting firefighters rapidly to remote and isolated fires. The next summer, smokejumper programs were started at Winthrop, Washington, and Missoula, Montana. The first operational fire jump occurred on July 12, 1940, on a fire on the Nez Perce National Forest. Smokejumping continues to this day as one of the fascinating aspects of wildland firefighting. Walt Anderson—firefighter, District Ranger, fire manager and ski jumper—helped get it off the

ground.

Walt Anderson died in 1990 at the age of 94 in Missoula, Montana. He fell a little short of his goal of living to the age of 100.

Brothers Doug and Ken Frederick are both wildland fire management veterans, following in the footsteps of their great-uncle, Walt Anderson. Doug started his career with the Forest Service on the Wenatchee NF, serving on the Entiat Hotshot crew and engine and hand crews. He also worked on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie NF in fire and fuels. He is currently the Assistant Fire Management Officer at the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge near Cheney, WA. Ken also started his career on the Wenatchee NF and worked in a variety of fire jobs before moving into pub-

lic affairs. He has worked on the Coconino and Flathead NFs, and he is currently a public affairs specialist with the BLM at the National Interagency Fire Center.

Footnotes

¹ The Forest Service's Intermountain Region had studied the idea of dropping firefighters into fires by parachute in 1934—even going so far as to hire a professional parachutist to do a few demonstration jumps—but had concluded that the concept was too risky.

² This was not true in Europe. Germany and Russia already had highly organized paratroop units in their armies by the late 1930s. According to Francis Lufkin, the Aerial Fire Control Experimental project used a translated Russian paratrooper manual as a guide. 🇷🇺

A Missoula Jumper's Alaska Lament

by Steve Hall (Missoula '70)

I came to Alaska from Missoula one day,
It's the Promised Land for overtime pay,
Where grizz run free from Tok to Nome,
And Caribou graze their tundra home.

I thought I'd spend a week or so,
Jumping fires made for two,
Chasing women, having fun,
And getting a tan in the midnight sun.

When I got to Fairbanks to my surprise,
The siren went off, 'it's 12-man size',
I said to myself this just can't be,
It's just a joke they're fooling with me.

About that time they called my name,
And said to load on that airplane,
That's when my fears began to run,
I knew that trip would be no fun.

Its tires were bald down to the threads,
And a wing was bent where it hit the shed,
Oil was dripping from the engine cowl,
And the pilot boarded with a hell-of-a scowl.

But I got in and I sat down,
There was a terrible roar when we left the ground,
But some how we got in the air,
And I still believe it was because of MY prayer.

How that plane flew I'll never know,
And if my buddies were scared it sure didn't show,
They just sat and chewed their snuff,
And as we flew it got a little rough.

Now I don't mind flying, not even a little bit,
But when we reached the fire an engine quit,
Let's jump I heard somebody holler,
Cause discretion is the better part of valor.



Steve Hall (Courtesy S. Hall)

So I grabbed my bag and began to assemble,
My gear inside without even a tremble,
I hustled to the door where I knew I'd be safe,
So if they said jump I wouldn't be second place.

With one engine out and the other one screamin',
To maintain flight, I knew was just dreamin',
So with that in mind and static clip in hand,
I was ready to jump, given the command.

I knew any minute that I would soon see,
The ground come up and surely smite me.
But I remained calm, cool, and collected,
While the man next to me, his last meal rejected.

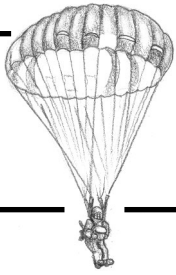
We were all ready to leave that beast,
Me included, to say the least,
Tom and Ed and I were there,
All ready and waiting to hit the air.

But we didn't jump and to Bethel we flew,
Where upon we landed and did a ground loop too,
We pushed her off the runway and had a smoke,
I'm tellin' you boys, this ain't no joke.

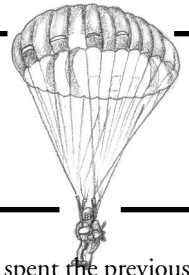
After repairs, some hours later,
We took off again, though we all thought better.
Headed back to the fire, for another look,
Jumped in the tundra, and got it hooked.

So that's my story and I'm stickin' to it,
I've been to Alaska and I lived through it,
The country is beautiful and the jumpers are great,
I was glad I came up from the lower 48.

My tale has a moral and it goes like this,
A trip to Alaska may not all be bliss.
So just keep smilin', while you're in that plane,
And just remember, it all pays the same.



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

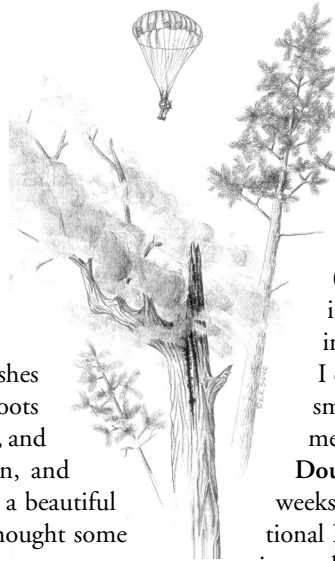
Congratulations and thanks to Edgar Thorsrud (MSO-42), Gar Thorsrud (MSO-46), Erik Thorsrud (MSO-79), Bill Fogarty (MSO-57), Jim Thompson (MSO-63), Bob Webster (MSO-55), Andrew M. Hayes (MSO-79), James J. "Jack" Cole (MYC-55), Ernie Longanecker (NCSB-70), Chris Sorensen (Associate), and Abie A. Harris (NCSB-60), who just became our latest Life Members.

Carol Tracy: "Per Dick's (MSO-53) request, his ashes were flown over St. Mary's peak in the Bitterroots Sunday, July 16, with Bob Nicol flying myself, and Jim (son) and daughters, Shannon, Colleen, and Becky, observing from another plane. It was a beautiful day and a magnificent final resting place. Thought some friends would like to know."

Marlene Dutton (wife of Delos Dutton MSO-51): "Dear Gobi reunion jumpers, I received the two 'Books of the Gobi' and the Siskiyou smokejumpers plaque. What a treasure! It means so much to me. Dee would have been so proud. What a family treasure. All the stories from so many of Dee's friends. The jumpers experiences have been captured for all time, and what a life they did live. It is with sincere gratitude and love that I thank all of you Gobi jumpers. I am proud to have known so many of you and the joy you have shared with me, the kindness you have shown."

Carroll Gambrell (MSO-52): "After a 37-year career as a forestry consultant, I chucked it all to become a writer. I am the author of a couple novels, *The Kudzu Chronicles* and *The Sugar Valley Saga*. My forthcoming effort, *The Glory Days*, will be of special interest to smokejumpers. It is a fictional autobiography of smokejumping fifty years ago, narrated in the jocular vein. Hopefully, it will be available for the 2007 (Boise) reunion. Congratulations on the *Smokejumper* (magazine). I appreciate learning of friends of a half century ago."

Last spring I was contacted by **Tom Healy** from Ireland. Tom has been a firefighter for 37 years and was planning a trip to the U.S. He spent four years in the British Airborne and currently jumps about 30 times a year with skydiving clubs. Tom wanted to see a smokejumper base and do some hiking during his time over here. I knew that **Roger Savage (MSO-57)** would be the perfect contact for Tom. Here is an email from Tom, who just completed his trip (July): "I took your advice, went to Missoula, met Roger, and had the most wonderful time with some of the nicest people you could wish to meet. I spent a day with the smokejumpers, even getting to see some rookies on a training jump at 9-Mile. Went hiking with a trail crew who are



all friends of Roger, having spent the previous night in Spotted Bear Ranger Station. I drove about 2000 miles around the state, which included a short visit to the West Yellowstone smokejumpers. I stopped off at Lost Prairie Skydivers, near Kalispel, and took a jump.

"Everyone I met was so kind, and the countryside just breathtaking. When I got there (Missoula), Roger couldn't do enough for me, making me feel so welcome, and his lovely wife, Bonnie, invited me into their home for dinner.

I can appreciate even more now the contents of the smokejumper magazines that you sent me. I had a memorable time that will stay with me forever."

Doug Houston (RAC-72): "Just got back from two weeks of fire (Aug. 1st) and am flying on a Glacier National Park fire starting tomorrow morning. Six jumpers jumped this fire on Friday afternoon when it was about 30 acres, but nothing other than solid beetle kill in front of the fire, so it went from about 1,000 acres Sat. morning to 22,000 by late afternoon causing road closures, evacuations of the town of St. Mary's and one heckuva column of smoke."

Eric Eastep (MYC-00): "My days as a jumper are over. I took a job as an Engine Module Leader in Cedar City, Utah."

Steve Hall (MSO-70): "As a follow up to a note I sent you last November, on Saturday night June 10, 2006, my daughter, Christina Hall, was crowned Miss New Mexico. This means she'll be competing in the Miss America pageant in January, 2007, which will be nationally televised on the cable channel CMT. The format of this years Miss America pageant will be changed from previous years as the viewing audience will have a chance to vote for their favorite contestant, much like the 'American Idol' program."

Steve Carlson (IDC-62): "There is an article in the Aug. '06 *Discover Magazine* about the tourist impact on wilderness areas, in particular, the middle fork of the Salmon River, now part of the 'Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.' While it doesn't speak directly about fire, it does talk about preserving areas that we all enjoyed getting into on 'High Mountain Two Manners.' And, of course, that is my old jump territory, so I could (perhaps) be just a little biased."

Dave Wood (RAC-66): "I retired from labor relations work about 10 years ago, and my wife and I followed open wheel racing as a hobby, and it turned into much more than that. For the past three years, we have worked with Champ Car World Series, and we do the fan based activities for the Grand Prix in the US and Canada. This includes the fan autograph sessions, fan forums, fan club dinners, meetings and tours as well as pace car activities and pre race

ceremonies. We are quite busy from April through September from Sisters, Oregon. The rest of the year is spent above Tampa, Florida.”

Murry Taylor (RDD-65): “I’ve updated my web page, *jumpingfire.com*. It has an icon on the home page where you can ‘Make A Fire Jump’ and also contains other updates about the movie and new books in progress.”

Ed Summerfield (NCSB-47): “I talked recently with **Bill Eicher** (NCSB-48). Major General William E. Eicher, U.S. Army, retired in 1984 after 32 years of active Army service and now lives in Bowie, Maryland. Poking around on the internet, I found out that upon retirement from the Army, he went to the American Defense Preparedness Association as Vice Pres., Technical Services, responsible for the operations of 26 technical divisions. He retired from that position in 1996. Upon his retirement from ADPA, he was honored on the floor of the U. S. House of Representatives for his ‘remarkable accomplishments and his ‘44 years of distinguished service to our nation.’”

Tom Uphill (MSO-56): “Hi Chuck, wanted to let you know that I appreciated the GREAT work you did on the Gene DeBruin story. I attended Forestry school with Gene and also jumped with him at MSO. He was a tough little guy, as your story points out, but he had a whole world against him.”

Ken Hessel (MYC-58): “Hi Chuck, just wanted to say thanks for your time and effort in publishing the Phisit/DeBruin story. Part I of Phisit’s account has cleared up several questions I’ve had for years.”

Clay Morgan (MYC-74): “I am now working for Excalibur Almaz, a new spacecraft company which is modernizing formerly secret Soviet space capsules for spaceflight. We also have a space station, in wonderful shape. We plan to fly space tourists to orbit and to perform other services, such as crew transport and from the International Space Station. It’s kind of Jules Verne meets Buck Rogers, meets John le Carre.”

Chris Sorensen (Magazine staff): “For you aviation buffs, Neptune Aviation Services of Missoula is tanking the very last P2V Neptune to roll off the Lockheed assembly line. The plane will be Tanker 42. At the Hawkins and Powers Aviation liquidation auction in August, the C119 Flying Box Car, which starred in the remake of “Flight of the Phoenix,” sold for \$65,000. An A-26 Invader sold for \$112,000. There are about 40 airworthy P2V Neptunes and about 40 A-26 Invaders still flying.”

Brad Sanders (MYC-88): “I have been living in Sumatra, Indonesia, for 3-years working as the Fire & Aviation Manager of a large pulp and paper company with 300,000 hectares of acacia plantations to protect. We have a great little firefighting department that includes some very dedicated men, an airboat, MD500E/r helicopter and an Air Tractor 602. We are just ending our fire season (late Sept) for this year with the start of the rainy season. We had 143 fires, burning 413 hectares.”

