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Smokejumper Magazine, October 2007

National Smokejumper Association

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2007

SMOKEJUMPER



A Leap of Faith 3
A Tribute to Fred Brauer 23
Revisiting the Mongolian Smokejumpers 33

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Message from the President



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

MY HAT'S OFF TO THE Boise Reunion Committee and all of those who helped in making the reunion a great success. Over 700 people sat for dinner on Saturday night after a full day of touring, golfing, running, or just hanging out catching up on old stories. We also had two mixed loads of jumps with both rounds and squares making it close to the spot. The reunion was capped off with the Sunday morning Memorial with over 300 in attendance, services led by Leo Cromwell and Stan Tate. All in all, it was a fun-filled weekend.

There were some people who should have been recognized during the Saturday night program and some a little more than they were. One of those, Linda Bass, did an outstanding job with her artwork for the programs, t-shirts, and placemats. It's a great design and will be worn for a long time as many people purchased the shirts. Thanks, Linda, you've got a great gift. Others who were going to be recognized were **Dale Longanecker**, NCSB and **Wally Wasser**, Boise, who are in a tight race for the most jumps, both fire and total jumps. Both have over 300 fire jumps and over 700 total. The female jumper with the most jumps is **Robin Embry**, Grangeville,

with over 400 total and counting. She's the leader of over 200 female jumpers since the first female, **Deanne Shulman**, McCall, back in the day...well, early 80s. I also want to thank all of those who donated items for the silent auction and raffle. It was a huge success.

This has been quite the year for reunions. Redding, in May, was attended by more than 300, Boise with more than 700, and the NCSB reunion with more than 400 gave everyone a chance to catch up on old friendships and make a lot of new ones. Next year will see one at McCall and, hopefully, Redmond.

So, until then, the door is yours. Your static line is clear, there is 100 yards of drift, and the whole world is a jump spot. Have a great one. 🍄

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A Leap Of Faith

Former smokejumper spearheads effort to turn a closed base near Cave Junction into a museum honoring the airborne firefighters.

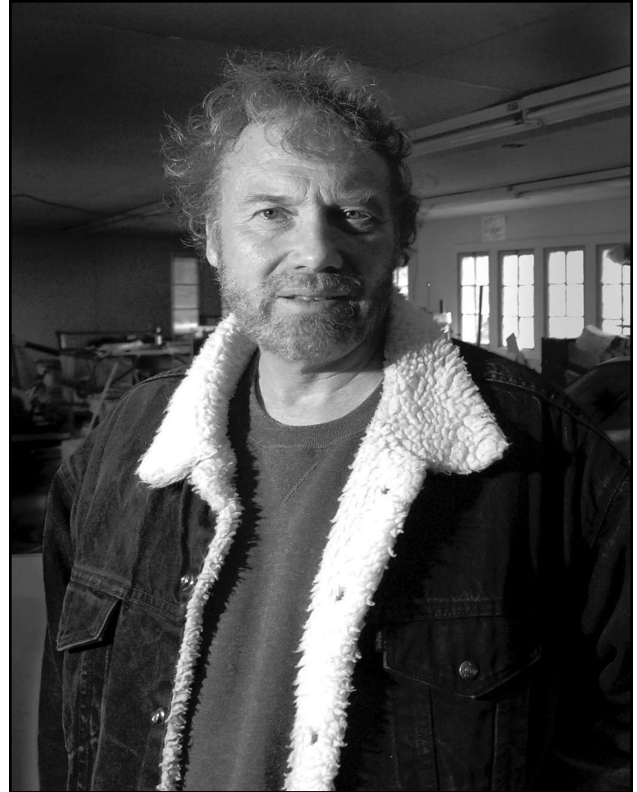
by Paul Fattig

Originally printed in the Medford Mail Tribune February 19, 2007. Used with permission from the Mail Tribune and MailTribune.com, publications of The Mail Tribune Newspapers, Inc.

Gary Buck (CJ-66) crouched in the doorway of the C-45 "Twin Beech" airplane, looking down as a fellow smokejumper dropped like a rock until his parachute caught air.

This would be Buck's first jump on a forest fire. And it would be in the extremely rugged and remote Illinois River drainage in what was then the 2-year-old Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area deep in the Siskiyou National Forest.

"I was scared," the veteran smokejumper freely acknowl-



Gary Buck (Courtesy Roy Musitelli/Mail Tribune photo)

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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

edges of his first jump in the summer of 1966.

"When you are out there looking down from 1,000 feet up, the terrain looks rough and scary," he adds. "There are lots of hazards. Snags. Big rocks."

Buck never regretted taking that flying leap into a 17-year airborne firefighting career that began at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, the first U.S. Forest Service smokejumper base in Oregon when it opened in 1943.

Buck is the president of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Museum Project, a nonprofit group whose mission is to establish a smokejumper museum at the base which closed in 1981. The group's nomination resulted in the base being named to the National Register of Historic Places last November.

The base is located at the Illinois Valley Airport about a half-dozen miles south of Cave Junction.

During a recent walk through the base's old headquarters and parachute loft, Buck talked about those with whom he spent 17 summers leaping out of perfectly good airplanes. From the Siskiyou base, they would jump fires from Alaska to Virginia, although most of their battles would be in the West.

It wasn't the \$2 an hour they were being paid in the mid-1960s that drew them to the hazardous duty, he says. He figures it was the spirit of adventure that drove them to give up the safety of airplanes and jump over a wildfire.

"Whatever it was, I sure liked them," he says. "They are classy, funny, real characters. They would go way beyond the norm to do a job. Non-whiners."

Fellow veteran smokejumpers describe Buck—a youthful-looking 60, whose 6-foot-3-inch height was almost too much for him to qualify as a smokejumper—as a tough non-whiner.

"He was a stud," says former Siskiyou smokejumper **Gary Thornhill** (CJ-68), who retired last year as vice principal and athletic director at Illinois Valley High School where he was an outstanding athlete. Thornhill was later a standout college football player.

"At that time, there were a lot of college athletes jumping—it was a summer job," adds Thornhill, a jumper from 1968 until 1980. "They were all great people, but it was hard. And 'Joe Buck' didn't have any problems doing any of it."

The nickname came from Buck's having a strong resemblance to the Jon Voight character in the 1969 "Midnight Cowboy" movie, he explains.

"My first fire was pretty easy," Buck recalls. "We got it out. But then we had a 12-mile pack out. We had 140-pound packs. That was a real eye opener.

"I was 19 and I thought I was in good shape," he adds. "But it was a killer."

The historic buildings on the base are empty now of those who wore jump suits. The smokejumpers would become everything from astronauts to teachers, attorneys to loggers.

A smokejumper named **Stuart Roosa** (CJ-53), who would become an astronaut and the command pilot on Apollo 13, spent the summer of 1953 working out of the base.

Willie Unsoeld was a Siskiyou smokejumper in 1950, before he gained fame as the first climber to scale Mount Everest in 1964 via the treacherous west ridge route. National Geographic magazine regarded it as one of the top five climbs to the roof of the world.

Perhaps the most famous jumper in the smokejumping community was Buck's friend **Allen D. "Mouse" Owen** (CJ-70), a 4-foot-10½ inch-tall former Marine who served three tours in Vietnam. Owen had to get a congressional waiver to join the Corps as well as the smokejumpers. An article in Life magazine described him as "a small person to look up to." Owen, who jumped out of the Siskiyou base for a dozen seasons, died Sept. 9, 1981, in a skydiving accident near North Pole, Alaska.

"Mouse was one of a kind," Buck says.

Buck stepped into the old headquarters building, circa 1936. It was originally located at the district ranger headquarters in nearby Cave Junction until it was moved here in 1961.

"The jumpers used it down there in 1943," Buck says. "They were trucked out here to jump fires."

When they weren't jumping fires, the smokejumpers kept busy by sprucing up the base. In 1977, jumpers Thornhill and **Gary Mills** (CJ-66) were told by supervisor **Terry Mewhinney** (CJ-64) to cover the interior pine boards in the headquarters with paneling.

"I really didn't want to cover this fine wood, but Mewhinney made me" reads tongue-in-cheek graffiti signed by both jumpers which was uncovered when the paneling was removed. Mills recently retired from the Forest Service after serving as a fire boss for many years.

The parachute loft, built in 1948, is the oldest in North America. Buck remembers when it bustled with the noise of sewing machines repairing torn chutes.

"We had big sewing machines in here when I got here," he says. "Smokejumpers did the packing, repairing and all the sewing."

"Jump gear, harness, cargo bags and other items were all made in the loft," he adds.

Buck, who attended college during the summer, earning a bachelor's degree in cartography, would take a two-year sabbatical from smokejumping to serve in the Army in Vietnam after he was drafted.

But he returned to smokejumping. After the Siskiyou base closed in 1981, he would jump for four more seasons from other bases. During the 1985 season he jumped on a fire in western Alaska near the village of Silawik, some 300 miles northeast of Nome.

"It was real windy out there—I was blown backwards," he says, noting jumpers turn against the wind when landing to reduce the speed at which they slam into the ground.

He got up after the hard landing with severe neck pain. Still, the non-whiner battled the blaze.

"I was feeling pretty bad, but I went to work on the fire," he says. "When I came out I went to the doctor."

The doctors pronounced Joe Buck healthy enough, if it weren't for his broken neck. Surgeons operated, reinforcing his fractured vertebrae with a piece of bone taken from his pelvic bone.

"That was the end of jumping for me," he says. 🦋

Reach reporter Paul Fattig at 776-4496 or at pfattig@mailtribune.com

Where Are These Guys?

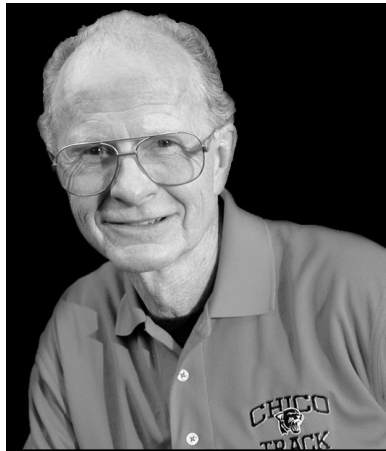
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Sounding Off from the Editor



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

THIS HAS BEEN A SUMMER of reunions. In May the California Smokejumpers started it off with the celebration of their 50th year. The national reunion in Boise was well attended, well organized, and was another example of a first class event.

As covered in the Odds/Ends column, **Gary "Tex" Welch** (CJ-60) was found to have leukemia and, early on, was not given much hope of surviving. However, he said that he was sending in his registration for the Boise Reunion and would see us there. Sure enough, with brother **Larry Welch** (CJ-61), Tex was there and enjoying the event with the rest of us.

Another survivor, Phisit Indradat from Bangkok, Thailand, was in attendance, along with his wife and sister-in-law. Phisit was featured in the two-part series "Prisoner In Laos" printed in *Smokejumper*.

The efficiently run program after the Saturday evening dinner really caught my attention. I like programs that are sharp, have little dead time and are not long. This one finished up in 55 minutes thanks to the work of **Mike Fitzpatrick** (RAC-78) and **John Magel** (MYC-58), who co-MC'd the event.

We were fortunate enough to have

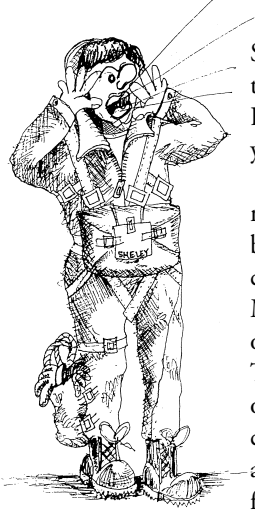
retired USFS Chief Dale Bosworth give a short presentation. Thanks to **Lynn Sprague** (MYC-59) for his work in getting Chief Bosworth to the event.

The Chief was very complementary to the smokejumpers, but one part of his presentation especially caught my attention. I will paraphrase and go from memory, but it was to the effect that the Forest Service will, in the future, have to justify the use of our best firefighters (smokejumpers) in remote wilderness areas.

I would say that we have had some excellent examples of why we need to *continue* with this philosophy and actually *increase* the numbers and use of smokejumpers as a cost effective way to prevent the enormously expensive project fires of recent years.

We now know that there is a time and place to let fires burn and do the job that nature has intended for thousands of years. On the other hand, wildfire intensity has increased, and we are currently spending about a *billion* dollars in annual cost in putting them out. Recent studies suggest that a trend in warming and drought will further make matters worse. The logical approach, in my mind, is to stop almost all wildfires at their earliest stages when they can be contained with the least amount of resources and at the lowest cost to the taxpayers.

Let's go back to one of my favorite subjects, wildfire on the Siskiyou N.F. In 1982 the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was closed as a money-saving plan. It was to be used as a satellite base and manned when needed. Even though I love the Gobi, there was merit in centering smokejumper operations in Redmond with a much larger crew. But "out of sight, out of mind" took over, and the expenses of three major fires in remote areas on the



Siskiyou could have operated the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base for the next hundred years.

In 1987 the Silver Fire, 12 miles north of the base, burned 100,000+ acres and cost \$28 million. In 1994 the Mendenhall Fire, 2 miles west of the base, cost \$3 million. Then comes the granddaddy of them all. In 2002 the Biscuit Fire went into the books as one of the largest wildland fires in U.S. history. A quick plane ride from the former

smokejumper base, it burned 500,000 acres and cost \$180 million.

But, it seems like the initial suppression costs are just the tip of the iceberg. There has probably not been a more litigated fire in the history of the Forest Service, as the Biscuit Fire became a national icon in the national debate over post-fire logging. The USFS spent \$5.8 million alone to prepare and defend the sales and were involved in more than 17 court decisions. I'm guessing that it is probably impossible to calculate the post-fire costs to the taxpayers, as this will probably continue for years. Now a recent study by the USFS and Oregon State University questions the practice of post-fire logging and says that it and planting young trees makes future fires worse.

The series of lightning strikes that caused this enormous fire were a short distance from the closed Siskiyou Smokejumper Base and would have been considered, in prior years, a series of "two-manners." The USFS said these fires were not initially manned because of a lack of resources and, somewhere in the chain of command, said that there were "no smokejumpers available for 48 hours." However, as shown in a series of articles in *Smokejumper*, there were plenty of smokejumpers available (110) at the

time. I'm sure that now there are many people in the Forest Service who would like to step back in time and make that initial jumper request at the time those fires were reported. The legal issues from this fire will continue in the court system for years, taking USFS time and taxpayer money that needs to be used in other areas.

Now, back to my thoughts on Chief Bosworth's presentation. I think that it is and will be easy to justify the use of smokejumpers on fires in re-

mote areas. That is the job we are trained for and, if used there, will prevent the headaches, heartaches and expenditure of money on future Bis-cuit type fires.

It can't be a money thing. Cal Fire (formerly CDF) just signed a 3-year, \$15 million contract with the owners of a DC-10 air tanker. The cost to operate the air tanker is \$41,000 a day plus \$5,500 per flight hour. June 27, 2007, that air tanker nearly crashed while fighting a fire in the southern

San Joaquin Valley. "Tanker 910 was caught in a downdraft and struck several trees before being able to climb away."

I know the USFS and Cal Fire are separate organizations, one state and one federal. But the feds are spending plenty of money on their air attack plan with contract helicopters.

As the saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and, I must add, a whole lot cheaper. 🦋

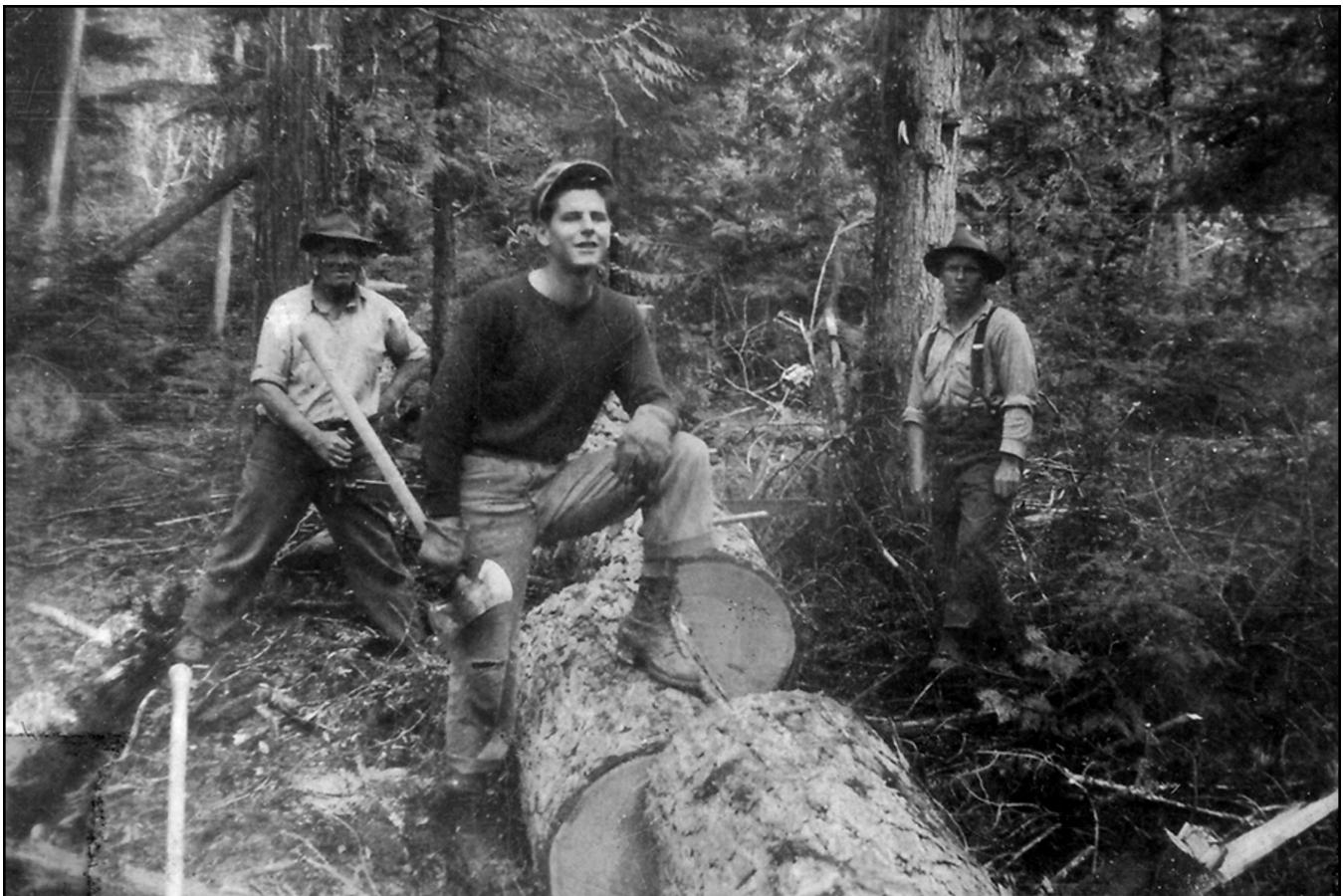
A Favorite Forest

by Chuck Pickard (Missoula '48)

So what led up to all this smokejumping?

It was 1946 and I was fresh out of the Marines after 27 months in the Pacific. Forestry was my chosen path, and after spring semester, it was "go west young man." Destination: the Falls District of the Kaniksu National Forest. The nearest town: Priest River, Idaho.

Priest River separated the district into an east and west side with beautiful Priest Lake at the north end. The lake was about 20 miles long, and, through some narrows, one could enter the upper lake where on the far shore stood the Roosevelt Grove of the Ancient Cedars, massive trees with diameters of 10-12 feet made famous by Teddy's visit several years earlier.



Lumberjacks with Chuck Pickard (Courtesy C. Pickard)



Logs going down Priest River (Courtesy C. Pickard)

At the foot of the lake was a guard station named Coolin with about a dozen cabins close by, and, a few miles north on the west side, a small lodge named Linger Longer. The west side had several beautiful clear running creeks: Goose, Cedar and Branch Creeks, to name a few. Upper areas of some of the drainages still showed scars from the fires of 1910. **Gerald "Jerry" Linton** (MSO-48) got his start with the Forest Service working blister rust control on Soldier Creek just above Coolin back in 1946. BRC crews, perhaps 25 in number, could be seen on the hillsides digging out the "host" bushes. Many were housed in old CCC camps. The east side was lined with big drainages, each held a lookout at the top. Famous towers such as Sundance, Horton's Ridge, Camel's Prairie, Looking Glass, Prater Mountain, Bald Mountain, Lost Creek and Atlasta played a big part in fire control. Every lookout was occupied, trails and phone lines were maintained, and many had to rely on packers for supplies.

Districts in those days had a ranger, an alternate ranger, a dispatcher, a cook and sometimes a packer. Of course there were horses and mules. The summer crew was made up of local fellows and students in forestry or related fields. On the Falls District the ranger was "boss" and his word was final. He and his family occupied a small white house. The bunkhouse was white and slept about a dozen men. The cookhouse was white, the garages were white, the flag pole was white, and the station was surrounded by a white picket fence.

Sandpoint was the forest headquarters, and the Ass't Forest Supervisor was "Hy" Lyman. He was well respected and made regular visits to the Falls District. He was very fire oriented, and "Getting there the firstest with the mostest" was his motto. I was made fire guard that summer, and it was my duty to go to the camps and the various cutting jobs, talk to the bosses about putting fire tools on each rig and installing mufflers on the power equipment. Now, imagine how that might go: a little green man in a little green truck drives up and asks the "Bull-of-the-Woods" to get legal. It wasn't easy, but diplomacy usually won out. The ranger and Lyman backed it up with "Shut-em down if they give you trouble."

The business at that time was logging the last of the big virgin white pines. Diamond Match, one of the larger outfits, maintained three big camps and was cutting in several drain-

ages. The camps were made up of a bunkhouse, blacksmith/filing shop, cookhouse and always a root cellar. The hills echoed with the crashing of the big pines. There were no power saws. The fallers worked with crosscuts, axes and bottles of kerosene. They were called lumberjacks and had come west with companies like Weyerhaeuser and Diamond after the mills had gone silent in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. The 'jacks were mostly Swedes, Germans, Poles, Norwegians and Finns. The work was hard, but steady if you produced. In the fall when the snow came, the 'jacks returned to their families or spent the winter in cheap boarding houses in Spokane, Portland and Seattle.

When Forest Service people or other visitors were in camp, it was customary to be invited for a meal. I remember the breakfasts. There was food on food and pastries of all kinds. It was there I first learned of pouring beef gravy over pie. Silence was the rule at these tables. No one spoke unless it was to pass a dish. Often times I took orders from the 'jacks and next trip I'd bring back a pair of socks, tobacco or a roll of snoose.

They were logging heavy on the east side. Roaring jammers slinging the hooks were snaking out 16 foot logs for loading on the trucks to haul and dump directly into the lake. Huge booms were put together, and eventually a small tugboat would cut a boom loose and head the logs to the mouth of the lake. Soon the Priest River would be loaded with logs flowing south past the town of Priest River to the Pend Oreille and then west to Newport, Washington, where Diamond had a huge sawmill.

Priest River was a hot little town on the weekends. There was a particular bar owned by a woman named Millie that attracted plenty of the 'jacks. They danced to the wee hours to the famous Idaho scramble. The floors and even the bar top were a mass of splinters from hundreds of corked boots. Millie was one tough gal. For some unknown reason, she took a liking to **Boyd Swenson** (MSO-48) and, between us, we had many free beers.

Between the town of Priest River and the Falls Ranger Station was Olson's Shingle Mill: privately owned and a big operation. Gypos poured in there with big loads. It was a steam mill with an eight inch band saw and a two man carriage. The carriage was 20 feet long to accommodate the big timber and was piston driven. It shot back and forth like a rocket, and, as I remember, the guys wore seat belts. The mill had an old cone burner, providing occasional visits during the fire season.

Into the second summer on the Falls District, Boyd Swenson and myself were assigned to run down a broken phone line to one of the lookouts. We were able to get the '39 GMC pickup up a logging road before taking off on foot. Within a short distance we smelled smoke. Directly uphill was a smoldering snag putting up all kinds of smoke. A lightning strike the previous evening had broken off most of the top, leaving the lower ten feet burning. Swenson went back to the truck for a fire pack and water bag while I stood and kicked ashes. Swenson no sooner got back when we heard a plane. Soon here came **Wally Dobbins** (MSO-47) and **Bill Hellman** (MSO-46) crashing through the tree tops. Quite a surprise and our first introduction to smokejumping. I stayed and worked the fire while Swenson drove the pair to the district ranger station. We both signed-up for smokejumping the following year. ♣

Smoke Jumpers of Silver City

by Starr Jenkins (Cave Junction '48)

Originally published in the February 1957, issue of "The Wide World- The True Adventure Magazine for Men." Based on more recent information, some text regarding the Mann Gulch Fire has been omitted with the author's permission. The original editing and spelling were stylized for UK readers and are left intact in this reprint.

It was one of those warm mornings, so well known in southern New Mexico during July. For two days lightning storms had been flashing spectacularly over the peaks and canyons of the Gila National Forest, often stabbing giant trees with electric fire. Ready to meet any emergency was the United States Forest Service based at Silver City along the south edge of the forest.

There waited eighteen young men, comprising one of the most rugged and adventurous of America's fire-fighting teams - the Region Three Smokejumpers.

Their equipment consisted of an aircraft, parachutes, heavy canvas jump-suits, disposable paper sleeping-bags, and the fire-fighter's usual hand implements. These included a shovel, a kortik or short-handled rake, and a heavy axadze named a Pulaski, after an old Idaho firefighting hero. In addition they had lots of good old-fashioned guts.

They were one of America's crack teams of parachute-fireman specially trained for their role as spearhead in the never-ending war on timber's most spectacular enemy - fire. For those cool young men were the guardians of the vast Gila Forest - a green mountainous realm two-thirds the size of Wales - which spills over into Arizona in the west. Their main responsibility was the 700,000 roadless acres with the forest known as the Gila and the Black Range Wilderness Areas; but they also provided much of the fire protection afforded the remaining 2,200,000 road accessible acres.

On that warm, July morning, the call came in right after breakfast. George Cook, the lookout in the glass-walled tower on Reed's Peak, in his early scanning of the ridges had spotted a smoke. He lined up the azimuth on his fire-finder, estimated the range in miles, and cranked his ancient telephone to notify Mimbres Ranger Station.

In Silver City, forest dispatcher Calvin Sailors got the radio call from Mimbres and pulled the knob-with-string-attached out of the spot on the map labelled Reed's Peak and stretched the string across the surrounding compass rose to exactly 312°. The radio cracked again and Bob Rouse, up on Black Mountain, 25 miles north-east of the scene of the reported fire, called to report smoke at 127°.

The lines did not quite cross, so there was the possibility of two fires; but at such an extreme range a slight error on the part of either lookout could mean that it was the same smoke.

"Anyway, we've got one for sure," Cal said into the 'phone; he was talking to **Herb Oertli** (MSO-48), head

jump-foreman in the parachute loft across town.

"Well, we better make it six men then," Herb said. "Paul's ready with his stand-by crew, now."

"Okay, here's the location: Section Seven, Township Thirteen South, Range Ten West. That's south-west of Diamond Peak in the heart of the Black Range, just up out of Bonner Creek Canyon."

"Got it," said Herb, scribbling on his jumper-request form.

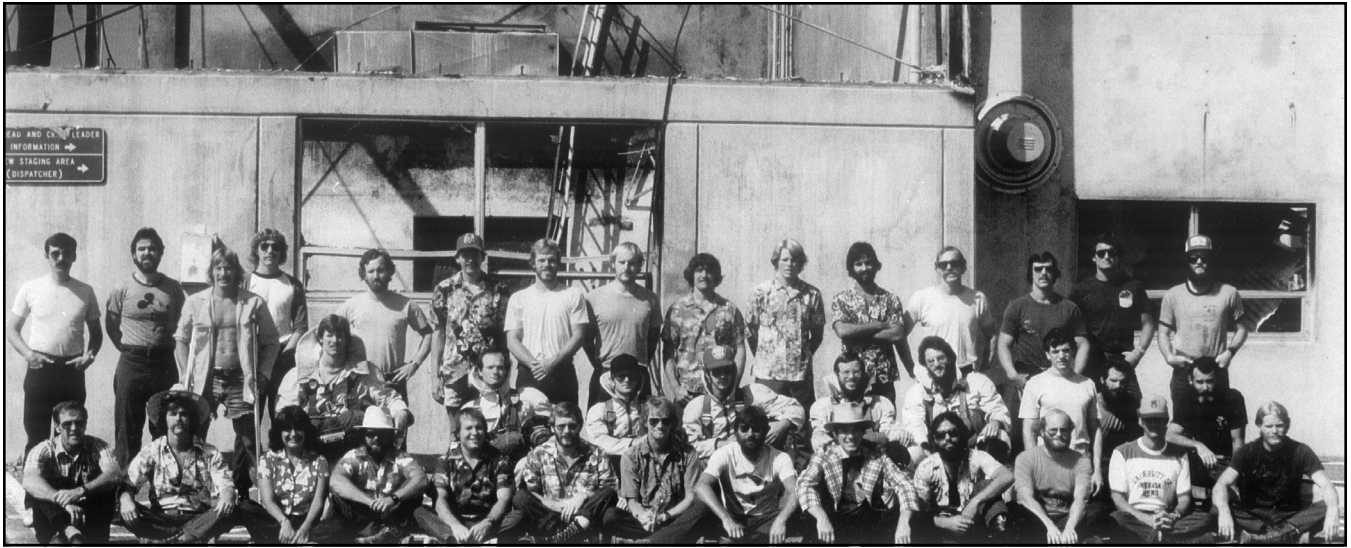
A few minutes later, Oertli's second-in-command, big **Paul Dennison** (MSO-49), was in a truck speeding to the airport with the top six men on the glory list piled behind him.

Squad Leader **Roland "Andy" Anderson** (MSO-52) was there, and so were jumpers **Glen Smith** (IDC-54), **Tony Percival** (NCSB-54), **Jim Wright** (CJ-53), **Fred Cavill** (MSO-54) and **Carl "Joe" Wilson** (MSO-52). **Mel McNeal** (MSO-54), another jumper, not due to make a leap just then, went along to help Paul with the spotting - the job of putting the men down where they were needed - pushing out the cargo after them.

The men felt good to be moving out again after a couple days of idleness in the stand-by shack at the field. They hustled the few items of gear not already loaded into their cavernous Department of Agriculture DC-3 aircraft. Firepacks were aboard, most of the 'chutes, and several pairs of five-gallon water-cans lashed into tight cubes to facilitate their dispatch.

In the shade of the wing, the jumpers put on their two-piece suits of dirty orange or dirtier white canvas. The pants had stirrups and quick-release zippers the full length of the in-seam, and the high-collared jackets had padded elbows and shoulders. Harnesses were donned next, and then each man helped his buddy hook on a bulky back-pack 'chute, the big steerable 28-footer that was compressed into a white canvas pod just now. The emergency chest-packs were snapped on in front next, and then bulky leg-pockets were filled with a coil of rope, which would enable the men to climb from the trees in which they might land. The men waddled heavily into the 'plane, carrying their converted football helmets in their hands; and **Hank Jori**, Forest Service pilot on loan from California, revved the 'plane up and lifted her into the air.

Silver City and its neighboring towns, with their massive pink and blue open-pit copper mines, sank away below; and the 'plane climbed above the high Gila country. It always seemed uncanny to fly from a desert into a great forest in less than five minutes; and yet these men knew that sometimes at lower elevations they had to jump forest fires where landing on cactus was - no joke - a problem. Altitude of the far flung sea of timber ahead was eight to ten-and-a-



1981 California Smokejumpers

Bottom L-R: Dick Tracy, Dick Linebarger, Gina Martinez, Ron Omont, Gary Sexton, Larry Hartgrave, Ken Perkins, Bob Harris, Bill Neulun, Arlen Cravens, Steve Abrams, Tim Huntington, Pat Bailey. Middle: Frank Hayes, Al Foley, George Maasen, Mark Youmans, Morgan Zeitler, Norm Baker, Dennis Golik, Don Sterrett, Gary Johnson. Top: Dave Noble, Rob Early, Ralph Ryan, Thor Johnson, Jim Gerber, Sven Klaseen, Rich Gersbach, Don Sand, Rick Haagenon, Tim Quigley, John Bald, Dan Mitchell, Jeff Steffens, Rick Rife, Mike Poetzsch. (Courtesy Carol Tracy)

half thousand feet - rather high stuff to jump into. And several of the boys, despite their love of 'chuting, were beginning to "sweat it out." They weren't scared exactly, but restlessly excited. And no exception was big, stolid Anderson, who already had made fifty-one jumps.

The usual jokes were made about checking the record-cards of the 'chutes to see who had packed each one.

"What's the matter, Andy, why don't you look? You afraid you might have one of your own?" somebody chortled.

Jim Wright, a husky young redhead whose face was flushed with anticipation, dominated his fear by sitting, static line hooked up, in the very maw of the open door, past which the air rushed and roared; but it was not all bravado. Jim found it fascinating to sit there, watching the patternless panorama of mountains and valleys unfold below. It was also a good way to overcome that touch of airsickness by carefully studying the nice, stable horizon and the beauties of the big thunderhead to the west.

Paul Dennison, not yet wearing his spotter's 'chute, moved around in the front of the 'plane, snapping cargo 'chutes on firepacks, checking that the crosscut saw looped around one of them was securely guarded and lashed, studying and making pencil-marks on a big map of the Gila, which he folded and unfolded on the floor. Some men can move around in ungainly logging boots with the grace of a cat; and Paul Dennison was one of those men. He was the picture of a skilled, decisive leader at work, and he was pouring 100 per cent of his effort, ability and judgment into doing this job right.

He checked frequently with the pilot and soon they spotted the smoke. It came from a lone burning snag on a pinecovered ridge to the left below. Obviously a two-man fire, so Anderson and Smith, the first two on the jump list, prepared to step out.

This was not a Salmon River Fire, like the one in Idaho

in '48, when seventy-five jumpers poured out of the sky upon it. Nor was it a Mann Gulch Fire, like the terrible one that devastated five square miles of western Montana one blistering afternoon in 1949, killing thirteen jumpers in the process. No this little fire on the Gila in southern New Mexico was not like that terrible affair at Mann Gulch, thank heaven. It was just one of the thousands of small fires that the Forest Service deals with every year before they get big enough to make headlines.

One has to remember, however, that every fire that does make headlines - whether it be of the ten per cent caused by lightning, or of the ninety per cent caused by man - was at one time no bigger than the quiet little burning snag that now flickered below - a spot-fire that could be controlled by a couple of men in an hour.

Paul briefed Andy on location and his best route out and gave him a small section of map. Andy and Smith donned their gloves and helmets, buckled down wire face-masks and hooked their static lines to the cable next to the door. Paul put on his flatpack 'chute and his spotter's helmet and goggles, and crouched beside the door, watching the slow descent of a streamer of orange crepe-paper that he had tossed into the blast. This streamer, with a small weight attached, had almost the same drift characteristics as did a man descending by parachute, and thus gave Paul an idea of how much wind he would have to offset for.

The 'plane circled and Paul carefully checked a dozen details on the rigging of the men about to jump. Collars up, helmets on securely, static lines not tangles with anything.

Anderson moved up to grip the handles that rimmed the door and studied the terrain below to assess the dangers.

Paul opened the rear compartment door so that he could lie full-length on the floor beside the jumpers, his feet hooked into the compartment door-sill, his goggled head peering into the slipstream. This was the final run and Paul

directed pilot Jori into the exact path he wanted by muttering instructions into a hand-microphone.

When the position was perfect for the operation, he said, "Cut the motors!" and Hank throttled back to give Andy an easier opening shock.

The 'plane settled into a heavy glide, and a moment later Paul pounded Andy's boot with his hand.

Wham! The man leapt away. McNeal dragged aboard the static line and the 'chute cover, and the 'plane started circling again.

Tall, black-haired Glen Smith was next. He moved into the doorway and raised his head above the curve of the fuselage for a refreshing blast of cool air. His motor-muffled leap was equally tense and rapturous, and soon both men had sifted down among the trees and had signalled with streamers that they had landed safely.

Hank spiralled the aircraft down for the cargo-dropping runs, and McNeil and Paul slid fire-packs to the rear of the 'plane to get them hooked up for the drop.

Hank dived the 'plane in at treetop level and out went the fire-packs and water, their yellow cargo-chutes blossoming against the hurtling green; and then he was climbing out of there in search of the other smoke.

It was a long, droning reconnaissance westward then, for a smoke that apparently did not exist. Percival, Wright, Wilson and Cavill were beginning to expect a "dry run" - a dismal anticlimax to their previous zeal.

"That lookout must have taken a sight on a fog bank," said one.

"I'll be glad to jump a fog bank any day," was the reply.

Ten minutes passed; twenty, but still no luck.

Meanwhile, in the little mining community of Pino Altos, just north of Silver City, Mrs. Polly Quost, an off-duty nurse, looked up from her housework and glimpsed smoke curling up from a forested ridge north of town. It was only a small column of smoke, too low yet for the near-by Signal Peak lookout to spot.

Mrs. Quost picked up the 'phone - it was 9:51 - and informed the forest headquarters in Silver City. The dispatcher radioed the searching airplane, and soon the boys in the funny big suits were happy again. There was another fire after all, right up out of Wilson Creek.

When the DC-3 flew over it, the smoke was beginning to puff up in a tall, slender column. As Hank circled, Foreman Paul studied the blaze, for he had to decide how many of his men should go down.

There was a road about an air-mile distant, and the ground fire-fighters were being sent to the outbreak, the radio message had said; but none was in sight yet, and it was a steep climb down into the canyon and up to the ridge from that road. The fire was probably still less than a quarter acre in extent, but there was fairly heavy fuel below, and it was dry. Furthermore, it was beginning to flare up in an ominous fashion. Paul made the decision. "all five will go down."

It was the right decision. For even as he spotted out Cavill, Wright, Wilson and Percival two at a time, the fire grew before their eyes. Here was a case where the jumpers,

being ready (and by luck in the air at the time) would really be worth their weight in Congressional appropriations. For an hour from now there could easily be five acres ablaze down there. And by the time ground men with packs on their backs climbed out of that steep canyon, the fire might be too much for fifty men to handle.

There was a sudden big spurt of smoke, and Paul wondered whether the five of them could hold the fire.

With the four men out, Paul moved away from the door, got out of his spotter's 'chute, emptied his bag of jump gear on the floor and started suiting up.

McNeil helped him into his 'chute, and in a few minutes Paul Dennison, too, was dressed like a slightly shoddy spaceman, ready to follow his men down on the fire.