From *Smokeyjumper* magazine columnist **Chris Sorensen’s** Jan. 2006 column: “If anyone ever deserves the Forest Service Heroism and Emergency Response Award, it is

smokejumper **Ron Rucker** (RAC-76). On July 21, 2005, around 5 pm, with the temperature 105 degrees in Las Vegas, Rucker, smokejumper **Marge Kuehn-Tabor** (RAC-91) and contract pilot Jonathon Stairs took off from the North Las Vegas Airport to conduct reconnaissance on fires in southern Nevada. Rucker was training Kuehn-Tabor as an Air Tactical Supervisor. According to witnesses, the 1964 Aero Commander became airborne and then crashed nose first, ending upright on the runway. The nose and cockpit were severely damaged. Tabor-Kuehn was sitting in the co-pilot’s seat with Ron Rucker seated behind them. After the crash, Ron Rucker escaped through a hole in the aircraft, thinking the pilot and Marge Kuehn-Tabor were both dead. He got away from the plane and with both engines still running, he went back and extricated Kuehn-Tabor and dragged her to safety. Then he returned and attempted to rescue the pilot, who was entangled in the wreckage and critically injured. This entire incident was captured on video by various Las Vegas television news helicopters and the footage is compelling.”

John Twiss (RAC-67): “Redmond smokejumper, **Ron Rucker** (RAC-76), received a national heroism award Sept. 13, 2006. Rucker received the Chief’s Award for Heroism and Emergency Response from Dale Bosworth, US Forest Service Chief, at a ceremony in Arlington, Virginia.”

Brian Miller (RDD-85): “I’m currently Chief Resident of the Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery service at the University of Utah Hospital in Salt Lake City. I have accepted a fellowship position at the Washington University of St. Louis in Head and Neck Surgery and Microvascular Reconstructive Surgery starting in June 2007. All current and past jumpers are welcome to come see me and have their heads examined.”

Just got a call from **Abie Harris** (NCSB-60) passing along info that fellow Georgia resident, **Charley Crowley** (CJ-60), is making a comeback from chemo-treatment. All our best to Charley. Abie hopes to bring Charley, even though he is a Gobi jumper, to the NCSB reunion next September. 🍄

Where Are These Guys?

Please send any information to: John McDaniel/NSA Mbrship, P.O. Box 105, Falun KS 67442, email: jumpercj57@hotmail.com

Bill Arrington (CJ-53)
 Calvin Austin (CJ-53)
 David W. Beach (MYC-53)
 Ralph B. Benton (MSO-53)
 David A. Booth (MYC-53)
 John W. Brothers (MSO-53)
 Gary G. Brown (MSO-53)
 Don Chapman (CJ-53)
 James R. Cinker (MSO-53)
 Roert V. Clifford (IDC-53)
 Kirk D. Ellsworth (MSO-53)
 James W. Forbes (MSO-53)
 Joseph P. Fox (MSO-53)



Items from the Fire Pack



Early Days at CJ

The Redwood Ranger Station, Cave Junction, Oregon, served a large area roughly from the Cascade Range to the Pacific Ocean. There was much construction to be done. Under the guidance of our resident architect, **Ray Hudson** (CJ-43), we dismantled an old CCC building near the Oregon Caves and rebuilt it into a parachute loft behind the ranger station. Later, we built a hangar at the airport for the Fairchild.

William S. Laughlin (Cave Junction '43)

Finding Those Hidden Muscles

After a short stint in LaPine, Oregon, all except the "political objectors" were moved. In the spring of 1945 an opportunity to transfer to the smokejumpers came my way. Training first, followed by a little body toning followed almost immediately. The training center had a way of finding hidden muscles that the farm and Dad's sawmill or anything else had ever touched before. The great part, an airplane ride and a parachute jump, and then it was time to do something more.

Ralph Miller (McCall '45)

What Is a Noise Opposite a Whistle?

One evening Bill (Siemon) and I strolled past the mess hall to an area where we had the garbage dump. There we saw two black bears rooting in the garbage. We watched quietly and soon they were gone.

About a week later, we went down there again and one bear was there. Like an idiot, I whistled as if calling a dog. The bear came slowly toward us. The nearer he came, the bigger he looked. Bill said, "Hey, make a noise opposite a whistle."

In desperation, we jumped up

and down shouting and yelling and the bear ran away. I looked at Bill and asked, "Bill, what were you going to do with that stick in your hand?" "Oh," Bill replied, "I was going to goose you so you'd jump and keep him occupied while I ran for help."

Ivan Moore (Missoula '45)

Apples

During the last part of the season, **Loren Zimmerman** (MSO-43) and I caught a bus down to Hamilton to pick apples for a farmer who had a sizeable orchard. We agreed to pick for three dollars a day and board and room. At dinner the first evening, the farmer let us know what little regard he had for conscientious objectors, however, he had the highest respect for smokejumpers who would climb to the top of his trees and pick his apples. He was making all the money he could off the apple business and us, knowing that his apples would never again sell for three dollars a bushel.

Asa Mundell (Missoula '43)

A Shocking Call

The summer of 1945 found me pulling lookout duty. My training had been one mistake after another culminating in a pile-up on my second training jump. One evening, after a storm, my phone line did not work. The dispatcher, whom I remember as "Smitty," came riding up on a mule to investigate and find the break. He instructed me to crank the phone at intervals to see if the break was fixed. I did that and eventually found the line was fixed. That evening, Smitty called. "Neal, I could shoot you!" he sputtered. "Just as I was up to my waist in wet brush fixing that line, you had to crank the phone." With the prospective of years, I would say that it was Smitty's misfortune to deal with someone

whose every effort in the smokejumpers seemed to come out wrong.

Philip Neal (Missoula '45)

Short Career

Cayuse Landing was the summer home for a small group of smokejumpers in 1944. It was a small Forest Service airstrip about 50 miles northeast of Pierce, Idaho. We built a parachute loft and did maintenance work between jumps.

Of course, barbers were scarce in this country. As I owned a pair of hand clippers, it seemed appropriate to me, to take up barbering at 25 cents a head. My first customer, or victim, was **George Iten** (MSO-44). With a towel pinned around his neck, I began my work of art. When I finished, I felt I had done a masterly job. But, after viewing the haircut in a mirror and receiving comments from fellow jumpers, George demanded, "Just cut it all off. I'm sure it will look better." I don't remember for sure, but I think I was never paid, and so ended my career as a barber.

Larry Morgan (Missoula '44)

And Yellow Bellies You're Not!

After my first season at Cave Junction, the decision was made to try the smokejumping operation in the Twisp-Winthrop area. I was in the first group of six jumpers that arrived in Twisp around the first of June. We were warned ahead of time that we "Conscies" (conscientious objectors) were not welcome. Our first job was to erect a bunkhouse and bathhouse under the supervision of Cleo Jet from the Forest Service. He made no bones that he was going to give us a hard time. Cleo made a few attempts to ride us hard but that slowed down. We "Conscies" were used to hard work, didn't take any

breaks and got the job done with very little guidance.

At noon of our second week, Cleo came up with a lunch bucket in hand. "Elmer, can I sit down and eat lunch with you?"

"Sure," I said. "Is there something we're not doing right?"

"No," said Cleo. "It's just that when you guys got here, I had made up my mind that I was going to give

you Yellow Bellies a rough time. I was going to work the tail end off you and then kick you down the road. Well, it hasn't worked out that way. There is no way I can keep up with you guys when it comes to putting out work. You don't make mistakes and, at the end of the day, there's a lot of work done."

"So, Elmer," said Cleo. "Let me shake your hand and say welcome to

the forest. And Yellow Bellies you're not. If you were, you wouldn't have chosen this line of work. There is no way I would jump out of a perfectly good airplane and depend on a little piece of silk to get me to the ground."

Cleo was a very good friend of mine from then on until he died many years later.

Elmer Neufeld (Cave Junction '44)

Praise For the Eagle

by Phillip Toth (McCall '45)

Sixty-one years ago I made a jump I'll never forget. It was 1945, and two of us jumped a fire in the Bitterroot Mountains between Idaho and Montana. Before we stepped into the Travelair the Assistant Ranger told us, somewhat jokingly, "When you come down in these mountains, spread your legs wide, otherwise you'll slip down one side or the other." When we arrived over the area we saw what he meant. The mountain ridges were extremely narrow and steep, with the one we were headed for marked by a fire burning just below the top. My jump partner was a capable fellow, **Dave Smucker** (MYC-45), a Mennonite who hailed from Wooster, Ohio. He was due to go out first, as soon as the spotter's drift chute indicated the wind velocity. The plane approached the ridge and, not long after, the spotter gave Dave the slap on the back and sent him on his way. We watched him drift down, miss the backside of the narrow ridge, and then float off into the distance of the deep canyon below. On the next pass, as I positioned myself in the door, I noticed the spotter adjusting his calculations to be sure that this time we didn't miss the target. The tree tops looked closer than usual. I realized, as I said a quick prayer, that this was going to be one of my more difficult exits and that I needed to muster up some courage to kick off. Then, with the slap on the back, out I went. The severe opening shock, almost immediately upon launch from the plane, told me I was not wearing the more common Erwin parachute. Instead, as I looked up, sure enough, it was a fast-opening Eagle parachute billowing full-blown above me. It was an especially beautiful sight against the blue sky, with its extra skirt riffling in the wind. That this was the chute I was wearing was fortunate for me since, when I looked down, I wasn't too far above the swiftly approaching treetops. I had just enough time to maneuver to a landing within 50 feet of the jump spot.

Later, thinking about the jump, I realized that the Eagle chute with its design for a quick opening saved me from what could have been a very tough landing or worse. The Eagle parachute was rarely given to the jumpers, since its sudden inflation could potentially leave a jumper with serious back strain or back injury. Of my 14 jumps, this was the first and

only time I had been provided with an Eagle parachute. I was thankful that somehow that day my pack held just the right parachute for the specific conditions encountered. I felt Providence had known how much, at this particular time, I needed that quick-opening Eagle chute!

Dave eventually appeared on the fire scene after two hours of difficult hiking up the mountainside from the canyon floor. Fortunately, the fire was a fairly small lightning-struck fire that was easily brought under control. That night Dave and I slept on the catwalk of a fire lookout tower and had a breathtaking view of the forested mountainsides. The next day we hiked out to meet a fire-service pickup and returned to civilization. From the nearest town, we caught a bus back to McCall. Thus ended one more adventure in the line of work that was the sometimes harrowing, ultimately rewarding, experience of smokejumping.



Phillip Toth (Courtesy P. Toth)

*In a brief cover letter accompanying his article, Phil related that he was a CPS draftee in the early 1940s and had volunteered as a U.S. Forest Service smokejumper. He trained in Missoula in 1945 and was one of 35 CPS jumpers based in McCall. He recalled his supervisor, **Stewart "Lloyd" Johnson** (MYC-43), as a man highly esteemed and respected. Phil also referred to the late **Gregg Phifer** (MSO-44), a fellow CPS jumper, whom he had stayed in touch with throughout the years.*

During a trip west in 2002, Phil stopped in McCall and was impressed with the growth and changes. As a pioneer jumper, he was well received and shown the records documenting all the past fires, locations, and names of the jumpers. Phil said it was a privilege to be shown his record of seven fire jumps from 1945. He felt the records honored the fledgling role his group played in the history of smokejumping. 🌲

New NSA Life Members since January 2006

Thanks for your support!

<u>#</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Base</u>	<u>Year</u>
141	EMONDS	TROOP	CJ	1966
142	HEMRY	DAVID	MYC	1964
143	JUKKALA	ARTHUR (ART)	MSO	1956
144	PATTISON	WARREN	NCSB	1953
145	BENTON	JOHN (JACK)	MSO	1959
146	PERKINS	DAVIS	NCSB	1972
147	CARLSON	ERNEST (RAD)	CJ	1970
148	LEHFELDT	JAMES (JIM)	MSO	1956
149	HICKS	WILLIAM (BARRY)	MSO	1964
150	STEVENSON	ANDY	RDD	1965
151	LEHFELDT	BRUCE	MSO	1954
152	HAUGSVEN	LYLE	NCSB	1960
153	McDEVITT	LESTER	NCSB	1948
154	CUSHING	ROBERT	MSO	1959
155	MELLIN	RALPH	MSO	1960
156	MORLAN	RONALD	RAC	1969
157	ELLENBURG	LEE	MSO	1960
158	DALZELL	CLIFF	MSO	1961
159	REESING	ERNEST	MSO	1961
160	MAGEL	JOHN	MYC	1958
161	FREDEKING	WILLIAM (BILL)	MSO	1952
162	KREIZENBECK	GREGORY (GREG)	IDC	1969
163	THORSRUD	EDGAR (ED)	MSO	1942
164	THORSRUD	GARFIELD (GAR)	MSO	1946
165	THORSRUD	ERIK	MSO	1979
166	FOGARTY	WILLIAM (BILL)	MSO	1957
167	THOMPSON	JAMES R.	MSO	1963
168	WEBSTER	ROBERT L.	MSO	1955
169	HAYES	ANDREW M.	MSO	1979
170	COLE	JAMES J. (JACK)	MYC	1955
171	HARRIS	ABIE A.	NCSB	1960
172	LONGANECKER	ERNIE	NCSB	1970
173	SORENSEN	CHRIS	ASSOCIATE	

You can find a listing of the first 128 Life Members in the January 2005 issue of the NSA Smokejumper Magazine and Life Members 129-140 in the January 2006 issue, and also by checking the NSA website at www.smokejumpers.com

The Eckels Creek Fire /That's Why They Call It Hells Canyon

by Ralph Bowyer (McCall '56)

For me, it started the night before in the Cellar Bar in McCall, Idaho. I stayed too late, drank too much and didn't get to bed until very early in the morning. But, she was cute and quite friendly, and she didn't drink much. I closed the bar down, made my way back to the barracks and was asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow.

The next thing I knew, I was being awakened by our smokejumper foreman, **Del Catlin** (MYC-47), telling me to get dressed and head to the kitchen for some breakfast. It was still dark outside when I got there. Shortly, **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46), **Doug Bird** (MYC-57), **Terry Lewton** (MYC-56), **Shep Johnston** (MYC-56) and the "NED," **Jim Doll** (MYC-60), arrived. As we sat down at the large dining tables and waited for breakfast to be served, I glanced up at the clock on the wall. It was four a.m. and I had only been asleep for less than two hours! We ate a good breakfast, suited up, and headed to the vintage Trimotor Ford, that was being warmed up for takeoff.

The Trimotor was built back in the 20s and 30s. It was a museum piece in 1960. I often wondered how it could fly; it looked so heavy with its corrugated skin. The wings had huge airfoils, and the outboard engines were mounted with struts under the wings with its gauges on the outside of the cowling. The wheels were almost as large as tractor tires, and the pilots were constantly trying to synchronize the three radial engines which, when fully wound-up, allowed us to achieve over 80 mph in a power dive. But, smokejumpers loved the old bird, and her slow speed reduced our opening shocks.

We took off and headed almost due west, crossing the Payette River below. The old Trimotor lumbered on and on, eventually reaching our destination. The 45-mile trip took us almost an hour. We were witness to an awesome sight, Hells Canyon.

It is deep, deeper than the Grand Canyon, averaging more than 6,600 feet, and it is so steep that, in most places, you can stand on the rim and not be able to see the Snake River beneath you. It stretches for more than 100 miles through the wild Hells Canyon and the Seven Devils area to the confluence with the main Salmon River. From our altitude, the mighty Snake looked like a mere stream far below. This was before they built all the dams you see today.

A dry-lightning storm had gone through this area during the night, and we were sent here to see what had resulted. We began our patrol by flying north, and we soon spotted some rising smoke. It turned out to be an innocent looking grass fire, slowly burning in a thirty-foot circle about 350 yards below the rim on a steep, barren slope. The area was

completely void of any trees, and there was little or no wind.

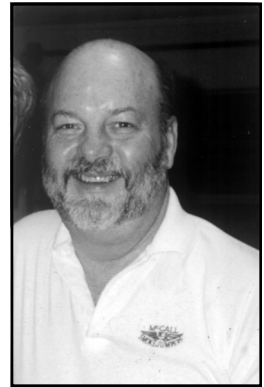
We continued on our way looking for a bigger challenge. After several miles and not finding anything else, we turned around and headed back south. Someone spotted a wisp of smoke coming from a small stand of mature Douglas fir trees located near the top of the rim. We almost missed it. It turned out to be the perfect two-man fire.

We couldn't see any flames, but there was smoke. The ground was flat and there was a nice little lake close by. There was a great jump spot adjacent to the fire with plenty of open space if you got sloppy with your chute handling. All things considered, it was an ideal place to spend a few days. You could even stroll over to the rim of Hells Canyon and watch the sun set. Unfortunately, I wasn't going to be one of the two leaving. Terry Lewton and Jim Doll were first up. After they jumped, their fire packs were dropped and the double "L"s came out. We continued our patrol of the area and didn't find anything, so we headed south toward the small grass fire we had seen earlier that morning.

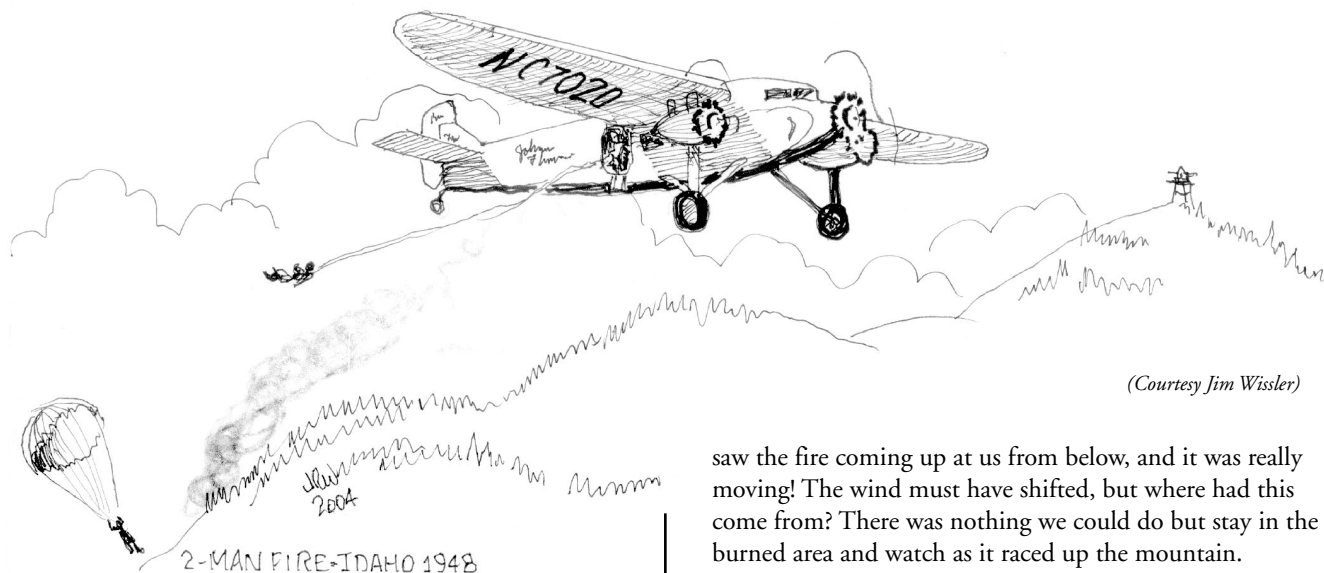
When we arrived back where the small grass fire was, it wasn't so small anymore. It had greatly increased in size. A jump site was located in what was the closest thing to level. We all made it down all right, and it was a lot steeper than it had looked from the plane. Wayne Webb instructed Doug and me to start at the top and build a fireline around and down the right flank. He and Shep would take the left flank and, hopefully, we would all come together down below.

Fortunately, the grass was sparse in the area where we were working, and it allowed us to move quickly. However, once we started going straight down the hill and as the temperature rose, things changed. We had a couple of spots where the fire re-ignited back above us on the fire line we had just built. Our efforts to climb back up to put them out were exhausting. It was so steep that the best way to get back up was to scramble on all fours. At times, it had to be close to a 60 degree incline in places.

God, it was hot! This time of year, if the sun is shining, the heat in this canyon exceeds 100 degrees during the day. It was now the middle of the afternoon and there was no escape from the relentless sun. We had been working for



Ralph Bowyer (Courtesy R. Bowyer)



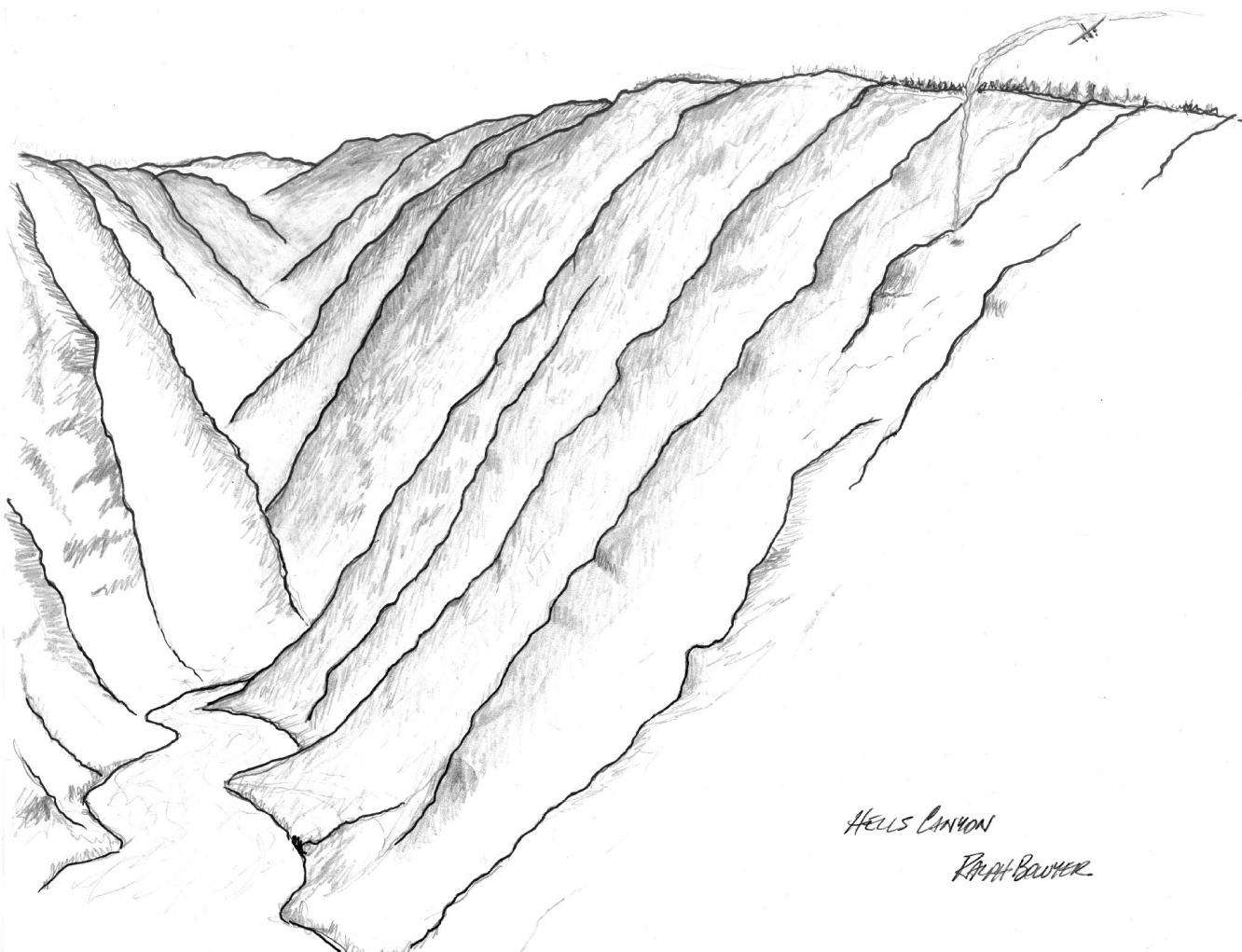
(Courtesy Jim Wissler)

quite a while and had run out of water in our canteens. I remember that Doug was so dehydrated that he had stopped sweating. He wasn't looking real good, so we took a break. While we were standing there leaning on our shovels, we

saw the fire coming up at us from below, and it was really moving! The wind must have shifted, but where had this come from? There was nothing we could do but stay in the burned area and watch as it raced up the mountain.

By now the smoke was a solid blanket around us. We could hear aircraft flying above us, but they were obscured from our vision. The heat was intense as we were getting the full brunt of the afternoon sun on the east wall of the canyon and we were out of water! We took our shovels and hiked back up to where we had left our fire packs.