He moved back from the door, hooked up his static line, and, when Jori had the 'plane in position again, began peering out at the jumpspot below, motioning Hank with hand signals into just the right run. The engines died when his hand made a slicing motion, and Paul grabbed both sides of the door and threw himself into space.

There was the long, fabulous moment of drop, then the reassuring "blam" of the 'chute jerking to full flower, and he was swinging crazily in the wake of the airplane, that old feeling of joy in his heart.

He tilted his head back and examined the full-blown beauty of the shimmering nylon above him and noted with contentment that there were no line-overs. Not like the jump **Randy Hurst** (MSO-54) had made recently, when a fistful of suspension lines - too many for him to cut with his emergency sheath knife - caught on top of the canopy, pulling it into two small, ineffective halves and forcing him to come in on his reserve.

Nor was it that other rare malfunction, a streamer - a tall, unopened chimney of silk that somehow failed to inflate. These static lines were almost completely foolproof, the way they used your body-weight to pull the 'chute out to full length before breaking loose from the 'plane.

Paul tugged his right outer shroud-line to activate one of the seven-foot steering slots in his canopy and turned himself into the wind, the same direction in which the 'plane was flying. To counteract that wind, he "planed" his 'chute - wove his fingers through the front risers and did his best to muscle up on top of them, tilting the whole canopy forward to spill the air out the rear. This, plus the air jetting out the diagonally-rear-pointing slots, slid him into the wind at about ten miles an hour.

With fifty jumps in this outfit and a 'chute that he could control like this, Paul didn't worry about landing in the fire. Nor did the treetops frighten him, for he knew that they were not as jagged as they looked. A live tree is a surprisingly flexible affair, despite, among conifers, its spear-like shape; and Paul knew that his face-mask and helmet, and his suit with its heavy, web crotch-protection, eliminated most of the perils of the up-coming branches. In fact, he many times preferred landing in a tree to hitting the ground in rocky terrain, or high country where the air-cushion was thin.

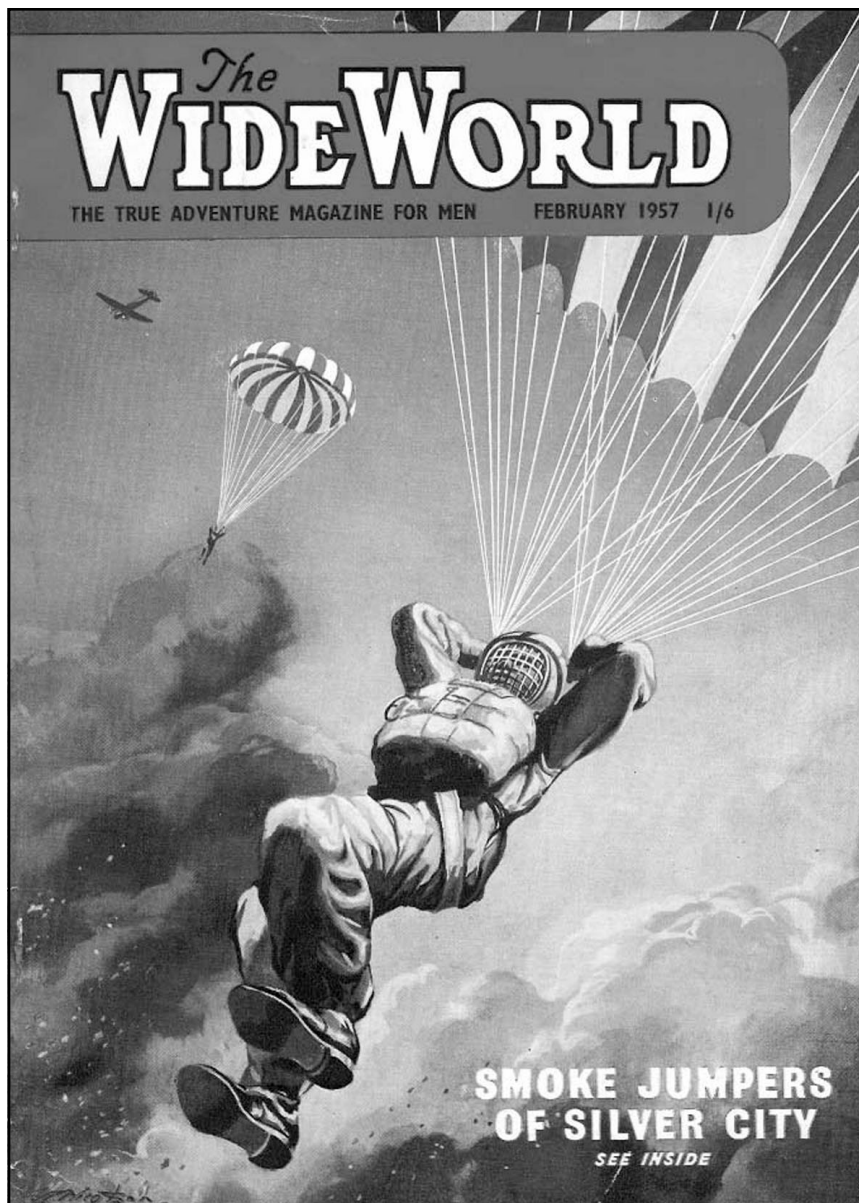
But there were real dangers a-plenty. The worst that confronted Paul as he sank to earth was the possibility that

he might not hang up solidly enough in a treetop to stay there, but just tip the air out of his 'chute and then fall on through. It happened, now and again; sometimes the 'chute popped open again in the last instant and sometimes it didn't, and the man would slam into the ground as if he'd jumped out of the tree-top holding a couple of loose, flapping bedsheets in his hands.

Another peril rising towards Paul was that of snags - brittle, dead trees that pointed like boney bayonets to the sky. Often, when hit, they would break off into splintered shards that could cut a man or a parachute to pieces. And, perversely enough, lightning fires almost always start in snags - as this one did - because the sharp point probing heavenwards is nature's own lightning rod.

It was a big snag that gave **Wendy Fernette** (MSO-42), one of the Missoula jumpers, so much trouble as he draped his canopy over the top securely, without happening to kill himself on the huge wooden spike of the top or dislodging any of the often perilously suspended limbs, known as "widow-makers." But before he could get down his rope to safety, he suddenly realized he had hooked into a leaning snag; and, to his horror, he saw that his own weight was pulling the dead tree over on top of him, a few agonizing degrees at a time. Utterly helpless, Fernette soon found himself falling to earth with a several-ton log plunging down above him. Miraculously he landed unhurt, in the V of two already fallen trees; and the giant log crashed across the V only inches above his back.

Arms aching, Paul planed his chute to within a hundred feet of the ground - and saw that he had done a better spotting job for himself than for any of the others. Then he



Cover Scan (Courtesy Bill Fogarty)

spun himself downwind again, to come in frontwards, and sailed down into a small clearing, his heels plowing a couple of furrows in the soft sand as he hit. He got out of his gear fast, sacked up his 'chute and suit, and put on his hard-hat ready for work.

Everyone else had landed safely, except Tony Percival who hit a branch pretty hard just off the ground and slammed on down, spraining an ankle. It was not a serious sprain, however, and did not even slow him down for a couple of hours - the crucial two hours for this fire.

Joe Wilson was the only one who landed high in a tree, but he was down his rope and on the ground by the time Jori came zooming in two

hundred feet above the trees to drop cargo. McNeal was up there shoving the stuff out, and it came out in three runs, only one chute failure marring the operation - and smashing a firepack to complete ruin except for the tools.

By ten forty-five, the crew was attaching the fire (just fifty-four minutes after Mrs. Quost had reported seeing the smoke). A perfect example of how smoke-jumping saves untold millions - by cutting to a minimum the time lag between detection and the arrival of firefighters.

Besides getting to the scene of a fire faster, smokejumpers also get there fresher. They have not had to climb miles up and down steep slopes to reach the outbreak; more often they have walked downhill a mere couple of hundred yards. Thus, they are better able to endure the staggering physical labours entailed in fighting a forest fire.

The fire was flaming over almost an acre now, the wind pushing it uphill; and one very hot spot, a couple of downed snags amongst a tangle of dry slash, was really putting out

heat. The men spread out, some flinging earth with their shovels into the hottest flames, to cool them down. (It is surprising how efficient a fire-extinguisher earth can be if handled correctly - the eternal stand-by for the Forest Service. On this water-less ridge, there was no thought of using water to put out this fire. Those ten gallons in the cans were for drinking!)

Two of the men chopped down the limbs and small trees with the Pulaskis, and cut a trail through the forest to separate the fire from its fuel supply, the surrounding woods. This trail was made into a real fire-line by the men as they dug through the ground cover of inflammable leaves, pine needles, and roots with their shovels and kortiks, and scraped their way down to fireproof mineral soil.

Soon the lightning-struck snag burned through at the butt and crashed to the ground. A few minutes later the hot spot flared again, and in a flash the blaze had leapt the fire-fighters' line and by-passed a hundred feet of their labor.

Paul and his crew withdrew about forty feet and dug in again; this time the line held.

It was obvious by now that these men were all top-notch fire-fighters: men with drive, initiative and skill. The reason behind this lay in the peculiar timing of the forest fire season in the South-west - mid-May to mid-July - which put the Silver City crew to work earlier than the smokejumpers of the bigger camps in Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. As a result, the New Mexico crew could be made up of many of the best men available to the northern regions, since the same men could fly north again in July and complete a full fire season in the northwest, too. Hence a man picked for Silver City duty could look forward to almost five months of jumping if his legs remained intact, and the highest possible number of fire jumps available to anybody in one year. Andy Anderson set a record by making twenty five fire jumps on one season during the fabulous fire year of 1953; he started the season well by making five jumps on the Gila.

To share this privilege, membership of the southern outfit recently has been divided among the northern crews. A dozen still come down from Missoula, the grand-daddy of all smoke-jumper bases, which has a normal summer complement of a hundred and fifty jumpers. Others come from McCall, Idaho, where about fifty men are later employed, and from Cave Junction, Oregon, and Winthrop, Washington, which each employ twenty-five men through July and August.

The men assemble in Missoula early in May, often while snow still covers the ground, to take their refresher training. This consists of a week of brushing-up on many safety procedures, reviewing first aid and rescue techniques, and, of course, jumping from the airplane a couple of times. Then they stack their aircraft with equipment and, unlike the birds, migrate south for the spring.

These were the men fighting the fire on Wilson Creek. As they chopped and scraped, the ever-bent back, smoke-filled eyes, and blistered hands were all part of the job. They scooped live embers and burning limbs inside the line, tossed untouched branches outside, following the Forest

Service maxim, "Separate the fuel from the fire."

The wind did not wreck their plans - as it easily could have - and by twelve-thirty the line around the fire was complete. One more potential monster was under control, at a harmless one and a half acres.

It was about this time that the two ground-fireman arrived. They were Joe Rivera and Dick Fahrlander, from Redstone Cabin in the Silver City district. The time of their arrival emphasized the slowness of ground travel and the advantage of flying fighters to the blaze.

Since the fire had been cornered and the jumpers had a minor casualty but no outside communication, Fahrlander was sent back for a radio. Rivera stayed with the jumpers, working to keep the demon down. With the adze-blades of the Pulaskis they improved the line and then moved into the smoking burn to break up remaining hot spots. Burning logs were rolled hot-side up and the fire scraped out of them. Big embers were scattered among cooler stuff and dirt mixed with them. And when things were quiet, the men took a break for lunch.

Later, the fire-fighters stowed suits and 'chutes in big cotton sacks and spent a few hours on patrol and mop-up. Fahrlander returned at about ten o'clock with Assistant Ranger Milt Hooker and the radio. They watched the sparks wink out till about midnight, then bedded down in their cargo chutes and expendable bedrolls, some of the men sleeping top-side since it was a warm night.

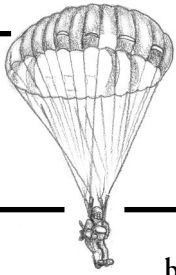
The next morning, the fire was dead enough to be left in the care of Rivera, whose job it would be to check any small smokes that developed with the heat of the afternoon.

A week later, as if in answer to the beating drums of the Indian dancers of New Mexico, the rains came to the parched southwest, and this rugged crew of jumpers were stowing their gear aboard the 'plane for the long flight to the northern camps. For the job goes on, as long as lightning strikes and summer heat lingers, the dull-exciting job of parachute fireman - leaping to kill giants before they get half-grown. 🌲

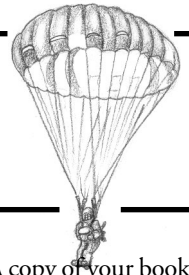
Where Are These Guys?

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

Earl Keely	(NCSB-56)
Kenneth R. Knoll	(MSO-56)
Melvin J. Landers	(MYC-56)
Edward G. Lufkin	(MSO-56)
Mike McCormack	(NCSB-56)
Malcolm Montgomery	(MSO-56)
Charles Moses	(MSO-56)
Charles R. Munns	(MYC-56)
George L. Pace	(MSO-56)
James F. Pigg	(MSO-56)
Verlon E. Prafke	(MYC-56)
Allen F. Samuels	(IDC-56)
Bernie Simpson	(MSO-56)
Kenneth Wicks	(CJ-56)
Floyd Wilson	(MSO-56)
Brent G. Wynn	(IDC-56)



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to Jack Ridgway (CJ-60), Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64), Mike McMillan (FBX-96), Bill Ruskin (CJ-58), Jim Burleigh (MSO-58), Ron Lund (FBX-64), Byron Leavitt (Associate) and David Mellin (RAC-66) who just became our latest Life Members

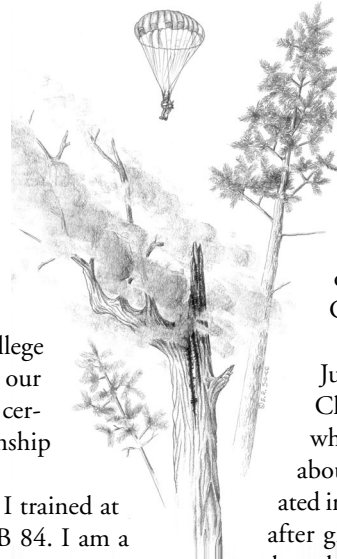
Pic Littell (MSO-44): "The National Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater, Oklahoma, is honoring the 60th anniversary of our Cornell College National Championship Wrestling Team and our coach, Paul K. Scot, on June 1 in a special ceremony. We will be presented with championship rings on the occasion and after 60 years!"

Brent Smith (RAC-77): "Just a note from Iraq, I trained at RAC in 77, MSO 78, 79, 80, 81 and NCSB 84. I am a Colonel in US Army Reserves after 10 years active duty...this is my 4th combat tour since putting on a uniform during medical school for which I took an Army Scholarship. I got out in 96, but stayed in reserves. Went to Afghanistan (Bagram) in 2004-2005 and got here in Tikrit, Iraq (Sadam's home town), north and east of Bagdad, in early March 07. I am deployed with the 399th Combat Support Hospital here. My residency training is in Emergency Medicine. While combat injuries, especially from the big killer (IEDs) are horrendous, taking care of our fine troops in this setting is gratifying. I currently practice in Shreveport, LA, with some ex-army docs. I grew up in Tonasket, WA, and my wife is from Twisp, WA. Not sure how I ended up down south. I enjoy the magazine greatly ...keep up the good work."

Jerry Dixon (MYC-72): "Garrett Hudson is a rookie this year at McCall. Rick Hudson, his dad, is in his last year. Hud has jumped 34 seasons without a break and, to my knowledge, has never had a serious injury. When I jumped in 1982, Garrett was two months old that June. After our qualifying run I got to hold him in my arms. Now he is 6' 4" and ready to jump from DC-3s with his father."

In the April 2006 issue of *Smokejumper*, I wrote: "**David Bruhn** (Associate), one of my best-ever runners, friend and Cdr. USN (Ret.), has just published his second book, *Wooden Ships and Iron Men: The U.S. Navy's Ocean Minesweepers, 1953-1994*." I'm guessing that minesweeper sailors are a pretty select small group, and one that was also a smokejumper even makes this a more unusual combination. Enter the "small world" with this email from **Gary Baker** (MSO-67) to David Bruhn:

"My name is Gary Baker and I am writing to inform you and Mr. Sheley that I was indeed a minesweep sailor (1960-62) aboard the USS Enhance, MSO 437 and a



smokejumper (MSO-67). A copy of your book arrived just today, and I immediately went to page 40 where you listed four ships that participated in exercises off Santa Rosa Island in 1970. They were all ships in my division: Leader (command ship), Excel, your ship, Enhance, and Guide. The only one missing was Lucid. I found out about your book in the pages of *Smokejumper* magazine in an item written by Chuck.

Smokejumpers will be gathering in Boise in early June for a reunion, and I plan to meet and visit with Chuck at that time. I am so happy to have discovered what appears to be everything I ever needed to know about my ship since I left it. After the Navy, I graduated in forestry from U of Montana and became a jumper after graduation. As much as I enjoyed my three years aboard the Enhance, I have to say that as exciting and enjoyable as it was, jumping was still the best job I ever had.

I look forward to reading your book and hope we can continue to correspond. Maybe Chuck can drag you to Boise."

Bob Ingram (MSO-59) is a new member to the NSA, and Bob would like to make contact with any of those he jumped with at Missoula (59-61) or West Yellowstone (62-64). You can contact Bob at: 815 Castle Ridge Rd., Austin, TX 78746 or call 512-914-2576.

"**Wild Bill**" **Yensen** (MYC-52): "Just finished (May) the Utah fence project on the Dixie N.F. I had a great crew! Jim Rush, Louie Uranga, Dave Hemry, Ken Kiser, Digger Daniels and myself. The Ranger was so impressed with our work he can't wait till next year."

NSA website in response to July 2004 article in *Smokejumper* magazine 'Smokejumper Wins Medal of Honor': "I gave you my word some time back I would tell you some more about Lt. Kenny Sisler, CMH, SOG, Dexter, Mo. By now you have found more SOG members that know him.

My contact was with SOG too. When they brought Kenny in, my contact was at Kam Duc near the border (to Laos). I checked Kenny for Classified Papers, Maps, Call Signs etc. Well, Kenny died at 29. Me and my contact are now 71 years old. God has been good to us. My contact was wounded bad the next month. Thank you for the SOG Photo and the write up. Are you a Smokejumper and a writer too?" Ben A. Gutierrez

In the July 2007 issue of *Smokejumper*, **Dave Wood** (RAC-66) wrote a great article titled "Hook Before You Leap." **Jim Damitio** (RAC-69), who also jumped that fire, responded with the following email to Dave:

"I just finished reading your account of my first fire jump in 1969 in which my partner, **Mike Goery** (RAC-

67), hooked up to a rubber band. That jump story has earned me a lot of free beer over the years. Your memories of that day are nearly exactly the same as mine, except there is more you may not know. I remember thinking, as I wedged my nervous, oversized self into the tiny door of that Beech, that all I had to do was what I had been trained to do. That is, get a good position, check my chute, check my partner, check my drift and keep my feet together on landing. Well, I got the first two done but when I looked for my partner, Mike was nowhere to be seen. I simply couldn't

find him and finally figured he had not jumped for some reason. It distracted me to the point that number four didn't get enough attention, and I missed the jump spot, squarely hitting the top of a Pine snag with my size 12 EE Whites. The top five-feet broke off and it, along with me and the 5A, crashed end over end through 30 feet of hard white branches before the chute caught on something just enough to somewhat slow the fall. Purely by chance my feet were the closest thing to the ground, and I hit it with them about four feet apart. So much for number five. I fell flat forward,

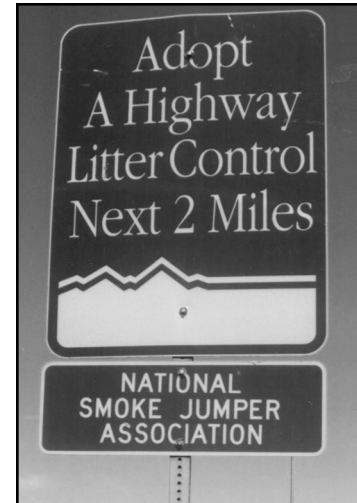
NSA Highway Pickup

On April 22nd, 2007, sixteen smokejumpers and three associates completed another spring litter pickup for the Montana Highway Dept. on Reserve Street in Missoula.