Wayne and Shep soon joined us and their story was



pretty much the same as ours. We had left all our fire packs lying out in the scorching sun and by now everything in our packs was hot. Our water was hot enough to steep tea, and the canned juices didn't taste the same warm, but nobody really complained. We were all worn out. We improvised a tent out of one of the cargo chutes, and everyone crawled under seeking the shade and trying to get some rest. I was so tired that I couldn't sleep and decided to get up and go outside to take a whiz. As I walked over to the edge of a nearby drop off, I noticed some heavy smoke rapidly coming up from below. I realized that we had pitched our tent in an unburned area and here came another wave of flames. "Guys, drag everything over into the old burn!" I yelled, as I turned back to our camp, "There's fire coming up over this hill!" We got it all moved in time to watch as the fire went by. I couldn't help thinking about Lewton and Doll up on top somewhere with their private lake, shady, level, nice little two-man fire. Their biggest problem was probably wondering what to fix for dinner.

It was late afternoon now. We had rested some, and it was decided that we would pack up and walk out. We had to be at least a mile or more from the bottom. Our packs weighed over 100 pounds each, and it's tough enough to tote one of them a mile on a level grade, but at night, on a 50-60% incline, you think, "Just how surefooted am I," and "What happens if I trip or start to slide?" Well, as the old saying goes, "It all pays the same." I repacked my firepack, put on my hard hat with my elastic banded flashlight and put my arms through those pack straps. I leaned forward, stood up and, SHAZAM, I suddenly became a 275-pound, unstable mass on steep rocky incline.

We started traversing down into the canyon and, as soon as it got dark, our pace slowed as we carefully picked our way down the steep, treacherous course. I lost track of the time as we had been going nonstop all evening, becoming very weary, although nobody would admit to it. Finally we decided to take a break. It was so steep that we just leaned back, still strapped to our packs, and rested against the slope. As I nodded off, it occurred to me that I had less than two hours of sleep in the last 36. This had been one long, hard, hot day.

I woke up when someone near me moved. I opened my eyes. It was just beginning to get light. We had all fallen asleep. I looked, and there was the Snake River, only 300 to 400 yards below us. Thank the Lord! This ordeal would soon be over.

It didn't take very long before we were down, standing next to a dirt road that ran along the side of the Snake. We got out of our packs and stretched. Boy, did that feel strange and good. I took off my Whites and socks and dipped my feet in the small, clear stream that was right next to us. It was cold, but it felt wonderful.

We hadn't been there very long before some fella' in a USFS pick-up came down the road, saw us, and stopped. "Say, are you the four jumpers that were up on the fire?" he asked. They knew that we were up there somewhere, but the fire was all around us, and they couldn't see anything from the air and they had reported us as missing. We laughed and

loaded our gear into the truck and drove to the fire camp. We were warmly greeted by the Fire Boss, Ted Costello, who jokingly said, "You boys kinda' let this one get away from you." We were then fed and driven back to McCall for a hot shower and a cold beer.

Lewton and Doll, they had their fire out within two hours and spent three days waiting for a packer to come and pick them up. When nobody showed up, they had to pack out. They finally hitched a ride from a fisherman at Blacks Lake up to a Forest Service lookout. Two days later they finally got back to McCall. Everyone in McCall had jumped around them. (There is some justice, after all.) 🌲

Wayne Webb was the well-known and respected Loft Foreman at McCall. He passed away in 1999.

Doug Bird is now retired from the Forest Service, rising to the position of Director of Fire and Aviation, Region 4.

Shep Johnson spent 15 years with the CIA, worked for the BLM Interagency Fire Center helicopter operations in Boise and retired from the BLM Alaska Fire Service in 1990.

Ralph Bowyer is semi-retired after an extensive career in the furniture business and currently lives near Dallas, Texas.

Terry Lewton is retired and is living in Boise, Idaho.

Jim Doll died later in 1960 in a sky diving accident while attending college.

NSA Life Membership

Benefits include:

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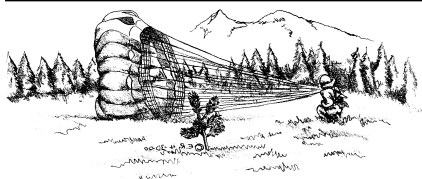
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... tax deductibility of your contribution.

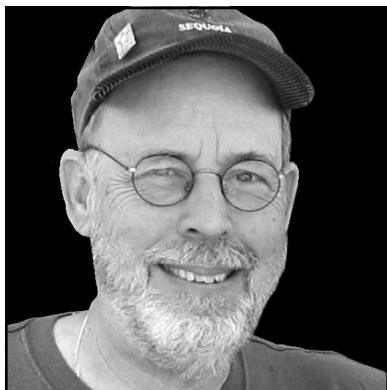
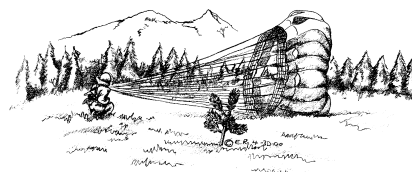
The NSA will apply any current year membership fee and any prepaid membership fees toward your Life Membership.

The NSA has made it easy to afford the Life Member contribution. On the NSA Life Member application form, you will find a contribution installment schedule that will work for your finances. On-line membership is available at www.smokejumpers.com or you may write to:

Jim Cherry, NSA Life Member Coordinator
2335 300th St.
Ventura, IA 50482 🌲



Checking the Canopy



Tom Decker
(Idaho City '64)

RATTLESNAKE! THERE WERE two of us on the fireline, but I suspected a third when I heard the distinctive whirl of a rattlesnake. Even though I did not see it, I knew instantly what it was! A small timber rattler was curled up under a downed ponderosa log. When the helicopter picked us up, only two of us got on board. The rattler stayed on the mountainside where he belonged!

We're not immune from the surprises of life that come in the way of rattlesnakes, tangled chute, and communication foul-ups. As the old saying goes, "Murphy's out there," and we live halfway expecting that things will get boogered up.

It's good to know the sounds of the threats that are out there. St. Peter said that the devil prowls about like a roaring lion. Nobody misses a roar! Neither do we miss the ominous buzz of a rattlesnake! Most jumpers will attest to things being screwed up, sometimes big-time. We don't know why. We may say, as Flip Wilson said, "Da debil made me do it." Regardless, we may be able to recognize the onset of evil as it snakes its way into our lives, often beginning innocently enough. Sometimes it's enough just to recognize the threat for what it is, and then leave it alone. Back up and walk away. Close the book. Cancel

the subscription. Cut up the credit card. Turn off the computer. Forget the liaison. In short, stay out of harm's way.

We instinctively recognize a rattlesnake if we hear one, and we avoid it! Evidently the snake in the garden wasn't a rattler, but he talked a good talk, and Eve didn't get it for

what it was. Neither did Adam, for that matter. How about us? *Hoot!* 🦉

Colonel Tom Decker retired from the U.S. Army and is now a part-time parish pastor at the St. John Lutheran Church in Long Beach, Calif. Tom can be reached at thomasdecker@verizon.net

2007 NCSB Reunion

Now is the time for all NCSB Jumpers to mark your calendars and make plans to be a part of the 2007 NCSB Reunion. The reunion is scheduled for **September 7-9, 2007**. We are asking all current and former NCSB Smokejumpers to contact Mike Fort with their current address information, including email address, if you have one. This will get you on the NCSB Reunion mailing list so that you will be kept abreast of reunion plans and developments. Please contact Mike Fort with your current address information:

Mike Fort
32 Thurlow Road
Twisp, WA 98856
Fortmd@Methow.com

Also, as part of the reunion, we are planning on publishing a book (or two) of collected "war stories" and a compilation picture disk. Larry Longley will be contacting you soon to solicit any stories that you would like to have published in the book. Stories can be of any memories that you had while jumping at NCSB: rookie training, your worst fire, how your rookie year was the toughest in smokejumper history, your best memories, or worst. Let's try not to bring about any lawsuits, divorces, or fist fights. I'm sure that every NCSB jumper has some interesting "war stories" to tell. Pictures are also being solicited and will be returned promptly once they are copied. We will be scanning all pictures submitted and compiling them on a disk that will be available to purchase at the reunion. Selected pictures will be used in the book as well. Please send your stories and/or pictures to Larry Longley. Please do your best to identify where and when the picture was taken and who is in the picture. Pictures can be in any format. We are set up to make professional quality scans of any media. Please send your stories, and/or pictures to:

Larry Longley
16430 Marine Drive
Stanwood, WA 98292
Phone 360-654-1720
Email LDLongley@Cyben.com



NSA Trail Crew



Two Weeks in the Sawtooth-2005 (Sawtooth N.F.)

by Fred Donner (Missoula '59)

This report is dedicated to **Debra Peters**, AKA Princess of the Sawtooth, the Forest Service project coordinator for NSA volunteer crews in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) for the past four years. She is a 17-year trail crew veteran, a horsewoman, mule packer, outdoor cook, and firefighter. Recently she received a permanent appointment in the Forest Service and was made an NSA associate member by her fan club, the many jumpers devoted to Deb. She says her best preparation for supervising jumper crews was her early work experience in childcare.

An NSA volunteer crew of eleven built logworm fences near Stanley, Idaho, in the SNRA the week of July 18-22/05. At the Inlet Campground on Stanley Lake, we built 320 yards of two-rail logworm fence. At the Casino Creek Campground by the Salmon River, we built 672 yards of three-rail logworm fence. The atmosphere of hilarity and hard work took me back 46 years. The average and median ages were both 67 with a total of 44 jump seasons. The real reward of the week was meeting some truly outstanding colleagues.

Our squadleader was **Tom Kovalicky** (Missoula '61). A retired Nez Perce NF Forest Supervisor, Tom resisted every promotion, especially to staff jobs, to stay close to the grassroots. He is a member of two very exclusive clubs. He read his own obituary after the near-disaster at the Higgins Ridge Fire in 1961. (The Regional Office had feared the worst for the 20 jumpers involved.) He has been struck by lightning twice on horseback, both

horses walking away.

Our EMT was **Bruce Montgomery** (Idaho City '64). An Army medic and retired USAF officer, Bruce is a Discover Card executive. His claim to jumper fame is an unintentional gloveless letdown that took him off the jump list for three weeks. He is a scuba diver and a year-round farmer in Phoenix raising elaborate crops on his patio.

Our cook was **Rob Lundgren** (associate). While never a jumper, Rob is in his 42nd fire season (now as a contractor), including 33 years in the Forest Service as a fire management officer in Idaho. Rob and his wife love to cater group events, fortunately for us. Rob owns 16 Dutch ovens, but no microwave.

Hal Howell (Missoula '55) was an Air Force KC-135 pilot for six years, a United Airlines 727 pilot for 28 years, and an Army National Guard fixed-wing and rotary-wing pilot for 19 years. He is a world-traveling skier and boater. Hal worked his way through forestry school driving taxi at night in Missoula, learning the seamy side first-hand.

George Cross (Missoula '74), now 81, was, at the time, the oldest jumper recruit at age 47 and jumped for 13 seasons. A professor of physiology at the University of Montana for 30 years, including Dean of Students for five years, he recently entered ten events in a Senior Olympics and won nine gold and one silver. When five years old, he ran away from an abusive home in the Oklahoma dustbowl and never went back. He served in the 82nd Airborne in World War II.

George is an incredible, unforgettable character.

Charlie Brown (Idaho City '56) is a chemical and petroleum engineer with Koch Industries in Kansas City, who has lived all over the western U.S. He is a charter member of NSA volunteer crews since the first year. Helped with a little beer, he can recite flawlessly "The Cremation of Sam Magee" and "The Shooting of Dangerous Dan McGrew."

Doug Stinson (Cave Junction '54) was a Forest Service forester in Alaska and a corporate forester before he became a self-employed forester and landowner 30 miles west of Mount St. Helens. Once a Marine captain, he has been struck twice by lightning: once on horseback (horse survived) and once while kicking-off a high school football game. Dressed in his Wild Ass (trademark) hickory shirts and logging jeans from Bailey's (woodsman supply company), he looks like their catalog cover.

Steve Carlson (Idaho City '62) was a jumper before and after his service in Vietnam as a recon Marine. A badly broken leg on a fire jump ended his 80-jump career. He then spent 32 years in information technology with Weyerhaeuser and EDS. Steve set up his astronomy telescope every evening and also regaled us with cowboy poetry.

Jim Cherry (Missoula '57) is a retired Lutheran minister and former church camp director. He is a meticulous craftsman, who has built three houses, and was our technical guru making sure our fences were precisely built as well as our corrals the second week. He is a professional beekeeper and brought

cases of honey to give to all his colleagues both weeks.

Myself, I was in the Air Force and Air America before becoming an intelligence officer in the State Department and later the Defense Intelligence Agency with most of the last 45 years of work and college related to Southeast Asia or China. This past July 4th, I won first and second places with different partners in the senior crosscut saw competition at Old Logging Day at McGrath, Minnesota.

Finally, my first week personal hero. **Neil Satterwhite** (McCall '65) was a known "wild man" at McCall, attested to by others and admitted by himself, before he went to Vietnam as a Ranger lieutenant and forward observer in the 101st Airborne. During the Tet Offensive in 1968, he took a direct mortar hit on his back. Severely wounded and hospitalized for over a year, he lost half his voice box. Although rated 100% disabled by the Army, Neil returned to jumping for seven more years. Neil sets the standard by which smokejumper-tough is measured, as far as I am concerned.

Jim Cherry, Charlie Brown, and I stayed in the Sawtooth for a second week, again with Deb, to rebuild a corral at the Grandjean Horse Trailhead, a campground for horses headed into the Sawtooth Wilderness. We tore down 183 yards of old rails and posts and rebuilt a large corral divided into three smaller corrals to be used by both Forest Service and outfitter packers. We also painted the associated barn, repaired the gravity feed water system for three watering troughs, and replaced damaged hitching posts. The average and median ages were both 68 with a total of 56 jump seasons. Once again the hilarity and hard work were just like old times with another cast of outstanding colleagues.

Our squadleader was **Roland (Ron) Stoleson** (Missoula '56). A former Sawtooth NF Forest Supervisor, Ron was 42 years in the Forest Service. When I made my last fire jump with Ron in 1959, he was

deciding between forestry and baseball, having pitched with a Washington Senators farm club the previous year. Forestry won or we undoubtedly would have seen Ron in the World Series.

Our EMT was **David Hemry, M.D.** (McCall '64). The Army sent him to Alaska as a doctor, and he stayed on as a doctor in the Alaska Army National Guard for 26 years and is now in private practice. He quit jumping only because his med school would not allow him any more time off. He pilots his own float plane and was in the first group of private fliers to visit Siberia.

Our cook was **Stan Linnertz** (Missoula '61). He was a broadcaster, especially of sports, and radio station manager in Nebraska for many years. A NoDak raconteur from Minot State College, Stan will proudly tell you more than you want to know about the glories of North Dakota.

Doug "Digger" Daniels (Missoula '61) has been a civil engineer in Belgrade, Montana, for 38 years. As a young boy delivering newspapers in south Missoula, he watched smokejumpers taking off from Hale Field and decided that was for him. His chain saw with

"Log Wizard" tool attached was key to our corral success. He was also our water system repair guru at Grandjean.

Bill Ruskin (Cave Junction '58) was an Army engineer officer and a ski instructor for NATO troops with the Norwegian Army for two winters. He was a city official for 24 years in Colorado Springs and for ten years has organized golf tours in Scotland and Ireland. He is the chief organizer for NSA volunteer projects in Colorado.

"Wild Bill" Yensen (McCall '53) was an outstanding baseball pitcher for high school, college, and smokejumper teams. (How many know that McCall fielded a competition baseball team?) The nickname acquired prior to jumping, "Wild Bill" was a schoolteacher who retired from jumping at age 40 but returned for 14 more seasons when that age limit was lifted. He says he was almost killed six times jumping. He is famous for engraving smokejumper knives, claiming to have done over 1,000 to date, a living legend in smokejumper folklore.

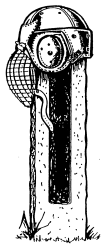
Grandson to smokejumper grandpa: "Grandpa, when I grow up, I want to be a smokejumper."
"Grandson, you can't do both!" 🧐

North Cascades Smokejumper Base 2007 Reunion Sept. 7-9, 2007

The reunion committee is requesting help in obtaining addresses of jumpers, pilots and admin/messhall staff. Please send us your current mailing address and e-mail address – also any other NCSB personnel you know of. On your e-mail indicate "ADDRESS" in the subject line to help Mike with the sorting. Registration and reunion detail information to be mailed out winter 2007.

Mail to:
Mike Fort
32 Thurlow Road
Twisp, WA 98856
e-mail: fortmd@methow.com

Bill Moody- Reunion Coordinator:
PO Box 262
Twisp, WA 98856
bmoody8@centurytel.net
509-997-5971



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.

William "Kay" Johnson (North Cascades '54)

Kay passed away, August 3, 2006, at his home. He was born and raised in Winthrop, Washington, and grew up on the family ranch herding cattle and buckin' bails. He graduated from Winthrop High School and attended Wenatchee Valley College.

Kay enjoyed a lifelong career of smokejumping and wildfire fighting. He jumped 11 years before moving on in 1965 to become the Fire Management Assistant for the Entiat Ranger District. In 1970 Kay and his newly formed family moved to Medford, where he was Assistant Fire Staff for the Rogue River National Forest. From there he moved to Anchorage and became Chief of Services in charge of aviation and fire management for the Anchorage District of the B.L.M. Kay retired in 1984 to become a full-time general contractor based out of Anchorage with jobs extending as far as the Kenai Peninsula. He and his wife moved to Chelan, Washington, in 1996 to fully retire.

Howard Dwayne Roe (Missoula '55)

Dwayne, 73, a retired Air National Guard veteran, died of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease August 2, 2006. He graduated in 1951 from Havre High School, Montana, where he was active in student government and theatre, and ran the mile. He attended Western Montana College at Dillon and continued to be active in school affairs, clubs and the theatre. In 1954, Dwayne was elected student body president. Summers were spent working for the Forest Service at Seeley Lake, Mont., as preparation for becoming a smokejumper. In 1954, he joined the Montana Air National Guard in Great Falls. He became air operations supervisor of the 186th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, retiring in 1989 as a senior chief master sergeant.

Carl H. Schmidt (North Cascades '48)

Carl died August 9, 2006. He graduated from Twisp High School in 1939 and moved to Seattle to work for Boeing. During WWII, Carl was a waist gunner on bombers stationed in Italy and completed 50 missions, including ones on the Ploeste oil fields. After the war, he graduated from Eastern Washington College and began a teaching career in Spokane that lasted until his retirement in 1976. Carl jumped two seasons at NCSB.

Charles "Chuck" Dysart (Missoula '53)

Chuck passed away August 15, 2006, after a courageous battle with ALS. He attended the University of Washington

and Eastern Washington University. After Chuck graduated from Eastern, he served several years in the Navy on the Aircraft Carrier, the USS Boxer. He went into a 30-year teaching career and taught everything from Cheerleading to Special Education, High School, and Grade School. Chuck was a private pilot and began building a plane. That airplane was finished in 2005. In 2003 Chuck was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrigs Disease). Throughout his illness, he worked for the cause of ALS research, making a trip to Washington D.C. to lobby congress to obtain more funding to research ALS.

John L. Harnish Jr. (Cave Junction '45)

John died March 14, 2006, in Traverse City, Michigan. During the 1945 season, he served with the CPS-103 jumpers at Cave Junction. Later he worked for the Menno-nite Board of Missions and Bethel Publishing as a graphic artist. John retired from Bethel Publishing as a department supervisor of graphic artists. He was active with Mission Manistee, Manistee Audubon Society and the Lake Bluff Audubon Society.

George E. Smith (Idaho City '62)

George died August 16, 2006, on his 31st wedding anniversary, after a long bout with cancer. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1954 to 1957 and then graduated with a degree in Range Management from Utah State University. He jumped in Idaho City in 1962 and 1963. During the Vietnam War, he was employed in military operations in Southeast Asia and returned to smokejumping in Fairbanks from 1971 to 1975. After retiring from the Alaska B.L.M. in 1985, George and his wife, Judith, purchased a beach-front home on Anderson Island, WA, where they operated a popular B. & B.

Edward L. Henry (Missoula '53)

Ed died July 25, 2006, after being struck by a bicyclist while rollerblading on a pathway near Teton Village, Wyoming. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1956 with a forestry degree. Ed jumped at Missoula from 1952-55 and at West Yellowstone in 1956. After college, he became a Navy pilot and flew for five years before going back to college and obtaining his master's degree in business administration from U.C. Berkeley in 1967. Ed worked a year for Weyhauser before starting a career as a commercial airline pilot that lasted 25 years.

Carl Dean Johnson (North Cascades '57)

Carl died September 15, 2006, in Denver, Colorado, just about six weeks after the passing of his brother, William "Kay" Johnson (NCSB-54). Carl graduated from Washington State University and jumped ten seasons at North Cascades and Fairbanks. He served as area fire control officer in Fairbanks until 1966 when he took the position as area manager for Western Alaska. After a move to Idaho, he returned to Fairbanks in 1973, where he became district manager in 1978.

Donald M. Durland (Missoula '47)

Don died Monday, Oct. 2, 2006, at his home in St. Regis, Montana, after a lengthy illness. He attended Darby Schools and received a B.S. degree in forestry from the University of Montana. While in high school, he joined the Army Air Force Reserve and was honorably discharged in 1945. He started a career as a smokejumper, but it ended in 1947 when his chute malfunctioned while jumping into a fire in Roaring Mountain Canyon in the Bitterroot Valley. The accident resulted in a fractured back requiring a rescue team to transport him 13 miles via a stretcher. He retired

after 36 years with the U.S. Forest Service, with assignments in Montana, Idaho and Alaska.

Alfred Casieri (Missoula '52)

Al died January 26, 2005, in Berryville, Virginia. He jumped at Missoula from 1952 through 1956. He was a retired Commander with the U.S. Coast Guard and also spent 14 years with the CIA.

David E. "Skinny" Beals (McCall '45)

"Skinny", of McMinnville, Oregon, former long-time resident of Redmond, died October 10, 2006 of lung cancer at the age of 81. He started his smokejumping career as a member of the CPS-103 jumpers in 1945. Skinny returned to jumping at NCSB in 1947 and was one of the five former CPS jumpers to be hired by Francis Lufkin after their discharge at the end of WWII. He jumped at NCSB until he transferred to Redmond in 1964, where he was loft foreman at the newly-opened base. After his retirement, he worked for the Juniper Golf Club in Redmond as a greenskeeper before moving to McMinnville. 🌲

Old Ranger Stations

by **Karl Brauneis** (Missoula'77)

Too often we use sight as our primary sense. Some times the eyes just need a break. I think that is the beauty of an elk hunt. For once, the sense of hearing takes over as the bull's bugle around you. In contrast, the sense of smell is to memory what our ears are on an elk hunt. Often, just the slightest whiff or fragrance can elicit forgotten memories from a time and place long ago. It happens to me each time I work out of an old ranger or guard station. Smell the stuff of yesterday. No computer paper shuffle or bureaucratic reports allowed. Just real honest to God work that serves the mission.



Shell Ranger Station 1974, Bighorn National Forest

The ranger stations I used to know all smelled of oats and hay
Greased or oiled saddle tack; horse sweat from the day
Wool blankets and coats, wool shirts and vests, denim cotton jeans
Pipe smoke, wood smoke, perking coffee, hot cowboy pork and beans

Pump your fuel up to the glass and measure her drain down
Or grab the bucket and fill with oats; your horse will soon be found
Take the weather and talk to lookouts posted way up high
Answer public questions and give 'em good directions before they wave "goodbye"

Today most smell a sterile vile; computer high tech run amok
Not much room for a man whose heroes rode the mountains tough
But once in a while you catch the whiff of history alive
Just fill your pipe and then enjoy; memories, "days gone by"

Karl is a member of the Cowboy Poets of Wind River and can be reached at brauneisfam@wyoming.com in Lander, Wyoming. 🌲



Touching All Bases



Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan (FBX-96)

Alaska Smokejumpers found the bulk of their fortunes down south in 2006. Fire season at home began May 22, offering bouts of activity to keep our jump list moving, even rolling briefly into June. Sixteen Boise boosters joined our list, jumping no fires but lending good hands to project work at base and in the field.

Our head count was 64 this year, with 52 Alaskans ultimately migrating to America for the duration of fire season.

Five stout rookies joined our ranks in 2006. They were **Ezra Butterfield** (Mendocino Hot Shots), **Ryan Ehlers** (Chena Hot Shots), **Porter McQuery** (Midnight Sun Hot Shots), **Aaron Schumacher** (Diamond Mountain Hot Shots) and **Aaron Worley** (Chena Hot Shots).

There was time for neither a rookie appreciation party nor the Big Flip in Alaska this season - our list was quickly decimated when America heated up. By now our rookies should know just how much we appreciate them. Reports from the Southland were favorable, and we're glad to have them on our jumplist.