It was the fifth year for **Ted Nyquest** (MSO-54) leading the volunteers picking up a two-mile stretch assigned to the National Smokejumper Association. It is estimated there is approximately 150 seasons of smokejumping among this years volunteers.

The group cleaned up and left a more tidy stretch of highway and had fun recalling adventures and renewing acquaintances along the way.

Associates and their former job assignments were: Tom Blunn, Ranger at Kamiah, Idaho, Alvie Hinman, R-1 Contract Specialist, and Ron Larsen, R-1 Deputy Regional Forester. 🦋



Front L-R: Tom Blunn, Larry Nelsen, Roger Savage, Jim Deeds, Al Hinman. 2nd Row L-R: Ed Courtney, Paul May, Barry Hicks, Wally Small, Bud Clarke, Ted Nyquest, Dennis Lehfeldt, Paul Evenson. 3rd Row L-R: Greg Lee, Ron Larsen, Ed Courtney, Chuck Fricke, Willis Curdy and Jon McBride. (Courtesy Ted Nyquest)

knocking the wind out of me and filling my mask, nose and wide-open mouth with clouds of Central Oregon pumi-dust. As I regained control of my breathing and checked for fractures, the next thing I remember is your partner in the second stick, whose name I also cannot remember, landing a few feet from me in a small tree and screaming at me that Mike had jumped without hooking up his static line. As I tried to process that news, I was thinking things were really not going according to plan. I also remember being amazed to find Mike alive. He said that his reserve never did fill completely, and the investigation indicated the chute dragging through the trees and the steep slope kept him from serious injury. I suspect it really was the entity that looks out after all fools and smokejumpers. Thanks for the memories, Dave."

Tom Decker (IDC-64): "Chuck, I probably have said it before, but I just read some more of the latest journal and really have to hand it to you for one of the best publications going! I don't know if there's "awards" for such periodicals or not, but it's first rate. I receive two theological journals (pretty much unintelligible except to academia) and one from the US Army War College (keen on ribbon cuttings and fund raisers) and one from the 1st Infantry Division Association (a newspaper format with heavier paper and some color...and that one is pretty good...usually focused on the next reunion), but the NSA Journal is by far the better...and it's bigger."

Just before my wife and I started the 10-hour drive to the Boise Reunion, I got an email from **Fred Donner** (MSO-59) informing me of the passing of **Wallace "Pic" Littell** (MSO-44). I had just been recently communicating with Pic via email. He was a member of the 1947 Cornell College (Iowa) Wrestling Team that won the NCAA and AAU National Wrestling Championships in one of the largest upsets in NCAA history. In the Jan. 2004 issue of *Smokejumper*, I wrote about Pic and that incredible event in "Giant Killers-Bigger Than Hoosiers." I had met Pic at the CPS-103 reunion in Iowa seven years ago. The Cornell team was honored at a June 1, 2007, ceremony at the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater, Oklahoma. **Ben Conner** (NCSB-48) was also a member of that elite team. Ben passed away in April 2007. He and Pic both just missed getting their national championship rings after 60 years.

Chuck Sheley (CJ-59): If there are any Life Members whose caps are in need of replacement, please send a check for \$10.00 and I will mail you a brand-new replacement LM cap.

Bernie Nielsen (MYC-47): "To All the Organizers of the 2007 Reunion: I tried to thank everyone personally for such a great Smokejumper Reunion. But, just in case I missed somebody, thank you again for making this 2007 Reunion such a memorable event and for all the hard work that went into it."

Mike Martischang (NIFC-74) to **Jerry Ogawa** (MYC-67) and rest of reunion committee: "Thank you, all of you, who worked on making ideas become real, for creating and delivering such a memorable, well run and delivered NSA Smokejumper Reunion! The Boise State University venue

was great for handling all the stuff you set up and arranged for. The silent auction was a great idea, and I hope it made the NSA tons of dough. All the contributors deserve special thanks for their gifts. The loser-less raffle (clever, you are) of Smokejumper Smoked Imperial Porter was someone's GREAT idea and deserves a special attaboy(girl)."

Tom Boatner (FBX-80) will retire in October 07 from the BLM in Boise. His leadership in fire operations has been a tremendous asset to the BLM, and he will definitely be missed.

John Gould (FBX-80) has just accepted the head of the Alaska Fire Service in Fairbanks. Congratulations to John and to the AFS who are getting a very good leader.

J.R. Wissler (MSO-48) commenting on the death of his friend **Harry Noel** (MSO-48): "Harry and I started work for the Forest Service in July 1946 right after I returned from the U.S. Navy. We both put in two summers on districts (before jumping). In 1948 we became jumpers, training and living at Camp Menard. The Trimotor and Travelair took us to our fires."

It is always interesting to find out more background of the men and women that make up the smokejumping profession. Walking into my hotel at the Boise Reunion, I had the pleasure of meeting **Ken Chase** (ANC-67). Now, three weeks later, I get a reunion photo from **Cecil Hicks** (NCSB-62) of him and Ken. The caption includes: "Ken is also an Alaskan dog musher who ran the 1,000-mile Iditarod Dog Sled Race a record-setting 18 consecutive times."

Many of us were looking forward to Werner Herzog's movie "Rescue Dawn" which should put the tremendous escape story of **Gene DeBruin** (MSO-59), Dieter Dengler, Phisit Indradat and others on the screen for all to see. Unfortunately, the movie does not reflect the facts. Gene's brother, Jerry DeBruin, has written an article that is printed in this issue expanding upon the problems with the film. The complete story of Gene's and Phisit's capture, imprisonment and escape has been covered in *Smokejumper* magazine. Parts of Dieter Dengler's book "Escape From Laos" were incorporated into that story to further expand our background knowledge. It is hard for me to imagine why anyone would alter a story that is so riveting. As in most cases, the true story is better than any fictional account.

Doug Houston (RAC-73): "**Kelly Esterbrook** (RAC-86) is retiring from the USFS, Deschutes National Forest. Kelly made a big contribution to the Redmond Smokejumpers and to female smokejumpers with national presentations and a lot of recruitment efforts during her career. She was a great jumper and amazingly held up pretty darn well enduring packouts that weighed almost as much as she did. Enjoy your retirement."

Jack Ridgway (CJ-60): "I read in a recent issue of the 1963 demise (Air America C-46 crash) of **Gid Newton** (CJ-55). I first met Gid in 1961 at CJ. He was a returning veteran jumper who had been Airborne in the military. Gid was quiet and kept to himself but once you got to know him, he had a great sense of humor and knew lots of good Airborne lore and stories. One weekend a group of us arranged for a fishing boat charter in Crescent City.

Gid said he was very susceptible to motion sickness and was able to get some pills from the local pharmacist. Even with the pills, Gid had doubt about the effectiveness of the medication.

Sure enough just after the twisting drive down to Crescent City, Gid jumped out of the car, ran to the boat and barfed overboard. He was OK for the rest of the day. We had a good catch of Sea Bass which we took back to the base.”

Jack Helle (MYC-54) in response to “Where are These Guys?” in July 2006 issue of *Smokeyjumper*: **Bill Klunder** (MYC-55) was an Army vet just back from Korea when he enrolled at the U of Idaho where we were roommates. He got his degree in dentistry from the U of Minnesota and practiced in Billings, Montana, for 10-15 years. He died of a heart attack in the 1980s in Alaska.

“Bill’s high school friend, **Verlon Prafke** (MYC-56), was also a Korean War vet and a student at the U of Idaho. Verlon was killed in an accident in the 1960s near the Great Lakes. He was setting up a field camp and tossed a rope attached to a radio antennae over some newly installed power lines that were not visible in the fog. He had set up the same camp for several years for lamprey research.”

We are trying to put together a centerfold of pictures from the Boise Reunion and are looking for close-up photos showing faces. If you have any that we can use, please send them along. Send prints to **Johnny Kirkley**, P.O. Box 228, Waimanalo, HI, 96795. You can email him at: johnny@alohafirst.com

Bruce Egger (MYC-46): “**Chuck Whitt** (MYC-46) died in December 2006 in Reno, Nevada. I met Chuck in the 5th grade in 1933 at Garfield School in Boise. We went to Junior High and Boise High together until my family moved to McCall in 1941. In 1946 we were both with the second group of McCall jumpers who trained at Missoula.

On Labor Day 1946, Chuck broke a bone in one of his feet on a fire jump in the Payette N. F. I was one of the three who carried him on a stretcher to the nearest road. The injury ended his jumping career.

We both studied forestry at Boise State and then at the University of Idaho, where I graduated in 1951. We both

worked for the Forest Service.

I was working on the Fremont N. F. in 1960 and took my family to McCall to visit my parents. I heard that Chuck was working on the Cascade District of the Boise N. F., and we stopped to visit him and his family.

Chuck transferred to Region 6 and served as a fisheries biologist on the Mt. Hood N. F. from the mid-70s until he retired. I saw him at the 1998 reunion in McCall.”

Bruce Marshall (NIFC-71): “I attended the Boise Reunion in June. It was my first association with the jumpers in 30 years. What a wonderful experience! My sincere appreciation to all those who organized the event.”

Keeping our membership numbers up is a never-ending job. Current Membership Chairman, **John McDaniel** (CJ-57), hardly ever takes a day off from his job that involves sending out the quarterly renewal notices and making 2nd and 3rd contacts to those who do not respond.

A couple years back, then NSA President **Carl Gidlund** (MSO-58), proposed a *half-price*, gift membership that members could use to get others into the organization. That offer is still on the table and the details are printed in another part of this issue.

Jerry Dixon (MYC-71) has taken advantage of this over the years and gifted at least ten jumpers and USFS personnel with a membership.

All of us probably have one or two close friends whom we met as jumpers. If they are not members, please take the time to gift them a membership. They try it, and they might continue.

We are at an all-time high for jumper membership but it is a battle to stay there with the few each quarter that do not renew. We need your help to keep us strong and active for the years to come.

If you haven’t already done so, think of the long-term benefit to the organization that the Life Memberships contribute. With the wise investment leadership of Board Member **John Helmer** (RDD-59), our investments have been returning over 25%. Please don’t think of the number of magazines you can get before you die vs. the cost of the Life Membership. The success of this organization 15 years from now can be improved with your actions today. 🙏

The following poem by Mike Fitzpatrick was read at the Saturday night dinner at the Boise Reunion, and there have been many requests to see it in print.

Smokejumping 1975 – 1995

by Mike Fitzpatrick (Redmond '78)

By the 70s jumpers had gone every place.
Lots went to SE Asia, one went to outer space.
There was lots going on in the fire world that we knew.
Here’s what I saw and some of its true.

In Region 6 after doing some study and such,
They decided that four jump bases were really too much.

So they shut down La Grande and boarded up Cave
And looked north, to Winthrop, some more money to save.
It wasn't out of malice but their twisted sense of duty
But they hadn't planned on crossing swords with Bill Moody.
Some calls were made and down came the order
To leave Winthrop alone protecting the border.

So some bases were closed
It seemed like a mini disaster
A lot of jumpers were like Ronin – warriors without masters.
So they headed up north to work in Alaska.

That program was growing and they had a plan
To develop a parachute a jumper could land
When the wind was howling and the fire was, too.
It wouldn't be easy but the attitude was "can do."

They invented a system that showed lots of smarts
There was plenty of forward speed AND moving parts.
The program was ambitious and created lots of tension
That was compounded by something they called para-cension.

The whole issue was contentious and bitterly divisive
Both sides were looking for something decisive.
BLMs job was to show that a square beat a round
Without a jumper punching a hole in the ground.
The FS said a person could get hurt
And there's nothing out there worth a jumper eating high-speed dirt.

Both sides could say that the other was wrong
But let's face it, competition is what makes us strong.
The hawks got the vision so on a rabbit it can feed
But the rabbit has the moves and plenty of speed.
Without pushing each other where would they be?
Probably extinct. But I have to say
For any idea that's bold there is always a price to pay.

By the 80s something else in smokejumping was new
Women were saying "We can do that job, too."
The guys weren't ecstatic, but that wasn't a snub
They just didn't want any girls in the club.
But women are tough, don't ever doubt it.
They said "We'd like your support, but we can succeed without it."
They passed every test and made all the jumps
And the guys who didn't like it ended up looking like chumps.
In order to succeed women beat out the odds and overcame the pain
And that fairly describes, I think, the smokejumper game.

By the 80s the airfleet was long in the tooth.
Some of the Dougs had been built when Lufkin was a youth.
Everyone liked them but it was asking for slaughter
And most bases contracted to fly the twin otter.
In Alaska the Volpar was real fast and all
But it had this bad habit of wanting to stall.
You hated to picture the crash and the burn
Every time the airplane made a left turn.
But wiser men said that the Doug was a gem
And if we can't replace it lets try to rebuild 'em.
Two were acquired both beauties for sure
So they said lets go out and pick up some more.

The Air Force had Sherpas they were ready to sell
So we got some of them and they worked out well.
In the future when they go out looking for more
All we ask is for something
That'll let you stand up in the door.

In 86 the BLM program became a national wonder
When they moved down to Boise the Great Basin to plunder.
There were lots of hard feelings about reopening there
And jumping fires in the land of the green and the home of the bear.
So BLM stood by in the Basin and out went the word
All they were saving was the national jackrabbit herd.
But they pressed on regardless and established that billet
The motto was – first create the need and then fill it.

And again at South Canyon good people died
Once again we remembered our world had a serious side.
It wasn't the first time and it wasn't for naught
For every disaster a lesson was taught.
A lesson that says nothings for free
That all life's a risk
With no guarantees.

Another thing I started seeing along with jumpers beating on flames
Was jumpers on computers and they weren't playing games.
People were going to fires and working themselves off their feet
Then going back to the loft to edit a spreadsheet.

I started running into jumpers who, with great erudition,
would tell me all about Rothermel's goddamned equation.
These people were planning burns and predicting rates of spread.
They could tell lots more about a fire than just the tail and the head.
They'd take weather at 2 and tell you by 3
Where at noon tomorrow that fire was gonna be.

Jumpers were Fire Staffs, Directors, ICs and Pilots
The inmates were running the asylum and there weren't any riots.

Every time someone did a study with the intention to roast us
They found out that jumpers still get there firstest with the mostest.
There's not a job we can't do once our banners unfurled
If we could get up before noon we could conquer the world.
At every level in fire our people do more
I guess that comes from going out the door
On good deals and bad
And asking for more.

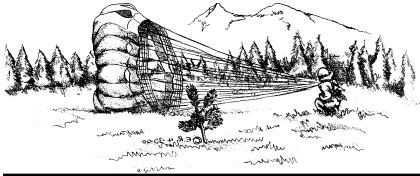
Back before the beginning, back in 1925
(I can tell you now because none of those old timers are alive)
They thought it possible to get from a plane to a fire.
But the question was "Are there enough crazy people to hire
To do such a thing without getting killed?"
But once the program began those positions were filled.

But what's really amazing and so rarely understood,
Is how it happened they found so many so good.
For every cull that got on that you'd just as soon cast aside
There were a hundred you were proud to have at your side.

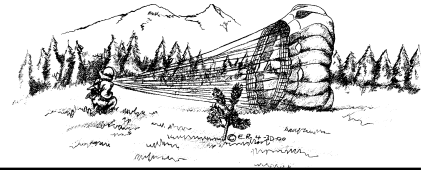
It's inevitable, I guess, that one can't always be a leaper.
The hours get too long and the hills get too steeper

And you started thinking your next IC
Might be the grim reaper.
And some jumpers figured they could do just as well
At something besides being a day-laborer in hell.

So knock back your whiskey and drink down your beer
And let's give this great job one mighty cheer.
The jobs in good hands don't worry about that
In 50 years there'll be other old-timers here
Some old lies to tell and the old songs to sing
About the greatest job in the world
And when they were kings.



Checking the Canopy



Stan Tate
(McCall '53)

T.J. THOMPSON (MSO-55) wrote a great story (*Smokejumper*, April 2007) about Richard A. "Paperlegs" Peterson (MYC-47). In response, I wanted to say that "Paperlegs" was, perhaps, the best friend any McCall jumper ever had. Someone should write a book about his extraordinary life.

An example of his generosity involved his brand new motorcycle. One evening at jumper camp my wife, Lynn, and daughter, Teri, and I were out for a walk. Up zooms "Paper" on a huge shiny new cycle.

"Here, take it for a ride," he said to me.

"Great. Mind if I take my wife with me? Would you hold our baby?"

"OK."

Never mind the fact that I had never driven a motorcycle or that our baby was only four months old. We took off in a cloud of smoke down the gravel road. Later, back at camp, "Paperlegs" was smiling and gently holding our little daughter. By the grace of God, we made it back in

one piece, perhaps much to "Paperlegs" relief. Teri was cuddled up in his husky arms as happy as I had ever seen her.

There will never be another "Paperlegs." I couldn't be at his funeral, but Shep Johnson (MYC-56) read the homily that I wrote.

Paperlegs Peterson-A Most Generous Person

Stan Tate 10/18/99

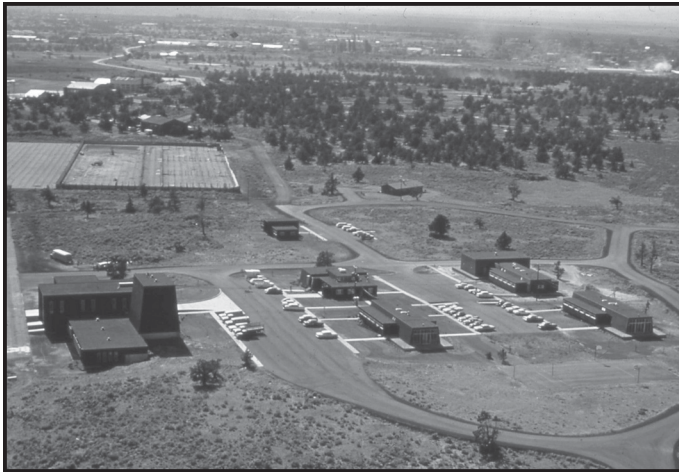
I had the good fortune to make my first fire jump near Loon Lake with Paperlegs, Max Allen and Merle Cables. I was very nervous. Pete was aware of my feelings when I saw the rocky terrain below.

He put his arm around me. He shouted that he would jump first and, when he was down on the ground in that very small clearing, would talk me down. He landed perfectly in the clearing. Soon I jumped, although I was half unconscious. When I got squared around, sure enough I could hear him yelling instructions on how to get into the only clearing around. He talked to me all the way down, and I ended up safely about 25 feet from him. "I told you I'd get you here," he said with a big grin.