Eight Alaskans made a demonstration jump last spring at the Southern Field Office Science Center near Anchorage. Operations Supervisor **Rob Allen** (FBX-93) described the jump as "an opportunity to show the folks in the big city a little bit about the smokejumper program."

The Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC) reports there were 305 fires across Alaska in 2006, burning 270,539 total acres.

Rob Allen reports 177 Alaskans jumped 26 fires in the home state. We sent 405 Alaskans out the door on 122 fires in the lower 48.

The Parks Highway Fire began June 7, barely sparing the town of Nenana, burning 115,000 acres by mid-July and costing close to \$10 million in the end.

By mid-June, the tide had already turned for jumpers and crews fighting the fire, spiked-out on the banks of the mighty Tanana River. One sunny day, our radios suddenly blared with major flood warnings for the region. Though overhead we saw only blue skies, a torrent of recent rains and snowmelt were converging upriver at an impressive clip.

Warnings of rising waters mildly perked our interest, and, against our better judgment, we decided to prepare. We moved boatloads of MREs and cubees from low-lying helispots and supply caches dotting the riverbank. We also relocated our spike camp to slightly higher ground. As we climbed into our



tents for the night, jokes of "flood watch patrol" resonated with nervous laughter.

At 5 a.m., I felt my tent fly shake and heard a defeated voice mumble, "Hey Mac, you might want to move your tent, I just got flooded." It was our division supervisor, a non-jumper, camped just twenty feet down the trail from me. I escaped my tent to see him standing hip-deep in muddy brown water, slogging the last of his gear to dry ground. He described in disturbing detail just how unpleasant his awakening had been. Feeling a cold sensation beneath his tent, he realized he was nearly floating in three feet of water. He frantically opened his tent flap and fell into the icy soup. An admitted sufferer of "irritable bowel syndrome," the cold shock initiated an immediate, significant and explosive IBS event for the division supe as

he fumbled with his befouled gear and pride.

Most Alaskans had to settle for two or three fire jumps at home before filtering south to join jumplists in the Great Basin and Forest Service country.

Missoula welcomed dozens of Alaskans, and we were thrilled to spend our summer amidst the big trees. We jumped fires large and small, in national parks, forests and beyond. The jump list spun until the season abruptly ended mid-September. In the meantime, we teamed up with the Zulies and a cast of Canadian Smokejumpers visiting from B.C. The Canuks were a joy to work with - fired up, full of good cheer and ready to make trades of their red nomex shirts for our yellows. We learned new words such as "fireguard" (fireline) and "diddybags" (PG Bags.) We hope to work with the Canadians again, perhaps in Alaska, and we're ready to boost the Great White North anytime our respective agencies can make it happen.

Mo-Town was a haven for Alaskans when off assignment. The city's newest attraction is a "standing wave" on the Clark Fork River, created by bulldozers last year to eliminate a hazardous section of rocks and rapids. The result is "Brennan's Wave," eulogizing a local kayaker and providing endless juice for water enthusiasts of all types.

The Alaska Smokejumpers wish to extend our prayers and support to Base Manager **Ed Ward** (MSO-80) and his family for the continued recovery of son Finn.

In July, the Red Eagle Fire in Glacier National Park consumed 32,000 acres, forcing the evacuation of the town of St. Mary. A load of Alaskans jumped the fire at 15 acres in dense forests and high winds. It was too late to do anything but escape as the blaze spawned a massive column. "I have never seen fire behavior like that before in my life," reported Ryan Curl,

an ASM pilot on scene. The Alaskans helped orchestrate the town's evacuation. Smokejumper **Chris Silks** (FBX-91) photographed the event from a helicopter, flying precariously close to the massive column. The resulting photos he snapped are incredible — they can be viewed at www.alaskasmokejumpers.com, our crew website.

The last push of the season came for two loads of Alaskans boosting the Redding base. The Big Bar Fire provided weeks of hiking and hauling gear in the rugged Trinity Alps. The final task for the bros was a cleanup project. At one site alone, bears devoured 60 cases of MREs, ignoring only the tasteless heating units, tobasco bottles and moist towelettes. "It looked like a bomb went off," reported **Bob "da Bull" Schober** (MSO-95), who assisted in the removal of a 700-pound slingload of trash and dung.

The Redding bros hosted their Big Flip at season's end, only to be won by our own **Tony Marchini** (FBX-01). Equally impressive, **Randy Foland** (FBX-01) ate 11 "Choco Tacos" (ice cream bars), edging out **Dylan Reeves** (RDD-03) posting a mere 10. **Foland** pointed out their eating contest was preceded by a full lunch.

Special thanks to **Chris Silks**, who served proudly as our acting crew supervisor throughout the spring. Aside from sporting the world's furriest "chop" sideburns throughout the entire summer, **Silks** tirelessly pursued answers to still lingering questions surrounding the government's shorting non-exempt employees \$4 an hour for all overtime worked in the past four years.

As it stands, we *may* be compensated for two of those four years, with no word yet on how (or if) hazard pay, comp time, cost of living allowances and interest will be accounted for. In the end, the Alaska Smokejumpers stand to lose tens of thousands of dollars we earned during some of our busiest seasons. Nice work Denver Payroll! It's safe to assume any debts *we* may owe the government will not be accorded this shortened, amended statute of limitations, but who does this job for the money anyhow?

Congratulations to **Robert Yeager** (RDD-92) our newly named crew supervisor. **Gus** is one who leads by example, and we're proud to call him supe. Our jump king in 2006 was **Rob Miller** (FBX-05) with 19 fire jumps. Well done Rob! Congrats are in order for **Marty Meierotto** (FBX-94) and wife Dominique. They welcomed their first child this summer, daughter Noah Jane.

On the wedding front, thanks to **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65) for officiating at my June wedding to my lovely wife Molly. There was a good showing of bros (at the reception), and **Murry** added a genuine touch of smokejumper pizzazz to the event. In the words of the smokejumper poet himself, "Weddings are the Superbowl of womanhood." Well done **Murry**.

Thanks also to **Doug Carroll** (FBX-94) for opening the doors of his Golden Eagle Saloon in Ester for our reception. Molly and I will travel to Puerto Rico in November to honeymoon.

In late September, **Ivan Smith** (MSO-95) and Stefanie were wed the day after Fairbank's first snowstorm. Mt. Aurora Ski Hill was the location, and **Ty Humphrey** (FBX-97) made great efforts to melt ice from the rock outcropping chosen for the

ceremony. Ty used a propane "weedburner" to torch the snow pack and avert disaster for the bridesmaids, who reportedly "looked pretty cute" tiptoeing along the snowy ridge top. Hats off to **Chip Houde** (FBX-88), always a great orator, for officiating the **Smith** wedding.

The Alaska jumpers bid farewell to **Bert Mitman** (RAC-70) at season's end in 2006. **Bert** came to Alaska in 1975 and, as he puts it, "passed 34 PT tests." **Bert** served as our assistant base manager and, in recent years, was the deputy chief of smokejumper operations. The "Ice-Man" was a crack parachutist, and if jumpers ever wanted to hit the spot, they only had to follow **Bert**. An avid hockey player, **Bert** humbly insists his nickname was not inspired by his prowess on the ice. He looks forward to summers free of the jump list, and says he will miss the bros, the excitement of fire season, "but not government bureaucracy." We wish you the very best, **Bert**.

Word has it we will be saying goodbye to **Mitch Decoteau** (GAC-78) in the spring of 2007. Mitch gutted out the fire season, traveling south as well, while still recovering from a broken leg in 2005. They don't come much tougher than **Mitch**. Look for the final word on **Decoteau's** retirement in the next Touching All Bases column.

Boise Base Report

by **Quincy Chung** (NIFC-03)

For everybody out there, another season has come and gone. Nine rookies completed the program and are as follows: **Jenny Camp**, **Sam Dearstyne**, **Steve Frugoli**, **Brandyn Harvey**, **Shaun Jensen**, **Erik Newell**, **Shaylor Sorensen** and **Joe Wyatt**.

In addition to gaining nine new personnel, a couple folks have decided to move on and explore different avenues of life. **Grant Beebe** (NIFC-90) has taken a job at the Idaho State Office as a subject matter expert for the Fire Program Analysis group, and **Beau Kidd** (NIFC-04) has decided to explore different facets of fire. Both will be missed by all in the organization.

Selected to fill in some of the newly vacated spots in the Boise organization: **Eric Reynolds** (NIFC-90), Base Manager; **Jim Raudenbush** (AK-82), Deputy Base Manager; **Eric Walker** (NIFC-95), Operations Manager; **Marty Adell** (NIFC-95), Loft Manager; and **Paul Hohn** (MYC-00), Assistant Operations. Likewise, former Alaska jumper, **Paul Lenmark** (FBK-96), traveled from Dillon, Montana, to take a job as a Fire Operations Supervisor for the Boise Smokejumpers in May of 2006. As well, this spring **Quincy Chung** (NIFC-03), **Tyler Doggett** (NIFC-01), **Jerran Flinders** (NIFC-04), **Eric Hipke** (NCSB-90), and **Dale Springer** (NIFC-01) all received Lead Smokejumper positions in the organization.

This summer produced record numbers across the Basin. Beginning in mid-July records began being set across the west and, just recently (Oct-6th), the Otter took what may have been the last fire call of the season; a good-deal four-manner in the vast timber of central Idaho. Again, Boise contracted three Otters and again shared the Dornier with Alaska. As early season busts continued to rear their heads, a second Dornier was called upon to assist with the above average fire calls.

During this past fire season (06) there were 1370 total jumpers out the door. That was up 642 total jumpers from the

2005 season. In addition, there were 266 total fires, twice as many as 2005 (133).

Furthermore, after the conclusion of our third year with the Smokejumper PT Test Incentive Program, there was one Adonis to reach, what some have said to be unreachable, 400 points. For all that don't know, Boise jumpers can either do the basic requirements per DOI standards or opt to max out in the four physical fields. By choosing this option, a jumper has a 3-minute time frame, resting only 5 minutes between exercises, to complete 120 push-ups, 25 pull-ups, 150 sit-ups and an 8-minute mile-and-a-half run or 16:45 3-mile. To achieve an epic score of 400, one must reach each of the totals. To do these events individually is conquerable. To do this in succession is historic. The first to put the numbers together was **Ryan Jordan** (NIFC -02). Ryan is the first one to have his name engraved and displayed proudly in the hallways of the Boise Smokejumper building. Congratulations, Ryan!

In conclusion, prescription burning is taking off, and the list of assignments continues to grow on the board. Jumpers are laying-off and planning hunting, fishing, and traveling trips. Some die-hards will continue to work in the loft constructing new gear for fellow jumpers, new rookies, and transfers. All in all, Boise is expecting a large rookie class for 2007 and a higher than normal number of spots for transfer.

From the Boise Organization, enjoy the down time and have a safe and great winter.

Grangeville Base Report

by **Robin Embry** (GAC-85)

It's the end of September and Fire Season has been officially declared over in these parts. (I suspect due to the onset of hunting season).

Leading Edge's twin otter went off contract on the 21st, and there's a skiff of snow on the mountaintops that (thankfully) arrived with some rain for the lower elevations last week.

In spite of the "season ending rain," we still managed to send folks out on two smoke-chasers yesterday (one lightning caused, one human caused) and a vanload of folks in nomex to help with rehab and prescribed fire on the Nez Perce NF. A half dozen die-hard smokejumpers (in other words, guys that couldn't hit the side of a barn from 10 yards) are on their way to Redding to prolong the endless summer.

I heard a lecture by a weather service employee a couple of years ago about predicting big fire seasons. The main point was that it doesn't matter how much winter snow pack you have or how much rain you get in the spring - the only thing that matters is "Critical July." What makes July "Critical" is how much rainfall you get in that month.

I never thought I'd hear myself say it, but "the weatherman was right." We had no rain in July and we had the kind of fire season that makes you proud to be a smokejumper. We didn't break any records, but we might have with more smokejumpers to go around. Regardless, it was the busiest season we've had here since 1994. We sent 15 folks to the Gila in Region 3 as smokejumpers and single resources in May and June, and then as many as we could spare to Redding in late June. In the early part of July, we sent several single resources to eastern Montana, and then it was

off to the races for fire season in Northern Idaho.