From the first day I came to McCall I wanted to be like Pete—I think we all did. He was the very life of our organization. His humor and generosity followed him in everything he did or said. I can feel his warm presence right now. There will never be another Paperlegs.

He took good care of me on my first jump. I believe Almighty God is taking good care of him as he enters his new eternal venture. Jesus loved persons like Pete who were courageous yet humble, who were generous while caring for others. He will be received well for his life devoted to helping others find good landings.

Paper guided me on my first jump and will continue to guide all of us old jumpers throughout our lives. When two jumpers get together, we will always talk a little about our beloved Paperlegs, no matter what else we talk about. His wonderful life will guide us safely until someday he will be on the ground waiting for us to arrive. And I am confident our Lord was guiding him last week to a good landing and met him with the words, "Well done, well done, Pete." 🙏



*Redmond Air Center
Late 1960*



Loading DC-3 For Fire 1966



B-17 Retardant Drop 1966



Oregon DC-3 Fire Jump



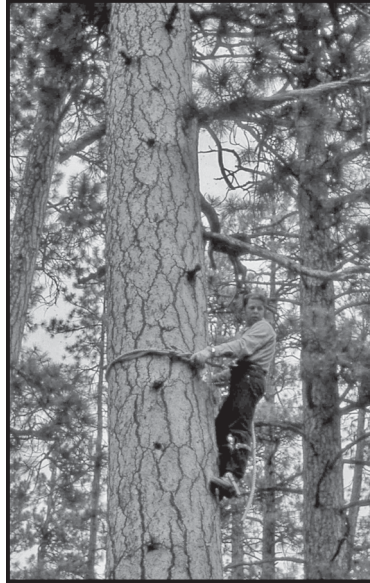
*Front : Smokey Cranfill, Bill Welch & Dave Wood
Back: Norm Prinz & Dave Laws*



Dave Wood Parakite Training 1967



Practice Jump 1967



Rookie Tree Climbing 1970



Norm Prinz & Dave Wood 1967



Redmond Air Center Photos

Courtesy Dave Wood Collection



Redmond Jumper's "Gobi" Imitation After Official Photo 1966

Layout Design by Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

A TIP OF THE HARD HAT to the reunion committee for a job well done! I know from experience that planning and carrying out an event like this is a lot of hard work. Just finding space to hold an event of this size and negotiating meal prices is a major undertaking. It is very difficult to strike a balance between offering a high quality experience and keeping the cost of registration low. The Association and the Reunion Committee did an excellent job of keeping the costs low. I was able to meet many of you for the first time and spend time with old friends and colleagues. The comments I received on this magazine were overwhelmingly positive, and my batteries have been recharged. I was especially proud and moved by the standing ovations at the Saturday evening banquet for President Emeritus **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40), **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49) and Sergeant **Alvin L. Ferguson** (PNOR-45). I am sure planning for the next reunion in Redding is

already underway.

In this column I have mentioned the Basin Creek logging project in the Highlands south of Butte, Montana, several times. The watershed provides 40% of Butte's drinking water. On the way home from Boise, I drove through the area myself to have a look. To my untrained eye, the area looks like a ticking time bomb. I cannot estimate the number of beetle killed trees per acre and the understory is very thick. The Native Ecosystems Council, the Wildwest Institute and the Alliance for the Wild Rockies lost an appeal to the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Logging to protect this area from a massive wildfire was scheduled to begin in late June.

Lately I have been wondering who would take the place of pilots **Kenny Roth**, **Jim Larkin** and **Denny Lynch** who have all flown over the horizon for the last time over the past year or so. I was really inspired by an article written by Mary Pickett (*Smokejumper* July 2007) in the Billings, Montana Gazette about elementary school teacher Patrick Kenney and six female students—5 middle school students and one elementary school student who are finishing up the restoration of a 1932 Pietenpol airplane. Kenney is a pilot himself. The plane was built by the late David Comstock, a well known Montana pilot who left money in his estate for the restoration project. Work began in March 2006 in the Experimental Aircraft Association hangar at Logan International Airport. The students learned welding, varnishing and

stitching fabric, along with rebuilding a Ford Model-A engine. One student put in over 400 hours on the project and the others put in hundreds of hours as well. Several of the kids are contemplating careers in aviation, the military and engineering. The restored plane was placed in the Musselshell County Historical Museum in Roundup, Montana. To read the entire article point your browser to: http://www.billingsgazette.net/articles/2007/06/24/features/magazine/20-plane_g.txt. These kids are our future!

Speaking of the future, I heard 267 people tested under the Montana Firefighter Testing Consortium in June. The consortium includes the Butte, Billings, Bozeman, Miles City, Kalispell, Great Falls, Helena, Lockwood, Missoula and Missoula Rural Fire Departments. I doubt that 10% of the people who tested will land a municipal job in Montana in the next two years. There simply aren't that many jobs out there. While I don't know if any State or Federal agencies had representatives there, they should be looking at some of these people. This summer there were about 40 out of 200 wildland engines out of service in California because there simply weren't any qualified people to staff them. Their labor shortage is here and it's only going to get far worse. Government at all levels is going to have to become aggressive in recruiting and retaining wildland firefighters.

"The universe is wider than our view of it."—Henry David Thoreau 🌲

A Tribute To Fred Brauer

by Ron Stoleson (Missoula '56)

He's one of those few who are deeply admired and loved by those he supervised. He was and is, a "Jumper's Jumper." At a noon luncheon in Missoula in 2004, attended by about forty ex-jumpers, he was given a plaque designed and crafted by **Vance Warren** (MSO-54). The plaque contained the words, "We came as boys and left as men" and was a fitting tribute to a person who is still idolized by many of the "boys" who were privileged to work for him.

Fred O. Brauer joined the "Parachute Project" in 1941 at Missoula, Montana. He had much to tell of the Project's progress from the days of the "Eagle" parachute to those of the FS-3.

Fred grew up in Montana, going to high school at Missoula County High where his athleticism earned him a football scholarship to Montana State University (now known as the University of Montana). Fred took up studies at the University in 1938 and majored in Journalism. He had worked summers for the Forest Service fighting forest fires on the Bonita Ranger District on the Lolo National Forest in 1934, at the age of 17, and for the Seeley Lake Ranger District during the 1937-1939 seasons.

The Alternate Ranger he worked for at Seeley Lake was **Merle Lundrigan** (MSO-41), who would later become the "Parachute Project" leader in Missoula and who hired Fred in 1941, putting him in charge of physical training for the smokejumpers. The training assignment fit in well with Fred's athletic background as a football player for MSU. At MSU Fred enlisted the help of their Athletic Department's trainer, **Nasby Rhinehart**, to design a physical training regime for the jumpers. Nasby's help resulted in "the rack" (some called it the torture rack), a device for exercising the leg and stomach muscles.

In 1941, when Fred joined the outfit, there were 26 jumpers at Missoula organized into three squads. After group training at Ninemile, one squad was stationed at Stoney Creek Civilian Conservation Corps camp on the Lolo National Forest with **Francis Lufkin** as foreman. The second squad was based at Big Prairie, a fly-in ranger station on the Flathead National Forest, with **Dick Lynch** (MSO-40) as squadleader and **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) as Rigger. The third squad was at Moose Creek, another fly-in station on the Nez Perce N.F., with **Rufus Robinson** (MSO-40) as squadleader and **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) as rigger.

Also, in 1941, **Frank Derry** (NCSB-40), **Chet Derry** (MSO-40) and **Glenn Smith** (NCSB-40) were a part of the project and responsible for the development of equipment necessary for the project's success, a job Fred felt never got the recognition it deserved. That winter brought about the development of the static line and the "Derry Slots," a parachute canopy modification that allowed directional

control of the 28-foot parachute that was being favored over the Eagle because of its lesser opening shock. The 28-foot chute was a circular, flat canopy and was made of nylon, not the silk used in the Eagle. Silk was very tasty to grasshoppers and, on more than one occasion, parachutes left out in the open after a fire jump had multiple holes chewed in them by the hoppers. The Eagle parachute, which the 28-foot nylon canopy would replace, came in two sizes: a 30-footer used as a main and a 27-footer used as a reserve. Fred used the 27-footer as a main because it had much less opening shock than the 30-footer.

As a result of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Fred's journalism education was cut short and he volunteered for service in the Army Air Corps but wasn't called to active duty until April 1942, when space was available for him to enter pilot training. During the winter of '41, Fred, along with **Wag Dodge** (MSO-41), was hired by Paramount Studios to make some jumps that would be filmed for use in a movie Paramount was making titled "The Forest Ranger," starring **Fred McMurry** and **Paulette Goddard**. They each made 10 jumps and were paid the decent wage (in those days) of \$35/jump.



Fred Brauer 1946 (Courtesy Wally Henderson)



1st Lt. Fred Brauer May 1944
(NSA File)

When called up by the Army, Fred went to the Southeast Training Command with three others from Montana. One was a professional cowboy and another ended up practicing medicine as a doctor in Missoula.

After basic training, Fred was assigned to fighter pilot training but, when it became obvious that a large number of troop carrier pilots would be needed for the final assault on Germany, he was reassigned to twin engine training at Bergstrom Field at Alliance, Nebraska. He was with the 1st Troop Carrier Group, 93rd Squadron. The aircraft he trained in was the

C-47 (DC-3 to many of you jumpers). Following training, he flew in North Africa for three weeks but was then based in England where he flew missions to Belgium, France and Holland. One mission he flew was of historic proportions, coming as it did immediately prior to the D-Day invasion. It involved dropping troops of the 101st Airborne Division (commanded by General Gavin) at 0115 hours on June 6 (Fred remembered those dates and times), in the vicinity of the town of Ste. Mere Eglise, a name well known to those who have read about D-Day or have seen the movie "The Longest Day." Many will remember the airborne trooper snagging his chute on the church steeple in that town and hanging there while the Germans prowled the streets beneath him. The flight Fred made that night with eight other C-47s was the furthest penetration eastward of any allied air transports on that date.

Following his flight to drop the airborne troops, Fred was assigned the mission to drop some engineers in a Horsa Glider to build an airfield for the evacuation of troops from the front. The airfield was built and Fred ended up flying wounded American soldiers from that field. Fred recalls an instance when a German officer was included with the wounded soldiers. He had to restrain a wounded airborne soldier from killing the German officer.

Fred ended his time in Europe with 1500 hours in the C-47 and with many medals, including the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, seven major battle stars and the Distinguished Flying Cross. The latter was awarded to him for successfully leading a flight towing gliders full of supplies for relief of the besieged airborne units in the town of Bastogne. At least three men on the ground that day benefited from Fred's heroism and would later become smokejumpers. One, **David Navon** (MSO-49), although surviving Bastogne, would later lose his life in 1949 on the Mann Gulch Fire in Montana after parachuting from a C-47. Another, **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46), became a leader of the McCall

Smokejumpers and would share the stage with Fred in welcoming President Eisenhower (the commander of the European Theater of Operations in WW-II) to the dedication of the Aerial Fire Depot in Missoula in September of 1954. The third was **Bob Crowe** (MSO-46). Two days after Fred's relief flight, Patton broke through and relieved the besieged troopers.

In 1945, Fred was overdue to be rotated home after amassing 117 points while flying in the European Theatre. Instead, he was told he would be going to the Pacific Theatre to help in the final assault on Japan. President Truman's decision to drop two atomic bombs resulted in Japan's unconditional surrender, and Fred never had to go to the Pacific. Instead, he was discharged from the service. Upon returning home to Montana, he turned down an offer to fly for Johnson Flying Service (he couldn't feed a family on a part-time job) and, instead, returned to the smokejumping profession in November of 1945. He had attained the rank of Major during his stint in the Army and, after leaving, had also passed up a chance to join the Operations branch of the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency, who wanted someone with a parachuting and piloting background. Again, Fred didn't feel he could take this position in consideration of his family. Another jumper from Missoula would take that position and go on to recruit many other smokejumpers to the Agency.

In his return to civilian life, Fred felt strongly about the recognition of veterans with whom he had served. Working with the local Veterans of Foreign Wars grievance committee and with support from Ralph Starr, the Mayor of Missoula, Fred fought for the rehiring of veterans to the Forest Service (as was the law). In doing so, he probably strained his relations with some of the jumpers who hadn't served and some personnel types in the Forest Service Regional Office in Missoula (see the article in the July 2004 *Smokejumper Magazine* re: Wag Dodge). This volunteer work was mostly completed by mid-1946, but Fred believed its effects followed him in his future years as a Forest Service employee.

The smokejumper operation to which Fred returned had been well served by the Conscientious Objectors. However, there were still needs for some defined, consistent training standards. Filling those needs was the focus of Fred's work upon return to smokejumping. In 1946 the barracks were moved from Camp Menard at Ninemile to the Cannery Building at the Missoula Fairgrounds. Frank Derry left the Project in 1947, and the base was moved to the new Aerial Fire Depot in 1954.

Fred worked for the project, getting a formal training program instituted that included a seven training jump routine—the first two in big meadows and the third a smaller meadow. Among the seven there was a timber jump, where it was expected that the trainee would hang up in a tree and practice a letdown and retrieval of the chute.

Fred was assigned the Project Superintendent job in 1950 but recalls the difficult time of 1949 when the Mann Gulch disaster happened. During our interview, he had special praise for the job done by **Harold "Skip" Stratton** (MSO-

47), who was assigned the job of recovering the bodies of those lost in the fire.

An interesting event happened in 1958 when Fred turned 40 and was no longer, by the regulations at the time, qualified to jump. Even so, he suited up for a fire and got on board the DC-3. Before the plane headed out, someone ratted him out to the Regional Air Officer and he was forced to disembark. Needless to say, he had some strong words about who he thought was the rat.

In 1959, Fred was made Assistant Regional Air Officer, and his duties were primarily involved with the retardant program, that had just begun, and helicopters, also a relatively new program. That August, almost 10 years and one day from the Mann Gulch tragedy, the crash of a Trimotor at Moose Creek killed two jumpers and injured the pilot, a Forest Supervisor and a jumper foreman. The Supervisor died later. Fred was the Forest Service official who traveled to Grangeville, Idaho, visiting the injured jumper in the hospital. 40 years later he was a major player in getting a memorial placed at Moose Creek to recognize the fallen jumpers. Fred always took care of his "boys."

Fred ended his Forest Service career in R-5 at the San Dimas Equipment Development Center where he was involved in the development of Aerial Equipment. While there, he was also involved with the "Lassie" show and worked with Rudd Wetherwax on those productions. He left San Dimas in 1965 to return to his beloved Missoula and organized and began the Lolo View Manor mobile home park off Reserve Street. The park grew to 69 spaces and a 10,000 square foot commercial building called the Harriett Center (named after his wife of 37 years). His son John would later help him manage the trailer park.

He maintained contact with many of the Missoula jumpers, and in 1999 began an annual ritual of sending off the NSA members for the Art Jukkala Trail projects. He gave his usual "good deal" speech after having dinner with his boys.

Fred was a faithful attendee of all the jumper reunions but was missing at Boise this year. **Fritz Wolfrum** (MSO-53) asked people attending to sign a placemat for Fred and was going to take it to him. Fred passed away on Monday, June 25, 2007 at age 89. Hope he got to read the placemat. 🙏

The Redding Class of 1964 And Rich Farmer

by Kris Kristofors (Redding '64)

Many thanks to the Redding Smokejumpers who did an outstanding job planning, organizing and putting on the 50th Redding Smokejumper Base anniversary on May 19th.

It was good to see many jumpers from earlier years. We were a much more motley crew in 1964 when **Rich Farmer** and I were "poags" (rookies). Many of Redding's 1964 class, **Jim Klump**, Rich Farmer, **Tom Adams**, **Ray Morrow**, **Dirk Chandler**, **Don Spence**, **Richard Grandalski**, **Bob Conner**, and others went on to long important careers with the USFS. For years afterward, one could always count on running into them on major fires or at the jump base when they came in to jump as retreats. They were a significant part of the western states fire scene for many years. The class of 64 was a bunch of characters. If one did not have a nickname to begin with, you had one in a short period of time bestowed either by **Bob Kersh** or fellow jumpers.

At the celebration Jim Klump reminded me that Rich Farmer got pegged with the nickname, "Barfy," after he threw up the contents of his stomach on a cargo run in the Sespe Wilderness Area on the Los Padres National Forest. Rich always spoke in a solemn voice and put a high degree of gravitas on anything he was speaking about. Only by the twinkle in his eye or by his laugh at the end of one of his statements, could you tell he wasn't entirely serious.

He also was one of the most competitive guys you'll ever meet. During the evenings at the barracks, we played a lot of basketball. I do not recollect ever winning a game. But I came up with a plan for an activity at which I felt I could do better than Farmer. One morning we drove west of Redding up a logging road somewhere between the Northern Yolla Bollys and the Trinity River drainage. We hiked over a ridge and down to a fork of the Trinity River, which had a bunch of salmon in small pools. It was one of the most pristine sites I had ever seen with steep banks, heavy timber, clear water, and filtered sunshine in the canyon.

It did not take me long to get my limit. I don't remember if Rich got his limit, but I do remember him mumbling about my heavy-duty fishing tackle. We dropped our load of fish at his relatives in Hayfork and headed back to the jump base. A year later, I went back and found the same spot, which was difficult since the 1964 floods had completely changed the river. This time there were no salmon, but steelhead instead. I did not do well fishing this time, but I spent some time taking in the pristine location before returning to Covelo. A number of years later when Rich was the Fire Management Officer at Fort Jones, I wrote to him to get fishing recommendations for the area. He never replied. I guess some people are just sore losers. 🙏

Pioneering Smokejumper Ed Thorsrud Wasn't Easily Rattled

by Perry Backus, Staff Writer, The Missoulian Newspaper (Missoula, Mont.)

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Sometime in the mid-1960s, Ed Thorsrud (MSO-42) climbed into his converted Navy torpedo TBM armed with a full load of fire retardant and roared into the skies above Missoula.

On that particular day he was headed toward Helena where his payload was needed to help quell another wildfire.

The trouble started somewhere over the tiny town of Potomac. An engine cylinder blew and suddenly there was oil and flames shooting over his windshield.

"He shut off the mixture which put out the flames," his younger brother Gar remembers. "Then he pushed back the cage and dropped his load of 800 gallons of retardant. He was going to jump, but then he started thinking about how much money he owed the bank."

That's when Thorsrud spied the meadow just across the road from the Potomac Bar.

"The TBM has a glide ratio of a rock," Gar said. "He made one large sweeping circle before putting the TBM down just across from the Potomac Bar. He skidded about 100 yards to a stop. He got out and walked over to the bar and called in to let everyone know he was all right.

"I happened to be in Missoula at the time when he radioed into the base that he had an emergency. Over the loudspeaker they announced he was okay saying he'd just called in from the Potomac Bar."

Thorsrud landed in a field owned by his good friend, Pat Hayes.

The story passed around between family and friend has Hayes driving up on his tractor as Thorsrud climbed out of airplane.

"Howdy, Ed," Hayes was purported to say.

"Howdy, Pat," was Ed's reply.

No matter who's telling that tale, it always ends with a knowing smile.

That's how everyone remembers pioneering mountain pilot, smokejumper, and talented skier Ed Thorsrud—unshakeable and quiet.

"I can't remember a time that I ever saw him rattled," said his longtime good friend Ray Parker.

That wasn't because he lived a quiet, safe life. The son of Norwegian immigrants whose family settled in Missoula in 1936, Thorsrud never stepped back from a challenge.

His Norwegian skiing heritage led him high into Montana's backcountry long before ski lifts made the journey easy. He competed in high school and college in both Nordic and alpine events.

After graduating from high school, he trained as a

smokejumper at a time when most people in the country had never heard the term. He was a member of the second group of jumpers in this country's history.

Fred Brauer of Missoula was there to greet him.

"He came into my squad at Seeley Lake in 1942," Brauer remembers. "It was the second year of the smokejumper project ... he was just a really good man who knew how to work. That wasn't always the case. I suppose I brought in over 400 through my years as a smokejumper.

"Most of them didn't know how to work, but Ed already knew. He'd worked for years with his dad in the carpentry business. He came from a family of really good carpenters."

Brauer jumped with Thorsrud on a fire on the Nez Perce Forest's Boxcar Mountain. He remembers it to this day.

"We made short work of it," he said. "It was right on top of a ridge and we got a line around it quickly. The ground crew came in and we left the next morning for Moose Creek—a 27-mile hike. It took us a couple of days to get there."

That wasn't Brauer's most memorable experience with Thorsrud.

"My favorite experience with Ed came with pounding some nails," he said. "We were staying at the Boy Scout camp at Seeley and I asked him if he could build a pump house. Ed said, 'Sure.' He and a crew built a real nice pump house. It's still there at the scout camp."

Both men volunteered to serve as pilots during World War II.

"He never really talked about any of his experiences over there and I'm sure he saw the same kinds of things resupplying troops that I did," Brauer said. "He never talked about it, but I didn't either. I'm sure he was proud of his service."

Gar said his brother ferried C-47s to England initially. Right after D-Day—June 6, 1944—Thorsrud started resupplying Patton's Army as part of the 314 Troop Carrier Group.

"He was landing C-47s on roads and pastures," Gar said. "It must have been pretty exciting at times."

During the Allies final push into Germany, Thorsrud towed a pair of gliders containing troops and supplies of the First Allied Airborne Army over the Rhein River that landed near an important transportation hub at Wesel, Germany. Thorsrud received the Air Medal and several other citations for his efforts.

Not long after the war ended, Thorsrud found himself flying occupation troops into Oslo, Norway. On one trip, he

had the chance to tip his wings over the hometowns of his parents.

“He made a low pass over both cities and he said there were people outside waving flags,” Gar said. “He was pretty proud of that.”

Thorsrud came home and earned a business degree at the University of Montana.

He continued to fly—first for Johnson Flying Service, and later he bought his own airplanes, including the TBM and a B-25. His backcountry flying skills were legendary.

No airstrip was too short or remote for Thorsrud to land.

Perhaps the best example came after Johnson Flying Service received a request to fly in a generator to a remote Idaho airstrip called the Flying B.

“The only plane they had that was large enough to carry it was the Doug (DC-3),” Gar said. “No one had ever taken that big of an airplane into that strip before. Ed flew in first with a light plane and checked it out. He thought if he came back in the early morning, he could land and that’s what he did.

“People couldn’t believe it. No airplane that large had ever landed there before or probably since ... he left big footsteps for everybody to follow,” Gar said.

Thorsrud spent years flying slurry missions in Alaska and other states.

Former Johnson Flying Service employee Chub Riggelman remembers Thorsrud was always quick to smile.

Once day, Riggelman volunteered to stand by as the fire guard as Thorsrud cranked up the DC-2 he was flying that day. As the engines revved, there was suddenly a huge explosion as the engine backfired.

“It blew this piece of exhaust out of the engine,” Riggelman said. “Ed stuck his head out of the window and with a big grin on his face said, ‘Is it supposed to do that?’

“That was Ed. He was just a great guy to be around.”

His best friend, Ray Parker, always appreciated Thorsrud’s sense of humor.

Back in the 1950s, when the two were members of the University of Montana ski team, they spent a day practicing their jumps at Big Mountain with a contingent of the Norwegian national ski team.

While Parker was standing at the top of the jump preparing to make his run, he noticed that a bunch of the Norwegians gathered at the bottom were yelling something. Parker started down the slope only to hit a big rut and crash.

As he was limping off the hill, he looked over at Thorsrud and asked, “Ed, what were those guys yelling about?”

Ed’s reply, “Watch out for that rut.”

“Thanks, Ed.”

Thorsrud retained that sense of humor right up to March 27, the day he died.

“There seemed to be a laugh in everything he did,” Parker said. “Even on his deathbed, we shared stories about the good times we had. He had a hard time hearing sometimes, but we’d told those stories enough that we both had a good laugh.”

Parker said their wild days slowed a bit after they both

married and began raising their families, but they always remained very close.

One of his family’s favorite memories to this day came after Thorsrud loaded up the Parkers and his wife and four children into the B-25.

“It was a beautiful day. That B-25 had that glass nose,” Parker said. “We flew over the Snowbowl and then Missions. It was such a nice experience for all of us ... we were always more than friends. We call each other family.”

Family was always an important part of Thorsrud’s life.

Eight days before he died, Thorsrud convinced his family to take him to watch his grandson, Casey Higgins, help lead the Bantam B Missoula Bruins hockey team to a state title.

“He’d been bugging us about taking him,” said Thorsrud’s daughter, Betty Higgins. “We were sitting along the edge watching the game when Casey got a breakaway right in front of us and scored. It was like it was scripted. He got to see it all.”

“He saw that one last game and it just left us all with a great feeling,” said Darci Thorsrud, another daughter. “He was just so excited to be able to go. He was just always there for us ... he always used to tip his wing when he’d fly over our house. We’d always go running out of the house to wave.”

“What I remember most is Dad was always waiting for us when we came home,” Higgins said. “He’d always be on the deck at the cabin waiting for us to come home. He was just always there.” 🦋

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*.

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.



Smokejumpers Help Forest Service Memorialize Mann Gulch

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

THERE'S A CANYON ON THE Missouri River 20 miles north of Helena, Montana, that has a very special meaning to wildland firefighters, especially smokejumpers. To those parachuting firefighters, that canyon, Mann Gulch, is sacred ground.

It was there on Aug. 5, 1949, that a fire blew up and overran 13 men, 12 of them jumpers. Two smokejumpers, **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49) and **Walter Rumsey** (MSO-49), outran the fire and escaped into the next canyon north, now known as "Rescue Gulch."

Their foreman, **Wagner "Wag" Dodge** (MSO-41), built an escape fire, then lay down in it as the main fire burned over and around him. He was unscathed.

James Harrison (MSO-47) had been a smokejumper during the previous two fire seasons. He'd foregone the 1949 jump season because his mother thought parachuting to forest fires was too dangerous, so in 1949 he signed on as a fire guard on the Helena National Forest.

From his duty station at the Meriwether Campground in the next canyon to the south, Harrison hiked up Meriwether Gulch, then down into Mann Gulch, there to die with his old comrades.

The death of those 13 remains the greatest single loss suffered by the smokejumper organization, now in its 67th year.

The tragedy was recounted in the 1992 best-selling book "Young Men and Fire" by the late Norman Maclean, a Forest Service veteran, Montana native and University of Chicago English professor.

The U.S. Forest Service, which manages Mann Gulch in what is now the Gates of the Mountains Wilder-

ness, has erected small granite obelisks where each man fell. Those monuments are replacing concrete and rebar crosses which were emplaced soon after the fire but are now deteriorating owing to the snows and freezing rains of winter followed by 100-degree summer days.

In August 1999, during the fiftieth observance of the tragedy, the Forest Service also erected a monument to the fallen at the Meriwether Campground. It consists of a bronzed smokejumper jacket and helmet and a listing of the names of the dead and their hometowns.

Now enter members of the National Smokejumper Association, most retired from that job, many in their 60s and 70s. They want to help the Forest Service memorialize the area where their predecessors died.

For the past eight years, the NSA has provided volunteers for a variety of tasks the Forest Service has needed but does not have the money or manpower to accomplish.

With the assistance of back-country horsemen's associations whose members pack in supplies to the crews, NSA volunteers have rehabilitated 703 miles of trail and eight back-country cabins, built or restored eight bridges, restored two fire lookout towers, and erected six miles of wooden fence.

During a recent rainy and snowy 40-degree pair of days, a group of 14 volunteers, former smokejumpers and associate members of the association, pitched their tents near the Meriwether fire guard's cabin, then went to work.

Packers from the Last Chance Back Country Horsemen had delivered tools, cement and a sign that described the 1949 jumpers' ordeal to the ridge

between Meriwether Gulch and Mann Gulch.

Ten of the volunteers climbed the switchback trail to the ridge then, in blowing snow, dug postholes and planted the sign. From it, visitors will learn the actions of the ill-fated crew and the point where each man was overrun. The sign also carries pictures of the survivors and the names of the dead.

On their way back down to their camping area, the volunteers repaired trail washouts and felled trees that threatened to fall over the path.

Two other former jumpers found each of the monuments where the men fell and marked those locations with a global positioning unit to ensure that the spots are preserved for history.

And two other former jumpers reconnoitered the trail from the bottom of Mann Gulch on the Missouri to the dead men's monuments.

Jon McBride (MSO-54), chief of the NSA's trail operation, said his organization is willing to help the Forest Service in any way it can to ensure that Mann Gulch is preserved and protected.

If the Forest Service agrees, that could include building a trail that would connect the monuments, he said.

In a note to the jumpers, Jeff Brandt of the Helena horsemen said, "I'm humbled by your efforts to honor your fallen comrades. I first hiked through the markers over 20 years ago and didn't understand fully what happened. The sign will be an important educational tool. Now I have to read the books written on the incident so I fully understand."

And, from Jaime Tompkins, the outdoor recreation planner for the Forest Service's Helena District, "The

sign was placed in an ideal location. It has already been seen by dozens of school kids that have taken a trip out there since you and the members of the National Smokejumper Association completed the work.

“You and your organization are to be commended for the outstanding work.”

Before returning to their homes, the volunteers paused for an informal ceremony at the Meriwether Campground memorial. One of the crewmen, **Jim Phillips** (MSO-67), reminded his fellows that the 13 men who died in Mann Gulch left a legacy: Their deaths led to the initiation of scientific studies of wildfire, the incorporation of 10 standard fire fighting

orders and the delineation of situations that cry “watch out.”

Wildland firefighting remains dangerous but, because of the sacrifice of 13 young men at Mann Gulch, it is far safer now than it was on Aug. 5, 1949.

The Jumpers Who Died at Mann Gulch

In addition to fire guard and former jumper Harrison, who was from Missoula, the following smokejumpers perished in the Mann Gulch Fire:

Robert Bennett, Paris, Tenn.; Eldon Diettert, Missoula; William Hellman, Kalispell; Philip McVey, Ronan, Mont.; David Navon, Modesto, Calif.; Leonard Piper,

Blairsville, Penn.; Stanley Reba, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Marvin Sherman, Missoula; Joseph Sylvia, Plymouth, Mass.; Henry Thol, Kalispell; Newton Thompson, Alhambra, Calif.; and Silas Thompson, Charlotte, N.C.

In addition to McBride from Missoula and Phillips from Helena, the following former smokejumpers and associate members of the NSA comprised the volunteer work force: Tim Aldrich, Tom Blunn, Jim Hagemeyer, Roger Savage, Roy Williams, Bob Whaley, Ron Larsen, Jim Scofield and Gary Weyermann, all from Missoula; Charles Fricke, Florence, Mont.; George Galayda, Frenchtown, Mont.; and Carl Gidlund, Hayden Lake, Idaho. ♣

Hall Mountain Lookout

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

“Bonners Ferry Ranger Station, this is Hall Mountain checking in”

The sweetest southern angel voice seemed to drift upon the wind
A deathly calm fell on the land as dispatch soon replied
Each ear it strained to hear the voice – from radio on high

A rush ensued for all young men – as work plans were adjusted
Site visit north to boundary line “the field notes can’t be trusted”
“Coincidence and nothing more” the ranger watched their play
You see Hall Mountain guarded timber - Canada to States

And so I had my chance one day while riding with a friend
A single man who felt compelled to check for mistletoe
Upon the trees just north of us near Canada of old
A quick stop at the lookout for coffee black and hot
Would help on our inspection of those trees near mountain top

You bet this gal did fit the voice “Come in for coffee hot -
I’ll fix you boys some flap jacks with bacon on the spot”
And yes this southern angel made her Christian home on high
40 feet to be exact – in a Fickes L-4, '29¹

Soon wedding bells did ring and sing upon the Kaniksu²
Brought to an end the voice from Hall to never hear anew

But echo I can hear the “bell” a southern voice so dear
And see the ruckus that it made in valley far and near
That early summer morning when Hall Mountain rang in clear

To my friend Ken Gift and his Hall Mountain Lookout wife

(1) In 1929 Forest Ranger Clyde P. Fickes (pronounced Fickees)

designed a 14' by 14' designated L-4 lookout structure that could be packed into remote areas by mule and assembled by seasonal rangers in a matter of days.

(2) The Kaniksu National Forest borders the Canadian; Idaho, Montana and Washington state lines. Hall Mountain Lookout no longer stands.

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



Don and Joan Riddle in 1949 (Courtesy Riddle family collection)



Items from the Fire Pack



by Bill Fogarty (Missoula '57)

How Hungry Are You?

Norman Moody (MYC-44) and I were dropped on a grassy hillside over a mile from the fire. We left our gear and took only needed tools to the fire. After the fire was under control, we returned to our packs. A shepherd was nearby, and we visited awhile. The next morning we hiked back to the fire to make certain it was completely out. When we returned to our packs, we found the shepherd gone, along with all of our rations, right down to the chocolate bars. The scheduled packer never showed up, so the next morning we started to pack out. On the way, we spotted a trail to a lookout about one and a half miles away. We were real hungry, not having eaten anything since the day before, so we hiked up. The nice young fellow (working at the lookout) asked if we were hungry. We assured him we were! He gave us each a slice of bread with peanut butter, and it did taste good.

John Garber (McCall '45)

Dixie

Dixie, Idaho - there is no other place like it in the whole world. I can visualize the dusty main street. Vehicles were an oddity, perhaps an old pick-up to haul freight to and from the tree-lined airstrip. The general store resembled the ones in the old western movies: the board porch facing the street, a creaky floor with a few protruding nails, a rusty pot-bellied stove that had seen better days and, especially, the rock candy that had been on display for "x" years.

Roy Piepenburg (Missoula '45)

Take Us Home!

They took Johnny Johnson (MSO-44) and Jim Jackson (MSO-44) out last week to jump a fire. Jim

Waite (MSO-40) was afraid to let them jump. The wind was way too strong and rough, and they all got sick. The plane was on its side part of the time. It took 45 minutes to fly to the fire and 15 minutes to fly back.

George Robinson (Missoula '44)

A Joint Venture

During the 1944 season, ten of us were called on the first, or one of the first, "Joint Venture" operations between Region 1 and Region 6. We boarded a DC-3 at Medford at 5:00 a.m., had a lunch stop in Wenatchee, and were over the Lyall Ridge Fire on the Chelan National Forest by 2:00 p.m. The crew from Montana had arrived a bit earlier by Trimotor and had jumped below the fire.

Kenneth Diller (Cave Junction '43)

Earn Your Keep

Early in our training at Seeley Lake, I broke bones in my foot which put me out for the season. I was afraid of getting sent to another CPS camp before the next season, so early before the next training I cautiously asked Earl Cooley (MSO-40) what my chances were. "Well," he said, "We've been feeding you all winter, so I guess we'll have to get some use of you next summer." I was greatly relieved!

Dale Entwistle (Missoula '44)

The Call of the Wild

Addison Carlson (MSO-43) and I had started a long packout from a fire near Wahoo Peak in the Bitterroots and were headed toward Hamilton, Montana. It was the beginning of elk mating season, and they were bugling all around us. I started imitating them and before long, I was getting answers. Ad finally stopped dead in his tracks, turned and looked this greenhorn right in the eye and asked, "Have

you ever met a bull elk in mating season?" I got the message.

Richard "Dick" Flaharty (Missoula '44)

Late Night Jump

The summer of 1945 was a fairly busy season on fires. On one occasion, we jumped at 10:15 at night in Hell's Canyon on the Snake River. It took about a week to control the fire, and we climbed up out of the canyon at night. We walked 19 miles to the Seven Devils Guard Station, took a truck to Grangeville and a plane back to Missoula. Spare time in Missoula was spent at the city swimming pool and the roller skating rink. Roger's Cafe was a good place to eat.

Marshall Jensen (Missoula '44)

An Extra Day

A most memorable jump was on a mountain west of Wenatchee where we made a landing with ten feet of snow. A successful food drop was made, and after putting out the fire, we enjoyed the excellent food and the wonderful mountain scenery so much we stayed an extra day—to make sure the fire was out, of course.

Earl Kenagy (North Cascades '45)

Omitted Details

At Cascade Locks, I was assigned to the laundry and later became the Forest Service office clerk. When I first applied for the smokejumpers, I was turned down. The next year I applied again and because I was working in the office, I had access to my records. I noted there was a limit to my assignments because of being underweight. As clerk, I was able to fill out my own application form and somehow neglected to note the "limited service" stipulation. This time I was accepted!

Lawrence Morgan (Missoula '44)

Sky Cook

On the White Cap Fire, I took the lead at setting up camp and cooked a meal. As the fire grew and the number of crewmembers increased, I continued cooking. I became camp cook and was called the "Jumping Cook." Later I jumped as cook on the Augusta Fire.

Oliver Petty (Missoula '43)

Splat!

On one jump, a big can of lunchmeat slipped from the cargo chute, plummeted to the ground, and splattered over a large area. One of the ground crew asked if that was all the better care we took of jumpers whose parachutes did not open.

Walter Reimer (Missoula '44)

One Hundred and Thirteen Words is Worth a Picture

I remember vividly the pillars of billowing, gray-black smoke, the occasional leaping orange fingers of flames, and the aroma of acrid, hot gases as we got within jumping range. As we circled the conflagration, we could see through the patches of smoke a silvery thread deep in the valley. My heart ached at the sight of the towering Douglas firs being torched on the steep mountainsides below. With near perfect precision, a crew of eight perspiring jumpers lined up in the cabin, preparing to depart from the pitching, banking "Tin Goose." Then, very carefully orchestrated, two jumpers at a time descended and rolled into a welcome green meadow close to the creek.

Roy Piepenburg (Missoula '44)

Quitting Time

In 1945, Region 1 was experimenting with using airplane patrols to replace several lookouts. It was obvious that training for this project was to be well organized and "tight ship." There was strong emphasis placed on teaching us to use 24-hour time, which seemed to be vitally necessary for the project's success. We had many drills to get us

conversant in this all-important time language. We were to report to training at 0800 hours, have lunch from 1200 hours to 1300 hours, and to return to the house at 1700 hours. The fun was that every day at quitting time, Sam Zook (MSO-44) would announce loudly and clearly, "Well, its five o'clock, time to go."

Hubert Rohrer (Missoula '44)

A Good Experience

Remembering the four years in C.P.S., I think it made me a better person. Working on the different projects and meeting people of different backgrounds, I learned to respect the feelings and thinking of these people. All the projects had their importance, but smokejumping was the most enjoyable.

Dennis Miller (McCall '45)

First Class

A call came to the Grottoes Camp for volunteers for the smokejumper unit. Weir Stone (MSO-43), an ex-jumper, arrived in camp about that time and gave such exciting tales of the wild west Montana country that we signed up eagerly. For the first time in my life, I got to ride first class on a train from Grottoes, Virginia, to Missoula, Montana, in a Pullman sleeper with tips for services rendered just like a real American.