With fire season in full swing in all the western states, it was difficult to get boosters from anywhere. In true jumper fashion, people came in from fires, showered (or not) and climbed right back on the airplane to head to another one. With the lack of rain continuing on into August, "sweet deals" (two person fires) were fewer and harder to come by. Smokejumpers were challenged in earnest to catch fires that were already established at two or more acres for initial attack. Drivers sent to retrieve demobbing smokejumpers were coming back with empty vehicles saying their passengers had been helitacked or driven to another fire before they could pick them up. Jumpers traveled all summer long. Boosters from Redmond were really from McCall, Missoula, and West. Smokejumpers from other bases that demobbed through Grangeville were held hostage and put on our jumplist.

In all respects it was a truly fine fire season. We'd like to thank all the smokejumpers from Grangeville, Missoula, West Yellowstone, McCall, Redmond, Redding, and Alaska who graced the door of our Twin Otter this summer. Your professionalism and willingness to go the extra mile were the only things keeping us afloat this season. Secondly, hats off to our Twin Otter pilots, **Rick Tidwell** and **Nels Jensen** (MSO-62), and all the helicopter pilots, seats, tankers, air attacks, and aerial observers who provided us with the critical support we needed to get the job done. Thanks, too, to the dispatchers, coordinators, fire managers, drivers, behind the scenes support personnel, **Floyd Whitaker** (RDD-65) who packed all our parachutes starting in mid-August, and everyone else who had to answer our cranky phone calls and who provided us with support and direction.

I'm going to thank the Grangeville smokejumpers one more time (this is our column, after all) for being the best of the best, for their exemplary attitudes, and for their tireless efforts this season with no complaints. The Rookie class of 2006 was outstanding. Joining the ranks of the Grangeville Smokejumpers were: **Ahren Cornelius**, **Garrit Craig**, **James Greenwood**, **Jared Schuster**, and two detailers. **Ryan McBoyle** detailed from the Salmon River District of the Nez Perce N.F., and **Patrick Schon** detailed from the Banderli N.M.

We also filled 7 permanent seasonal positions. Congratulations to **Ryan Desautel** (GAC-04), **Mike Dunn** (GAC-04), **Joseph Forthofer** (RDD-04), **Russel Frei** (GAC-05), **Mike Nelson** (WYS-04), **Dan Vanderpool** and **Cort Wallace** (GAC-04). **Alessandro Potenziani** (RDD-01) accepted a temporary squadleader position from January through April for his work in Mississippi, and **Mike Blinn** (RDD-01) accepted a temporary squadleader position from mid-July through September. **Blinn** filled in behind **Mike Ward** (GAC-01), who accepted a temporary AFMO detail on the Elk City district of the Nez Perce. **Knute Olson** (MSO-00) detailed over to Grangeville as a squadleader from Missoula for August and September.

We're looking forward to filling some new positions this fall. The Washington Office finally approved national standard position descriptions for the smokejumper program, and we have been lucky enough to have the support necessary to move ahead and adopt them. We will have three assistant foreman positions here and some new lead

crewmember positions open as well.

We're also in the planning stages for an addition and facelift to the Grangeville Air Center that will, hopefully, cut down on the mid-air occurrences in the hallways every time you round a corner. Construction starts in March 2007, if all goes according to plan.

McCall Base Report

by Rick Hudson (BIFC-73)

The 2006 McCall Smokejumpers started spring refresher training in April with nearly two feet of snow still under the jump units. With the precipitation levels at 157 % of normal for the local Payette Forest, we had to plow the aircraft ramp before bringing the jump planes up from Ogden for overhead training. This early season moisture was followed by a deficit in June, July and August, resulting in the most active fire season locally for jump activity since 1994.

Sixty-two smokejumpers trained in McCall, making 519 fire jumps nationally, including 390 I.A. fire jumps out of the McCall base. Three NEDS, **Jeremy Cowie**, **Ann Hadlow** and **Adam Hernandez** completed smokejumper training from the initial class of six rookies.

Vacant positions at the jump base could not be filled by Human Resources, resulting in multiple detail positions and the shuffling of qualified personnel to supervisory positions. Detail squadleader/spotters included **Forrest Behm** (MYL-00), **Dustin Doane** (MYL-00), **Ryan Garber** (MYL-00) and **Andre Mascheroni** (MYL-01). Foreman positions went to **Rick Hudson** and **Dennis McCoy** (MYL-83). Master Rigger **Pete Pride** (MYL-83) handled the jump loft duties.

Rob Morrow (MYL-89), McCall's oldest, most qualified and hardest working temporary smokejumper, moved on to a district fuels job this spring. Despite being too old to receive an appointment, his love of smokejumping has been clearly evident in his broad friendships, his work ethic, and the quality product he always brought to the McCall base.

Steve Mello (MYL-74) made his last jump as a smokejumper this fall. His career as a smokejumper saw 206 fire jumps with a total of 419 jumps over 32 years. **Steve** worked as a jumper in the summer and as an Alaska schoolteacher in the colorful towns of Barrow and Ketchikan until his teachers retirement and permanent move to McCall in 1998. His maintenance of physical strength and commitment to jumping will be missed. Though he will miss out on the excitement of the jump, with a successful private tree service and a solid background in "C" faller certification, **Steve** will still be around to lend his expertise on training assignments.

The Silver City Crew took Twin Otter J-41 down May 10th for the New Mex Detail. The other aircraft, TDC-3 J-42 and Twin Otter J-43 remained as jumpships in McCall until J-43 came back in mid July. No Spike Bases were in operation by McCall this year.

Single resource assignments for smokejumpers have increased in the last few years. Geographic Coordination Centers (GCC) are concerned with the drawdown of initial attack smokejumpers being sent on single resource assignments during national high fire danger levels. In an average jump season the McCall base encourages jumpers to gain "fire quals"

by taking single resource assignments. However during the latter part of this season, at Planning Level 5 (extreme), a restriction halted most single resource activity to maintain smokejumpers as an initial attack force. Despite this restriction, McCall jumpers filled over 150 single resource assignments this season.

The local Payette Forest has been initiating Wildfire Use Management (WFU) on many fires within the wilderness for years. This summer some fires in the Salmon River drainage were managed as WFUs outside the wilderness due to cost, inaccessibility and the lack of sufficient resources. Increasingly, jumpers are joining Fire Use Modules that handle planning and the implementation of management techniques on these WFUs.

Early season prescribed fire details to Avon Park, Florida, Gunnison, Colorado and the Fire Use Training Academy (FUTA) in New Mexico put jumpers in both the planning phase as well as initiating burn modules.

Fall has been crisp mornings and warm afternoons, with some light drift smoke hanging on the horizon from the local WFU still burning since mid-July. Hunting and fishing seem to be on the minds of the late season jumpers. We are depending on the coming winter to mop-up and give us a clean slate to start with next season.

Missoula Base Report

by Dan Cottrell (MSO-01)

At press time, smoke is thick in the Missoula valley as the fire season in the Northern Rockies continues to roll on. As of September 5, Missoula has jumped 52 fires for a total of 322 jumps. This puts the season above average, and the hot dry weather looks to continue for the foreseeable future.

Spring workloads were unusually high as well for Missoula jumpers. In addition to local project work, an active hurricane season resulted in many jumpers heading south for project work along the Gulf Coast throughout the winter and spring. A record number of smokejumpers participated in spring burn details to Mississippi, and many jumpers were also called upon to assist with the severe fire season in Texas and Oklahoma.

As usual, the first jumping of the season by Missoula Smokejumpers took place in Silver City. Led for the first year by **Sarah Doehring** (MSO-91), the Gila Smokejumper base was set up on May 9 and staffed fires until monsoons ended the season on July 10. The crew included 21 jumpers from four geographic regions and staffed a total of 26 fires, 21 by jumping and 5 groundpounders. A total of 113 individual fire jumps took place, and two booster crews were utilized to handle the above average season. As Forest Supervisor Marcia Andre stated, "Their effectiveness in initial attack firefighting, combined with an outstanding safety record, was an incredible feat given the fuel conditions we faced this year."

Fire season kicked off early in Missoula as well with a dispatch to the Custer National Forest on June 6 to jump the Deer Creek Fire. It would be the first of many missions to eastern Montana, where we staffed 14 fires with 116 individual jumps out of the Miles City sub-base. The sub-base was staffed for an impressive 52 days by a crew made up of jumpers from Missoula, Grangeville, West Yellowstone and Ft. St. John, Brit-

ish Columbia. Miles City highlights included jumping a fire on the Black Hills NF, marking the first time the Hills have ever been jumped, and numerous other fires kept small by jumpers throughout the region.

Region 1 rookie training took on a new look in 2006 with **Mike Fritsen** (MSO-95) taking over as training foreman and lead rookie trainer. Training began with 29 candidates on May 30 with good weather prevailing throughout field week. Training concluded on June 23 with a class of 23 that survived one of the more difficult packout courses in recent memory. Missoula kept seven and two detailers, with eight going to Grangeville and eight going to West Yellowstone.

Many rookies hit the ground running as assignments to the Great Basin picked up quickly in late June. High winds in the basin resulted in one spotter remarking that he had a planeload of "wide eyed rookies" checking out a particularly small and windswept jump spot. Apparently they all survived that jump and gained a little salt in the process. An unofficial tally shows rookie detailer, **Amanda Holt**, leading Missoula rookies with a whopping 14 fire jumps and counting.

As Missoula baked under 33 consecutive days without moisture, business logically got busier as July progressed. Booster crews went out to everywhere, and those left in Missoula stayed steadily busy throughout the summer. Hostage loads in Missoula were augmented by a contingent of Alaska jumpers, who were glad to leave the rain in Fairbanks behind and head south. In addition to red bags, the Alaskans packed their booster van with inner tubes and kayaks and were frequent visitors to area whitewater hangouts. Missoula made history on August 13 with the arrival of 11 Canadian Smokejumper boosters from Ft. St. John, British Columbia. They quickly dispersed throughout the region on fire assignments and proved to dig "fire guard" as well as Missoula's best line diggers.

Aside from jumping, Missoula employees accomplished a wide variety of other summer projects, assignments, and details. **Tim LaRoche** (NCSB-02) spent the summer serving as Superintendent of the Lolo Hotshots. **Bill Phillips** (MSO-01) detailed to the Bitterroot National Forest as an assistant FMO in addition to welcoming a new baby this spring. **Mike Waldron** (MSO-88) and **Ryan Williams** (MSO-04) also took career enhancement details to local forests, and **Colby Jackson** (RDD-03) and **Jon Marshall** (MSO-04) spent the summer detailed to Redmond. Missoula Smokejumpers also assisted the fire community as blasters, air attack, helicopter managers and crewmembers, prescribed burn crews, and fire use managers.

2006 has also been a summer filled with tragedy as **Eddie Ward's** (MSO-80) son, Finn, suffered a traumatic brain injury on May 30. The summer has seen Finn make much progress towards recovery, but he still has a long way to go. Updates can be viewed at www.carepages.com by searching for finnwardmissoula. Donations towards medical care can also be made and are tax deductible through the Missoula Smokejumper Welfare Fund, 5765 West Broadway, Missoula, MT 59808.

As soon as fire season winds down in the Northern Rockies, gears will be switched to fall project work. Jumpers will be

headed off to exciting destinations such as North Dakota for burning, Wyoming for cone picking, and local forests for saw projects and fuels work. The 2006 fire season was successful and busy. Missoula Smokejumpers continued to serve the Forest Service in fire suppression, fire use, prescribed fire, training, and project work in a safe and professional manner.

North Cascades Base Report

by **Scott Wicklund** (NCSB-91)

NCSB had a very successful and productive year during the winter/summer of 2006. **Matt Woosley** (NCSB-84) and, the soon to be married, **Inaki Baraibar** (NCSB-98) started out early in Texas with division supervisor assignments during February and March. **Kat Russell** (NCSB-98) went on detail with the Bandelier Fire Use module, traveling mostly in the South doing RX work.

The majority of NCSB jumpers returned in late March for refresher training with snow still on valley floor. With no immediate fire suppression assignments in sight, a crew was put together to travel to Mississippi for Katrina relief work that lasted into May. Our jump ship this year returned in the form of "Jump 09," (a Casa 212) complete with Captain Keven McBride and Co-Pilot Jay Franklin.

On June 8th a four-man fire in the Okanogan kicked off the jump season. The forest continued to dry into June with occasional lightning storms sparking several I.A. jumps out of NSCB. Boosts to Redmond were frequent and kept the NSCB clan boomeranging back and forth between bases.

A trip to West Yellowstone gave eight smokejumpers from NCSB the rare opportunity to visit and jump the Gallatin Forest and then continue on to McCall and Redmond for more fire jumps.

Many boosters visited and jumped out of NSCB during July and August, and we thank them all for the help.