Homer Rice (Missoula '45)

"Guttenmitten"

Max Allen (MSO-48) and I had a rather scary and dramatic jump over on the Challis. It was a hot, early morning jump, and Max and I were first out of the Trimotor. When we went out Max grabbed hold of my backpack, and it spun me around, and we both opened into each other. Either he went through my lines or I went through his, so we tangled chutes right there. We were coming down with one chute that wouldn't open and the other kinda seesawing down to the ground. Max yells down at me, "Shep, climb up your lines. Climb up your lines." About the time I started climbing up my lines, we hit the ground. We hit so hard I don't know how we survived. Max

didn't have his jump gloves on and burned his hands pulling on the nylon. Max jumped up and pulled his jumpsuit off. He had a German belt buckle and it said *Guttenmitten*. I asked Max, "What's Guttenmitten mean?" He looks down at the buckle and says, "It means don't forget your mittens."

Thomas "Shep" Johnson
(McCall '56)

Off Fire Work

Off fire work that I did included many Forest Service support activities. Some were quite strenuous like baling and stacking hay at Ninemile, transplanting trees at the Savenac Nursery and rebuilding fence at the winter range. Other work was much easier and more interesting, such as sign making in the Ninemile shop and telephone repair in Missoula. There are many memories associated with the above and with other work not mentioned.

John Ainsworth (Missoula '43)

Rescue Jumps

I had two rescue jumps that were rather strenuous. One was for a jumper whose chute hooked on a tree snag and the tree fell over. The jumper had very severe leg and foot injuries. They had jumped in early evening and the fellows that he jumped with gave him first aid and spent all night carrying him out to the nearest trail. I was part of a fresh crew that carried him out to the nearest road approximately 20 miles away. The military participated in that rescue by dropping a physician, stationed at Pendleton, Oregon, who gave medication and monitored the jumper's condition. The other rescue was for a government employee who had fallen while working on a fire line and was severely burned. After giving him first aid, we carried him all night across the Bitterroot Range southeast of Missoula.

Luke Birky (Missoula '45) 🦉

Leave CJ For Redmond? Traitor?

by Charley Moseley (Cave Junction '62)

Eldo “Mick” Swift (CJ-56) and I spent the winter and spring of 1964 in Los Angeles. Somewhere between all the lovely young things he attracted to our apartment, he mentioned that Region 6 was finally going to open up a new smokejumper base at the site of our satellite base in Redmond, Oregon. Some of the CJ guys, along with some from NCSB, were going to have to transfer. Most of the CJ guys had been to Redmond on standby at one time or another, but I was not one of them. The idea of leaving CJ for any other base did not appeal to me.

That spring we arrived at CJ as early as **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) would allow and found out that the “Redmond Thing” was already up and running. It would be a joint enterprise between CJ and Winthrop (that’s what we called NCSB back then). Each base would send ten jumpers to start the year. The question was, “Who is going?”

The overhead was a solid group. **Al Boucher** (CJ-49) was the foreman, with **Hal Weinmann** (NCSB-54) and **Rey Zander** (NCSB-55) as squadleaders, and **David “Skinny” Beals** (NCSB-47) as the loft foreman. They were true professionals and had been “around the horn” several times. Redmond was doing just fine, so far. Al’s wit could be tolerated most of the time.

At Cave Junction, Al was able to ask for volunteers and try to persuade whomever he could that transferring to Redmond would be a good move. The rumor from our cousins up north was that “**Pappy**” **Lufkin** (NCSB-40) was pruning the overly mischievous types off his tree by making all the selections himself.

I was a squadleader in training and was good at persuading good people to go with me on little adventures—sometimes to their regret. Al latched on to me and would not let up on selling Redmond. He was good, real good, and just fibbed a little. The promised squadleader position was not only available; it was mine—just without the pay!

My buddy and roommate, **John Manley** (CJ-62), had been to Redmond a few times and liked the town and area. Many old western movies had been filmed in the area, and we decided to drive up for a “look-see.” We were immediately impressed with the new facilities and the incredible view of the Cascade Range. A good look at the map showed that Redmond was in the right place geographically and, with all the money being spent, there was no doubt as to where the future of Region 6 smokejumping was going to be. It was a real showplace with great scenery, many restaurants, and lots of pretty women. We might as well get in on the ground floor.

On our way home we stopped in at a club in Bend for a brew or two. It was called “The Rathskeller” and was



Jumpers win again. Chuck Sheley, Gobi Track Club, passes baton to anchor Charley Moseley in 4x200 relay in Medford 1963. (Courtesy C. Sheley)

conveniently located near a motel where some female Olympic Ski Team members were staying while they trained at nearby Mt. Bachelor. What an appropriate name. John and I were hooked and gone from CJ.

The news of our decision did not go over well back at the Gobi. Traitors! Double damned Traitors! The Family was being violated.

There was almost instant animosity, and some people from CJ still have trouble saying “Redmond.” (*Exception being the “Redmond Shuffle,” a backward volleyball move that preceded another round of pushups for the lesser skilled-Ed.*) Not mentioning any names, but no matter how many of my dubious stories go to print, the Editor of this magazine still will not allow “RAC” to appear in any of my credits.

Somebody had to go to Redmond, and I really consider that half-season there to be one of my best efforts as a jumper by helping prevent mayhem and total rebellions as the fire season got bad. Real bad! There were no fires. One-eared elephants were on the rampage.

Boucher left for Redmond early on, so the recruiting fell into my lap. It became touchy as Jim Allen and the squadleaders countered my recruiting—coach **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59), in particular. His most precious softball team was being decimated, and he fiercely hated losing at anything. There went his pitcher, his shortstop and center fielder. Number 3-4-6 in the batting order, and I still wanted more. It was war on my side, too. We needed all the good people we could get for the move and “losing” is

seldom part of my vocabulary, also.

Manley was on board and, by some hard talking, I was able to add my brother **Billy** (CJ-63), **Steve “Zuni” Johnson** (CJ-62), **Jim “Horse” Schmidt** (CJ-63) and **Jim Kloefer** (RDD-57) to the list. Four of our 1964, CJ rookie class, **Tommy Albert**, **Ray Farinetti**, **Dick Zediker**, and **Ed “Animal” Weisenback**, were also selected. Ed’s bones are still way back somewhere in the jungles of Laos. I miss him every damn day.

They gave us a nasty going-away party and an even nastier last softball game between the “Traitors” and the “Left-Overs.” The game started out rough and got rougher. No quarter was asked and none given. I can’t remember who won, but we’ll remember running over somebody at third base and the ensuing intense spitting and cussing match with Coach Sheley that followed. My mentor PO’ed—big time! The only cross words we’ve ever had. He finally had the good sense to just give me the finger and

walk off—red hair and temper blazing. The trip to Redmond the next day, July 1, 1964, was sad and quiet, and I was sore from head to foot.

Manley and I made a couple social visits back to CJ that summer, but not even one of those clods would come up to Redmond. Even my best buddy and fellow track team member from the University of Alabama, **Johnny Kirkley** (CJ-64), gave me some strange looks. But, most thankfully, time tends to heal most wounds. 🐾

Yes, and quickly. The half of the 1964 rookie class still alive and Charley attend the Cave Junction reunions and wear the Gobi colors proudly. The number 3-4-6 hitters were replaced with players with higher batting averages from the Brand-X farm team, and the jumpers continued to win the league championship. I don’t even remember these guys going to Redmond. The only thing that’s missing is the base, which closed after the 1981 season. (Ed.)

Revisiting The Mongolian Smokejumpers

by Bruce Ford (Missoula '75)



Mongolian smokejumpers test paraglider (Courtesy B. Ford)

Dave Pierce (RAC-65) and I had gone to Mongolia in 1990 as part of a UN-sponsored program to deliver and set up a computer parachute simulator. Jeff Hogue of Systems Technology, Inc, who wrote the simulator program, set it up, and Dave and I trained the Mongolian smokejumpers in its use. At that time there were 137 smokejumpers at seven bases across the country. The equipment and techniques were largely Russian. In July 2006, I was back in Mongolia and looked up some old acquaintances from that trip.

Ulaan Baatar has swelled to a population of over a million in recent years, as nomadic herder families leave the steppe to seek opportunity in the newly commercialized capital. Most of the growth has been at the edges of the city, in sprawling new districts of traditional yurts or “gers” set up in wooden-fenced yards.

In summer, 2006, Mongolia celebrated 800 years since unification as a single state under Chingis Khan. A huge,

white-stone portrait of Chingis adorns a hill above the southern edge of the city.

The smokejumper organization has changed considerably since 1990. They are now consolidated under the National Emergency Management Agency as the Specialized Rescue Unit (SRU). In addition to firefighting, they conduct pararescue operations and respond to other emergencies such as flood, earthquake, and toxic spills. The 40 jumpers have all been consolidated at the Ulaan Baatar base since 2003 under the leadership of Dumaaglin Namsrai, a former paratrooper. At their base in the ger suburbs, jumpers work in four round-the-clock shifts.

In recent years, owing to several factors, the jumpers have increasingly used ground transport to fires. The An-2 airplane, once the workhorse of the jumpers, is no longer certified here for their use, and Mi-8 helicopters are expensive to lease and operate. The SRU has no aircraft of its own and must rely on special-use leasing. The price of fuel is also a problem. 10-12 training jumps are conducted twice a year, in spring and fall, and aircraft are otherwise available only as needed.

Their 40 Russian Forester-2 main parachutes are currently at the end of their service life, and it is still unclear what will replace them. The SRU still has cooperative ties with Russia's trans-Baikal base in Ulan Ude, where they are now starting to use the new Forester-3 chute. The Mongolians also have two hand-deployed skydiver rigs for use by experienced jumpers.

The base has a motorized hang glider and two motorized Paragliders that can be used for fire detection patrolling over a limited area. On the fine, sunny morning I was there, they fired up a newly-repaired paraglider motor and hauled the apparatus to a nearby sports field where a ceremony involving police and structural firefighters was underway. Kids on bikes appeared from nowhere as they inflated the

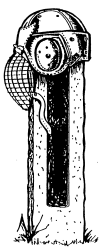
paraglider for launch in a good 10-12 mph breeze. After a couple of false starts, the jumper got a good running start and lifted off, motor buzzing, to the cheers of the accidental onlookers and assembled urchins. A long loop at 200 feet or so brought him back unscathed.

Funding problems have also left them very short of equipment, such as pumps and chainsaws. Their indispensable tools are the backpack water pump and backfiring apparatus. Most steppe fires are best controlled this way anyhow by burning out and extinguishing the edge.

Early fire detection is hampered by lack of resources, and rapid response is further stymied by organizational and political considerations. Decision to dispatch comes from higher up and through more layers of the organization than formerly, and usually takes three hours or so under the best of circumstances. Local officials are often loath to call in federal help until fires are too large to control easily. Hence the traditional advantages of smokejumping, early detection and rapid response, are largely lost.

Still, the Mongolian smokejumpers appear to remain a highly motivated and well-trained emergency response unit, even if their firefighting potential is muted by lack of funding and political factors.

I saw the simulator we brought in 1990. The original computer, now a technological dinosaur, still functions but gets glitches that requires constant ministrations of IT-savvy folks. The original program, designed for the round Forester-1, was updated in 1996 to include the Forester-2 and American trilobe ram-air canopies. I also looked up Batzdhargal, who was the head smokejumper in 1990 and now retired. He and a partner have a hot-air balloon and are looking for sponsors to get a ballooning business going. The wide-open steppe of Mongolia would be ideal ballooning country. 🐘



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.

Wilson B. "Ben" Conner (North Cascades '48)

Ben died April 15, 2007. In his 18th year of Parkinson's, he fell and broke his hip Easter Sunday and did not recover from the resultant surgery. Ben majored in political science at Cornell College in Iowa and competed on Cornell's NCAA Championship wrestling team. His college education was interrupted by three years in the Army Air Corps during World War II. After the war he graduated from New York University law school and began his career at Aircraft Marine Products where he went from salesman to Vice President and,

finally, Director of Marketing. Ben was a Life Member of the National Smokejumper Association.

Wallace W. "Pic" Littell (Missoula '44)

Pic, NSA Life Member and CPS-103 jumper, died May 28, 2007. He graduated from Cornell College in Iowa in 1947, received his master's degree in political science from Columbia University and his Russian certificate from the Harriman Institute. Pic worked for the U.S. Information Agency and retired in 1985 as head of the Moscow office. During his 30-plus-year career, he held many assignments in

Eastern Europe. Pic and his close smokejumper friend, Ben Conner, both were members of the 1947 NCAA championship wrestling team from Cornell College. The team was honored in a June ceremony at the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Jim Larkin (Pilot)

Jim died May 9, 2007, in Boise. He is the third legendary backcountry pilot to die within the past four months with the passing of Ken Roth and Ed Thorsrud. Jim started flying in 1937 and was actively involved in Idaho aviation for over 65 years. He flew C-46s over the "Hump" to Western China and Burma in WWII. In 1947 he was flying timber-spraying operations back in Idaho and went full time with the Forest Service in 1957. Jim retired in 1978 as Director, R-4 Air Operations at BIFC. His passion for flying did not stop with his retirement as he continued to fly during fire seasons. Jim was still flying for pleasure as recently as September 2006.

James "Jim" Brown (Missoula '46)

Jim died May 31, 2007, in Sandpoint, Idaho. He graduated with a forestry degree from Washington State College in 1939 and worked as an asbestos worker in Alaska in 1940. During WWII he worked on the "Manhattan Project" and jumped the 1946 season at Missoula after the war. In 1964 Jim established the 2,000 acre Homestead Ranch in the Pack River Valley near Sandpoint. He spent the remainder of his life on this property. He also owned land in Idaho, Washington and Alaska. Jim loved flying and flew for many years in Alaska.

Carl "Joe" Wilson (Missoula '52)

Joe, 82, died June 13, 2007, in Osburn, Idaho. He graduated in 1943 from Lourdes Academy in Wallace, Idaho, and enlisted in the Army. He served as a combat medic in the 187th Para-Glider Regiment of the 11th Airborne Division in New Guinea, Leyte and Luzon in the Philippine Islands. He was awarded the Bronze Star for bravery in rescuing a wounded rifleman on Leyte and the Purple Heart Medal for wounds received in the battle. The 11th Airborne was the first unit to land in Japan near Tokyo as occupation forces on Aug. 30, 1945, which was Joe's 21st birthday.

After the war he was a printer for 40 years in Kellogg, Idaho. Joe jumped from 1952 through 1955 and was a member of the NSA. He was with the New Mexico crew in Silver City for three seasons. Joe retired from the paper in the 1986. While jumping and working as a printer, he was known as the "Quiet man who worked hard."

Lawrence R. Morgan (Missoula '44)

Larry died June 8, 2007, in Spokane Valley, Washington. After graduating from high school in 1936, he began working in the photography business and later owned one of the largest photo businesses in the Northwest. During WWII he jumped at Missoula with the CPS-103 group for the 1944 and 1945 seasons. He retired from the photogra-

phy business after 57 years.

Harry E. Noel (Missoula '48)

Harry died June 12, 2007. He jumped at Missoula in 1948 and 1949 after working as a fire lookout. Harry graduated from the University of Montana and later was a U.S. Air Force pilot. He retired from the insurance and real estate business in Bozeman, Montana.

Fred O. Brauer (Missoula '41)

Fred passed away June 25, 2007. He was born Aug. 23, 1917, in Butte and attended Bonner School and then Missoula County High School, graduating in 1937. Fred then went on to the University of Montana, where he played football for the Grizzlies from 1937 to 1940. He joined the smokejumpers in 1941 at Missoula and was a squadleader during the 1942 season at Seeley Lake.

Fred then joined the Army Air Corp as a pilot and flew C-46s and C-47s in the European Theater where he was awarded the distinguished flying cross.

When the Smokejumper Center in Missoula was dedicated in 1954, he was selected to welcome President Eisenhower and present him with a painting of a Ford Trimotor, a jump helmet, and T-shirts for his grandchildren. During the day he had the opportunity to talk to the President and mention his role with the 439th Troop Carrier Group in WWII.

Fred returned from the war and entered a career that would make him a smokejumping legend. He was responsible for training the new recruits and often referred to the trainees as "My boys." Many of the recruits referred to Fred jokingly as "Good Deal" Brauer.

By 1950 he had been appointed the Director of Personnel at Missoula, where he remained until 1958 when he became Assistant Air Officer in charge of Retardant and Helicopter projects. He decided in 1960 to learn to pilot helicopters and transferred to Equipment and Development as Air Development Officer at the San Dimas, Calif., Development Center. He returned to Missoula in 1963 and built the Lolo View Manor mobile home park.

Fred was one of the true pioneers of smokejumping and made several appearances on the History Channel and various other documentaries. He was the second member of the National Smokejumper Association.

In 2002, Fred wrote that he still hears from many of his boys as far back as 1941-42. "We had the best fire fighting organization that the Forest Service ever had. Many of the boys were recommended to the CIA and did a tremendous service to the country during the Vietnam War. I am sure all of my boys will agree with me. They came into the jumpers as young boys without much experience. They left with great work ethics, wonderful *esprit de corps* and a new confidence. I don't know of a one of them who was not successful in their choice of vocation. I am extremely proud of the personnel and the organization during my tenure." 🍄

Family And Friends of Gene DeBruin Critical of Werner Herzog's Film, "Rescue Dawn"

by Jerry DeBruin (Associate)

The movie "Rescue Dawn" will begin showing at select theaters in New York and Los Angeles on July 4th with national distribution on July 13th. Its director is Werner Herzog who is a master at taking nonfictional truthful scenarios and twisting them into fiction, Hollywood style. Such is the case in "Rescue Dawn," which is littered with Herzog's errors of both omission and commission.

The movie is vaguely based on the book *Escape From Laos*, written by Dieter Dengler. However, the movie takes liberties that are offensive to anyone who is familiar with the events surrounding the prison break from Ban Houei Het Pathet Lao Prison in June, 1966. These liberties may be the stock and trade of Hollywood, but they are an insult to the brave POWs and their families.

We, the friends and family of Dieter Dengler, Eugene (Gene) DeBruin, and Pisidhi Indradat despise this movie and condemn those who produced it.

To support these statements we can provide considerable documentation. We base our condemnation on testimony given to the Central Intelligence Agency by Dieter Dengler and Pisidhi Indradat, who currently resides in Bangkok, Thailand, and is the last remaining successful participant of that prison break. We also have their personal writings, records, videotaped interviews and information that has never been released to the public.

This documentation by the POWs who survived the ordeal paints a very different mosaic about events of that prison break and the role of Dieter Dengler as portrayed in "Rescue Dawn." We want to be clear, we were friends of Dieter Dengler. We have warm memories of our friend Dieter, who recently passed away of ALS - Lou Gehrig's Disease. We believe Dieter would be appalled by this movie had he lived to see it.

Rescue Dawn is a flawed movie filled with numerous omissions:

Rescue Dawn: There were six POWs.

Real Life: There were seven POWs: Pisidhi Indradat, Prasit Promsuwan, Prasit Thane, Y.C. To, Duane Martin, Dieter Dengler, and Eugene DeBruin.

Rescue Dawn: Gene is portrayed as an uncaring, deranged and derelict Charles Manson type entity, devoid of humanity.