On June 24th, four NCSB jumpers were dispatched to the Tripod Fire within 15 minutes of the first report. (It was considered the #1 priority fire in the nation for most of the summer.) The 5-acre fire grew too rapidly for I.A. resources to be effective. As of this report on October 13th, the Tripod Fire is 177,000 acres and remains in uncontrolled status. However, rehabilitation has been ongoing for months and will continue into the winter and next year. This was only one of many local large Type I and Type II fires that burned throughout July, August and into September. Communities surrounding NCSB were kept on evacuation notice for much of the summer, and the daily weather report was always hot and smoky. Ironically, an I.A. fire jump was sometimes the only way to escape the perpetual smoke.

NCSB jumpers were highly utilized on most of the large fires with **John Button** (NCSB-75), **Matt Woosley** and **Inaki Baraibar** flying air attack. Almost every NCSB smokejumper performed various assignments in overhead positions, ranging from crew boss to Type 3 I.C. positions. The Flick Creek Fire alone utilized five full loads of jumpers on three separate occasions to implement line construction and burnout operations in some of the very steep, rugged and extremely scenic country above Lake Chelan and the Stehekin Valley.

September rain showers slowed the large fires and the I.A.

business but, on Sept 28th, six jumpers were dispatched to a new start called the Butterfly Fire in the Glacier Peak Wilderness. The Butterfly Fire was located in the very remote, high alpine Napeequa Valley. Surrounding glaciers loomed overhead and, with fall colors in full brilliance, the scenic factor of this fire went off the scales. After a season of many large campaign-type fires in which full suppression was a necessity, the Butterfly Fire was the perfect chance to allow nature to do a little housekeeping in the high alpine forest.

Cooperation with the Wenatchee/Okanagon National Forest, the North Cascades National Park and the various overhead teams assigned to the large local fires made this summer an excellent opportunity for all the NCSB crew to experience a well rounded mix of smokejumper initial attack fires as well as training opportunities, assignments and exposure to tactics on long term campaign fires.

This fall we're busy with fire rehabilitation, tree climbing projects, RX details and other local and out of state projects.

Total fire jump numbers were a little below average but, with business booming as it was, NCSB is happy to report no serious injuries during this sometimes very taxing summer. Congratulations are also in order for **Matt Woosley** with a promotion to operations and **Darren Belsby** (NCSB-86) to training foreman.

We wish everyone a great winter, and we are all looking forward to ski season. (Maybe that's just me.)

Redding Base Report

by Nate Hess (RDD-01)

The season started out with the first fire jump on the Inyo N. F. and remained consistently busy at preparedness level 5 for a good portion of the season and into the late season, after other bases shut down. With the Santa Ana winds in south zone and the red flag warnings in the north state, we were still in fire season well into October.

Several single resource assignments kept task book holders occupied. Qualified jumpers had good experiences in the capacity of I.C.s, division supervisors, strike team leaders, crew bosses and on down the food chain. Each assignment was followed by, "It was a good deal."

Rick Rataj (RDD-00), **Nate Hesse**, **Dave Johnson** (RDD-00) and **Mitch Hokanson** (RDD-00) rotated through squadleader details this summer here at the base.

Despite having a lower number of jumpers compared to years past, there were plenty of fires to be had from our current list and booster loads on several lightning busts that lasted a couple of weeks at a time.

The McCall jumpers sent the "rigging machine," **Brett Bittenbender** (MYL-88), during one of the lightning busts, who posted close to triple digit parachutes rigged, which kept the flow going. We would watch shelves of paracargo deplete into the red zone and barely reach the black before the cycle repeated itself.

The California Jumpers staffed the San Bernardino spike base several times this year. The stronghold is expanding there, and the fire management is recognizing the valuable capability of the smokejumping program. To date, 73 jumpers were delivered to 18 fires in five south zone forests and one state

ranger unit. Total jumps to date for the base are 114 fires with the 471 jumpers delivered. We also filled several 20-person pounder orders on some of the local complex fires.

Thanks to all the boosters who helped out this season. Another thanks to the AK bros who came down to detail with us providing entertainment and going home with all the big flip earnings.

Big Horn's Dornier Jumper 52, piloted by John Lesnik, was instrumental in getting jumpers to fires quickly this season. Thanks to Chris Eisele for flying relief when John was on days off. The Dornier just finished the first year of a five-year contract.

Our Sherpa Jumper 51 was also instrumental in reaching fires promptly. Thanks to our pilots: John Blumm - the newest pilot captain, Dan Johnson, Rick Haagenson, and Dave Spleitof - who also shared duties on the Sherpa and rotated flying the contracted King Air used as a lead plane for the tankers. John Liston was recently hired as the new air unit manager, taking Bob Cowards position. Bob went to the dark side and flies for CDF now. Thanks for many years of keeping cargo out of the trees, Bob.

Congratulations to the newest Redding jumpers: **Sean Hines** (Del Rosa IHC), **Brad Moschetti** (Tahoe IHC), **Jesse Rowan** (Black Mtn. IHC), and **Mark Urbani** (Mendocino IHC). The class of 06 has served us well this season, notably **Urbani** - who came back from a serious injury during rookie training to get his first fire jump in late August.

The baby and wedding report is as follows: **Luis Gomez** (RDD-94) and wife Jessica welcomed Luciano Guissepe, 7lbs. 15oz., born in August. **John Casey** (RDD-99) and wife Stacey welcomed Jack Kinney, 6lbs. 10oz, born in September. Upcoming weddings will have **Darby Thompson** (RDD-04) and Agnes married in November, **Dave Johnson** and Shelly will also be wed in November, and **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03) and Kristi will wed in March.

In other news, **Casey Ramsey** (RDD-01) took the season off and is building his house and doing other odd jobs near Kellogg, ID. **Rick Rataj** will return to New Jersey to climb for the state, inspecting trees for APHIS. Although funding has hampered east coast Asian Longhorn Beetle climbing, four jumpers went back to the Sacramento lot for the second time this year to recheck any further damage from the beetle.

There was a mad rush for deer tags in hopes of winning the contest this year. **Rick Haagenson** (RDD-79) claims he'll be hard to beat, but many are still confident. **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03) and **Don Graham** (RDD-01) drew tags for Idaho to fill the freezer with meat. **Dave Johnson** is toying with the idea to start charging the bros for his keen fish finding instincts on the Sacramento. **Donovan Lee** (RDD-03) is perusing a higher education this winter. Other jumpers have spoken of winter work, surf trips, and other miscellaneous travel plans.

Stay tuned for info about next year's 50th anniversary of the Redding base. Have a great winter!

Redmond Base Report

by Tony Sleznick (RDD-92)

A chill in the air makes one think of winter, but lack of season ending precipitation has dragged on the fire season in

Oregon. Redmond had a great jump season tallying 92 fires jumped for 428 Smokejumpers deployed. Jump hog is **Geoff Schultz** (RDD-01) with 17 fire jumps. And it might not be over...

Off the list were detailers **Jim Huthmaker** (RAC-02) and **Doug Smith** (RAC-01). Two rookies made it, **Angela Banfill** (RAC-06) and **Ramona Hull** (RAC-06)... Congratulations!

We had two summer-long boosters at RAC, **Jon Marshall** (MSO-04) and **Colby Jackson** (RDD-03). **Craig Hingley** (RAC-04) was hired back at Redmond this fall from the BLM.

Redmond hopes to expand our numbers to 40 next year to better staff the two Sherpa aircraft. The Sherpas look to get new radios and new paint jobs this winter.

Notably, **Ron Rucker** (RAC-76) was recognized for Heroism by Forest Service Chief, Dale Bosworth, in Washington D.C. Last year, **Ron** dragged **Marge Kuehne-Tabor** (RAC-91) from the wreckage of an air attack airplane in Las Vegas. **Rucker** has transitioned into a fuels job on the Ochoco NF, but still spends much time as ATGS.

Josh Cantrell (RAC-97) recently finished the fire season detailing as foreman with the Redmond IHC and is happy to be back.

Tony Sleznick is fresh back from Peru having taught S-130/190 to the local Bomberos.

Eric Schilling (RAG pilot) got signed off as a Sherpa Captain! He has proved to be amazingly accurate with paracargo. Great job, Eric. Kegs!!!!

Loft report from **Jeff Robinson** (RDD-86): nobody went without a parachute. From training, **Tony Johnson** (RAC-97) reports, "We studied hard... we have no one on academic probation." From operations, **Mike Jackson** (RAC-86) said the phone was always on. Base Manager **Bill Selby** (RAC-91) managed to install a great new washer/dryer setup in the boiler room. Thanks, Bill. Bottom of the list folds the clothes.

Jumper milestones were **Aaron Almos** (RAC-05), **Aaron Skillings** (RAC-05), **Heidi Bunkers** (RAC-04), **Sean Wishart** (RAC-04), and **Dave Keller** (RAC-04): all reached 50 jumps. **Wally Hockman** (RDD-01) and **Geoff Shultz** have made 100 jumps. **Tony Sleznick** hit 300 jumps. **Dirk Stevens** (RAC-91) hit 350 jumps. **Tony Loughton** (RDD-83), 450 jumps!

Seasonal promotions and congratulations go to **Aaron Olmos**, **Sean Wishart**, **Geoff Shultz**, **Dave Keller**, and **Heidi Bunkers**. More Kegs!

Congrats to **Tony Loughton** who got married to longtime partner Karen Curtis last spring. Also to **Jon Hernandez** (RAC-01) and his wife, Jill, who are expecting this winter.

Fall burning is in half swing due to the dry fall. Other upcoming projects include a bit of climbing on the Umpqua NF. Redmond looks to fill a 10-person winter Rx burning module that will travel throughout Region 8 assisting those local forests as needed. Plenty of sewing remains in the loft... (Oh boy!).

Folks are slowly hibernating due to school. **Mark Hentze** (RAC-00) has already booked his winter in Medelline, Columbia.

Fire season and project work seems to run all year these days.

The door is always open at Redmond (though you must get a visitor's pass at Admin.), and the coffee is always flowing. Stop by anytime.

West Yellowstone Base Report

by **Charlie Wetzel** (WYS-92)

Staffing in WYS was at 34 this year, including eight rookies (two of them detailers) and three other FS detailers. Additionally, the BLM supplied five more jumper detailers for a period of over two months when activity picked up.

The increase in numbers and a busy fire year helped to get our folks out on 48 fires for 285 fire jumps just from West Yellowstone. We had boosters in from Winthrop, Grangeville, Missoula, Miles City, Alaska, Boise and sent boosters out to nearly every base in the system.

It was a busy year locally with five large fires on the Gallatin NF, and we got lots of business, both jumping and single resource assignments.

Bighorn Airways was awarded another 5-year contract to supply a Dornier 228 for West Yellowstone with Randy Lepoldt as pilot. 🦋

Where Are These Guys?

Please send any information to: John McDaniel/NSA
Mbrship, P.O. Box 105, Falun KS 67442, email:
jumpercj57@hotmail.com

Gary E. Frey	(MSO-53)
Doyle W. Gerrard	(MSO-53)
Adrian B. Grill	(MYC-53)
Lathol L. Hadden	(MSO-53)
Edward C. Hanson	(MYC-53)
Richard J. Hensel	(IDC-53)
Edwin T. Hermes	(MSO-53)
Elmo W. Heter	(MYC-53)
Art Jacobs	(CJ-53)
Ansel N. Johnson	(MSO-53)
Allen F. Kelley	(MSO-53)
Donald L. Kerr	(MSO-53)
Richard P. Klason	(MYC-53)
Bobby G. McDaniel	(MSO-53)
Dan K. Merrell	(MSO-53)
Daniel L. Owen	(MSO-53)
Robert S. Pearson	(MSO-53)
Sheridan I. Peterson	(MSO-53)
Peter D. Reiner	(MSO-53)
William A. Rogers	(MSO-53)
Ernie Showers	(CJ-53)
Jerry D. Soapes	(MSO-53)
Robert L. Spinde	(MYC-53)
Cecil B. Stevenson	(MSO-53)
Joseph B. Stevenson	(MSO-53)
Denny Taipole	(NCSB-53)
Charles K. Taylor	(MSO-53)
Harvey J. Versteeg	(MSO-53)
Mathew E. Wallen	(MSO-53)
Edwin R. Wayne	(MSO-53)
John R. Wiley	(MSO-53)
Allen S. Wilson	(IDC-53)
Boyd C. Wilson	(MSO-53)
Jefferson F. Wolfe	(MSO-53)
Clair Ziekle	(NCSB-53)