Real Life: Gene DeBruin is a kind and caring individual, helping to pass the years in prison by teaching his cellmates English, sharing his blanket on cold nights, sharing his food, even staying behind to help Y.C. To, a Hong Kong

Chinese cellmate who had become too ill to escape without help. Gene returned to help Y.C. To despite pleas from Dieter Dengler and Duane Martin to join them as the group split up to try different directions in their bid for freedom. Pisidhi Indradat, a cellmate and survivor of the ordeal, called Gene DeBruin, "The finest man I have ever met."

Rescue Dawn: Despite being the new man on the scene, Dieter Dengler manages to formulate the plans for escape and lead the group out of the prison.

REAL LIFE: Dieter Dengler and Duane Martin arrived at the prison about two and a half years after Gene was shot down and were not immediately privy to the secret escape plans formulated by Gene, Pisidhi, and the others, who had already begun storing rice in bamboo tubes in preparation for an escape. It took the group thirteen days to trust the new prisoner with the German accent, Dieter Dengler.

Rescue Dawn: Dieter Dengler kills the prison guards.

Real Life: Pisidhi Indradat risked his life to kill the guards so the group could escape.

Rescue Dawn: Gene is portrayed as being a wreck of a man in the jungle when he meets up with Dieter, muttering, "What will I do now?"

Real Life: Dieter testified that Gene, after shaking Dieter's hand, shouted, "See you in the States," before heading back into the jungle and returning to help Y.C. To, knowing full well that To would not make it to freedom without help.

Rescue Dawn: Dengler and Martin approach the village together and when Martin is attacked, Dengler attempts to come to his aid by attacking Martin's attacker.

Real Life: Dengler hid in the bushes while Martin approached a village in an attempt to secure food. Martin was hacked to death by a machete-wielding villager. Dengler, weak himself from hunger, realized that he could not help Martin and to avoid becoming a victim himself, dashed off into the jungle, later to be rescued and whisked offshore to the USS Ranger.

Both Dieter Dengler and Pisidhi Indradat spoke of Gene as a strong leader and a peacemaker when differences threatened their escape plan.

In raising Dengler alone to the status of "Hero," despite the team efforts of all the prisoners, Herzog is in essence saying

that only those who escape are heroes, which downplays the enormous amount of luck that goes hand in hand with the skill a successful escape requires. Duane Martin wasn't less of a hero for succumbing to his attacker, Y.C. To wasn't less of a hero for getting sick during the window of opportunity for the escape. Why then must Hollywood lower those that didn't make it out to raise up one that did? All seven were equal heroes from those who won their freedom to the ones who lost their lives.

Think for a moment: What kind of movie director/writer portrays a character in a movie, yet refuses to talk with that person before, during, or after the production? Pisisdhi Indradat and Jerry DeBruin made multiple attempts to contact director Werner Herzog, producer Harry Knapp, and Gibraltar Films to insure the accurate portrayal of the characters, but to

no avail. No response ever surfaced. Nothing. Nada. Silence. Maybe the answer is the obvious one. Herzog didn't want to do an honest movie, he wanted to make his film his way, and the facts be damned.

The truth matters, and the truth is Herzog made a dishonest film and only succeeded in hurting a POW and a midwestern farm family that has suffered enough. 🙏

Jerry DeBruin, brother of Gene DeBruin, jdebrui@utnet.utoledo.edu; Stevan Smith, documentary producer and Vietnam War veteran, stevansmith@juno.com; Fred Rohrbach, Vietnam War veteran, pollynfred@comcast.net; Pisisdhi Indradat, Thai escapee and returnee from Pathet Lao prisons; Malcolm Creelman, Vietnam War veteran.

Highlights of and Reflections on Boise's 2007 Reunion

by Cecil Hicks (North Cascades '62)

Nearly 400 former and current smokejumpers converged on Boise, Idaho, during the first week in June 2007 for the National Smokejumper Association reunion. All told, the gathering attracted some 1,000 people, counting spouses, girlfriends and family members.

It was a time of renewed comradeship: recalling and retelling jump stories and fireline escapades (all true, of course), making new friends, meeting jumpers from other bases and eras, eating good food, and hoisting a glass, or two, to jumpers now off the jump list and no longer able to suit up to answer the fire call.

It was also time to thank the people responsible for putting together the event and activities that were well managed, well organized, and well attended. NSA volunteers can take pride in the job they did, and I'm sure nearly all the jumpers would say, "Well done." I can only speak for myself on the events I attended, but I didn't hear one negative comment, unless it came from one of the golfers that sliced a ball into water at the Saturday morning tournament held at the Warm Springs Golf Course.

By the way, I golfed with a friendly group of jumpers I'd never met before, and we turned in a respectable three over par 38. Our scorecard didn't win us any prizes, but we had fun. **John Gould** (FBX-81), the youngest golfer in our flight, was noted for bombing his drives off the tees. He was heading north to Alaska at the end of July to head up the state fire agency in Fairbanks. Good luck, John, with your new position. I didn't want to tell him, but the last time I played golf in Alaska's interior, it was on sand greens.

I marveled at the good appearance and shape of some of the former jumpers I bumped into at registration and at the barbeque that I hadn't seen in 20 to 30 years. In fact, some people still had hair, or at least it wasn't gray. Also, some of

the people (the ones without potbellies) looked like they were still in shape and ready to suit up, climb aboard the Twin Otter, and make a jump with the BLM and Forest Service jumpers that parachuted into Ann Morrison Park on Friday afternoon.

I was very impressed with the current jumpers I observed during these exhibition jumps. Years ago, it seemed that most of the seasonal jumpers were working their way through college with the fire fighting job and only jumped for a few summers until they completed their education. However, it now appears that a majority of today's crop of jumpers are career-minded, seasoned veterans. As the eight jumpers descended toward the jump target located on the green lawn at Ann Morrison Park just west of the clock tower, an overhead manager would call off the jumper's name through a loud speaker and give the number of jumps he, or she, had made. I recall that one jumper had 27 years of experience with more than 450 jumps. Wow! My seven years and 91 jumps seemed rather pale in comparison.

The spotter first dropped two loads of Forest Service jumpers with round parachutes from 1,500 feet in two-man sticks on each pass before taking the plane up to 3,000 feet for a final pass of BLM jumpers, who were jumping square parachutes. Boy, modern squares and FS-14s are sure maneuverable. I'm sure every former smokejumper watching wondered how they would have done if they were under the canopy right at that moment and making the jump. I don't recall that the FS-5s and FS-10s I jumped back in the '60s as being too swift in turning. In fact, they were downright slow.

Following their jumps, it was great that all the jumpers gathered at the jump spot (a round parachute spread out on the lawn), as it gave visitors, onlookers and guests a chance to take pictures and ask one-on-one questions. As I recall, one of the BLM jumpers won the pot by hitting on top of the

round, parachute nearly dead center. Good jump! Of course, back in the old days jumpers considered a good jump was any you could get up and walk away from.

On Saturday afternoon, I toured the BLM jump base and the National Interagency Fire Center at the airport. At each of the NIFC operation centers (dispatch, radio, equipment) we visited, well-informed employees outlined what they did and answered questions. Did you know the large fire cache warehouse holds some \$20 million dollars worth of inventoried fire equipment ready to ship to hot fire areas or other disaster points anywhere in the nation upon request?

I enjoyed the NIFC tour and it was very impressive, but my favorite part of the tour, of course, was having an opportunity to look over the BLM jump base. We were greeted in the ready room by jumper **Jenny Camp** (NIFC-06), who talked about the overall BLM operations and showed off some of the modern-day jump equipment. We also watched a fire video of the BLM operations. She said Boise has some 86 jumpers, but most of them don't stay around the base during the summer. The jumpers are normally stationed in the Great Basin area in the states of Nevada, Utah, and Colorado. Of course, they are sometimes sent to the other eight jump bases scattered throughout the West and Alaska during a fire bust situation.

I believe the biggest shocker of the jump base visit for me was when someone asked how many new jumpers were trained this year. Jenny said although 14 people were accepted and scheduled for training in 2007 at Boise, only seven people showed up on the first day. The seven that did made it through rookie training. I can't imagine why anybody, let alone 50 percent of the entire rookie crew who must have had a background of several seasons of firefighting experience in order to be ac-

cepted for smokejumping training, wouldn't at least show up for the first day. During my rookie training year in 1962 at NCSB, one rookie quit at the end of the first day. When asked why he was quitting, he said, "I can make more money working at my uncle's saw mill." While he might have made more money at the mill, I think he missed out on one of the best jobs and comradeship opportunities in the world.

In the rigging room we compared the round and square parachutes that hung overhead side-by-side in the loft tower. The squares looked big to me, although we were told they weighed the same as a round parachute at approximately 25 pounds. When packing out 120 pounds or more of jump and fire gear for several miles over mountainous terrain, smokejumpers know that every pound counts.

At the tarmac outside the loft, we got to climb aboard the Twin Otter that holds eight jumpers with gear. It looks like a good plane to jump. Personally, my favorite airplane to jump out of was the Grumman Goose in Alaska. We'd exit by kipping (swinging) out the door by holding onto the overhead handholds.

The last stop, before we boarded buses to return to the SUB at Boise State University and pass back through the airport's security checkpoint gate, was the National Wildland Firefighters Memorial. As you walk the winding path through the memorial garden, you observe plaques with names of deceased firefighters who had contributed to 67 years of firefighting and smokejumping history in our country. Not everybody listed died in fire related incidents.

I located several names of jumpers I'd jumped with over the years. One of these was **Herb Corn** (IDC-67). If you knew him, you knew he was a fast speaker. He could say more in ten seconds than I could in 30. I got to know Herb before he became a smokejumper. We met at Fort Ord, California, in the fall of 1964 and went through U.S. Army basic training together. We were in the same platoon and over the course of boot camp training, he plied me with numerous questions about getting into smokejumping, one of his life goals he wanted to achieve.

I couldn't find a plaque for **Arden Davis** (FBX-64), who died while making a tree letdown during a practice jump in May of 1966 in Fairbanks. I was the first person on a three-man stick out of a DC-3 that day and Arden was the last. The morning was a little breezy and all three of us missed the landing spot and ended up in trees. While making his letdown from just a few feet off the ground, Arden strangled from a dangling parachute line that he'd apparently failed to clear from beneath him.

The final event that I attended was the Saturday night banquet and National Smokejumper Association program held at the Boise Centre on the Grove. What more can I say about the evening than there was a well attended open bar, excellent food at dinner, good service, plenty of action smokejumper videos highlighted on large overhead screens, a great short (one hour) speaking program, acknowledgement of prominent smokejumpers, raffle ticket winners drawn, and plenty of friendly conversations held at the dinner tables.

In short, as the old time news reporters used to say, "A good time was had by all." I can't wait to attend the next Smokejumper Reunion. See you there. 🍷

Thanks For A Great Reunion

The NSA wants to thank the Boise Reunion 2007 group for their hard work in putting on another great Smokejumper Reunion.

Chair	Steve Nemore
Advisor/NSA Liaison	Leo Cromwell
Treasurer (Lead)	Cliff Dalzell
Logistics	Dick Terry and Paul Bradley
Event Communications	Jeff Bass
Food/Beverage	Dale Schmaljohn, Loyle Washam, Bill Baden
Banquet Program/Speakers	Lynn Sprague
Transportation/Tours	Mike Daly
Idaho City Tour	Francis Mohr and Guy Hurlbutt
Registration	Jerry Ogawa and Frank Halverson
Facilitator/Parking	Jim Lancaster
Parking	Pat Durland
Vendors/Logo/Photos	Bill Harro and Dick Wildman
Golf Scramble	Ron Nakatani
Aircraft Exhibit	Charlotte Larson
Fun Run	Mark Klinger
Contributions/Donations	Quincy Chung
BSU Housing/Minutes	Betty Percival
Chaplain Emeritus	Stan Tate
Administration	Marsha Webb
Publicity Contact	Dave Olson
Media Interview	Carl Gidland

Redding Smokejumpers Celebrate 50th Anniversary

The following is an introduction given by Scott "Mouse" Warner (RDD-69) at the May 19th, 50-year-anniversary celebration of the Redding Smokejumper Base.

At the 50th anniversary of the Redding smokejumpers, it is important to recognize a special outfit that is different from the other good smokejumper bases in many ways. It has been shaped by the rough California jump country, the unique U.S. Forest Service, Region 5 administrative environment, the indescribable blast-furnace summer heat at the airport jump base and a continuing hallmark of highly professional personnel and singular personalities.

The rough California jump country of big timber, thick brush, poison oak, and steep terrain is like no other in the smokejumper world. Most out-of-region jumpers have not needed to embellish or draw upon the added enthusiasm of amber liquids when telling R-5 California jump stories!

Then there are the unique administrative and operational attitudes of the R-5 Forest Service - like California, always on the cutting edge and enamored with the latest and greatest, which often has not included the smokejumper program as an important component. Yet when things get tough and when there is no time or assets for handholding, R-5 calls upon the Redding smokejumpers and out-of-region smokejumper booster crews to get the job done.

All through the years, the Redding smokejumpers seem to have adapted to the unbelievable blast-furnace summer heat. As they like to put it, "until it gets over 105°F, it is not too bad." But there is still no way to describe what it is like to an out-of-region smokejumper on arrival from cooler climes to feel that blast of suffocating heat when the airplane door is opened on the ramp at the Redding Smokejumper Base. Yet somehow, the cheerful and highly professional Redding smokejumper crew help put this hell on earth into the appropriate background of what the Redding smokejumper experience is all about.

The continuing hallmark of the highly professional Redding smokejumper personnel, from overhead to jumpers with so many singular and unforgettable personalities that have shaped the organization, and the people that have been part of it are more than anything what the Redding smokejumpers are all about.

A quintessential example, dating even before the first crew in 1957, was Loft Foreman and pioneer **Bob Kersh**. For decades, Bob was the heart and soul of the Redding jumpers. He helped in founding, building, and operating the aerial depot in downtown Redding in the early 1950s and was an instrumental principal in the design, construction, and operational mode of the Redding Airport



L-R: Jim Kloeffler and Lee Gossett from the original Redding Crew in 1957.

Smokejumper Base. More than anything, he was a shaper of character for the many Redding smokejumpers in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, whom he helped train and make into productive, can-do people. Bob built character with valuable life lessons by being a key figure and shaping the trademark excellent Redding smokejumper training and character formation. Like the good Marine, he was in WWII; he encouraged ordinary people that they could do more than they ever thought possible, ramming home the message to do a professional job no matter what the task, pay attention to detail, and to have a thick skin. Equitably and expertly disbursed good-natured harassment kept everyone's feet on the ground. No prima donnas, or as the dictionary defines "extremely sensitive, vain, or undisciplined persons," allowed in this smokejumper outfit! Indeed, lessons for life. It is worthwhile to remember the Forest Service of the era was a "just-get-by" outfit, not at all big spenders. Up until probably the mid-1970s, it was just part of the deal to get by with what you've got when it came to resources, funds, training, and personnel. What R.C. Kersh accomplished and what has come to be, is a big part of what the Redding smokejumpers are all about. It is quite a legacy.

The R-5 smokejumpers from the early 1960s on have been more professionally and career oriented than the other bases, which was not common for the time. There were many detailers from the California National Forests that formed much of the smokejumper contingent, only to return to their home unit after one season. Redding was a sort of fire academy with many training courses and the character-building experience of being a smokejumper for a

season. The detailers were then available to be called back when needed (with annual refresher training) in the unique Redding “Retread” Program. The Retreads were in a sense what is called today an outreach program. They disseminated concepts of enhanced cooperative fire operations of differing outfits, professionalism and camaraderie on a regional level, aerial fire operations seamlessly integrating with ground action (still relatively new at the time), safety as an integral part of the job, and broad-based experience as a terms of reference from across National Forests, Forest Service Regions, exotic places like Alaska, other Federal agencies like the Bureau of Land Management, the California Department of Forestry and other State agencies. This is normal today – however, not back then.

Many smokejumper candidates worked for Retreads back on the R-5 National Forest districts, being actually recommended by them to the Redding smokejumpers. This was part of an overall selection program that included personal interviews by the Redding Smokejumper Base Manager, and later other overhead. This was part of the more professional, career-oriented nature of the R-5 smokejumper program, with candidates being pre-screened or vetted so that there was a desire and encouragement to see rookies, known as “Poags,” make it. However, training was tough and comprehensive. It was all crammed into three weeks, with seven or eight jumps, so new jumper candidates had to earn it. During training, Redding Poags invariably acquired nicknames to last a lifetime - more often than not, dubbed by Bob Kersh.

There have been so many great Redding smokejumper overhead to recount. Omission in an overview such as this in no way diminishes their contribution to what makes up the uniqueness of the Redding smokejumpers. Past Base Managers like **Fred Barnowsky** (MSO-42), **Robert “Black Mac” McDonald** (MSO-52), **Dave Nelson** (MSO-57), **Dick Tracy** (MSO-53), **Gary Johnson** (RDD-69), **Dave Noble** (RDD-74), and **Arlen Cravens** (RDD-78) have all left their mark. Fred Barnowsky from Missoula got Redding up and running in the mold of the existing bases. Black Mac put the distinct professional and career-oriented aspect on the organization, while Dave Nelson, with boundless enthusiasm and energy among other things, put the Redding smokejumpers on the map by jumping right along with the crew at every opportunity. Dick Tracy nudged the R-5 jumpers more in line with the other smokejumper bases, while patiently working with the unique R-5 San Francisco office. Dick was a true leader through tough times, including in the 1970s, both the first jump fatality ever of a Redding Retread, **Tom Regennitter** (RDD-67), and, later, the loss of Redding jumper **Steve Grammer** (RDD-70) in a helicopter crash. Gary “Gramps” Johnson was both a smokejumper’s jumper and a true leader, guiding the unit operating out of the aircraft hanger north of the base following the destruction of the loft and warehouse in a tragic early 1980s airplane crash. Dave Noble was able to successfully work with R-5 in the difficult years when the need for a smokejumper base was in question, punctuated with the cathartic 1987 fire siege in which the Redding and

out-of-region jumpers yet again proved their necessity and worth beyond doubt. Arlen Cravens once again put the Redding smokejumpers on the map, impressing the R-5 National Forests with “we are here to help” and making it happen with tireless energy and enthusiasm.

Ironically, today the Redding smokejumpers, with Base Manager **Don “Max” Sand** (RDD-79) at the helm, operate in a “Golden Age of Smokejumping” wherein highly professional, self-contained organizations, like “the Jumpers” from all of the good bases, are in short supply and called upon like never before in this era of extreme fire behavior and enormous fires, lasting for weeks on end.

The foregoing comprises what the Redding smokejumpers are all about: unique in the Smokejumper and Resource Management/Wildfire universe, special in the “big picture” and so-called “real world” by any standard and by any measure. There is nothing like it, and no other outfit, smokejumper and otherwise, in the whole wide world. Happy 50th Anniversary, Redding Smokejumpers, and there are sure to be even better days ahead! 🦋

Advisory Resource Board—Members, We Need You!

We need to make use of the knowledge and expertise of our membership to help run and administer the NSA. Although our board has a wide variety of backgrounds and skills, we constantly are in need of information and advice that would help us in our decision-making process.

Starting now, the board wants to establish an **Advisory Resource** list of individual members who would be willing to *lend us their expertise*. It will *not be necessary to attend board meetings*. The board will contact you for input in areas in which we need more information and advice. We hope to develop and expand this list to many areas.

Let’s start with:

1. Endowments/Gift Giving/Deferred Gifts
2. Financial Audits
3. Insurance

This is only a start. If you are willing to help in the above areas, please contact Chuck Sheley (contact information on page three). In addition, add any additional area of expertise to expand this resource list.