

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
APRIL 2002

SMOKEJUMPER



Inside This Issue:

Women Celebrate 20 Years of Smokejumping	3
Recollections of Rod Dow	10
They Jump for Your Life	14

CONTENTS

Observations from the Ad Shack	2
Women Celebrate 20 Years of	
Smokeyjumping	3
Memoirs of a Lookout—Part II	8
Featured Life Member Merl “Bud” Filler	9
Recollections of Rod Dow	10
The Jump	11
Sounding Off from the Editor	12
Fire Shelter Update from Jim Roth	13
They Jump for Your Life	14
Zena Creek Fire: Payette National Forest ...	19
NOVA—“Fire Wars”	20
Featured Life Member	
Fred “Fritz” Brauer	21
Jungle Creek Fire	22
Featured Life Member Gary Welch	24
Pyramid Peak Fire	26
Checking the Canopy	28
Across Three Divides	29
My Shortest Time Aloft	31
Smokeyjumper Milestones	32
Touching All Bases	33
Downside	34
Trail Crew Project Report	35
Letters	35, 58
NSA Guest Book	36
Update on Grievance by Eight Missoula	
Smokeyjumpers	36
Elmer Neufeld in His Own Words	37
Parallels	41
Items from the Fire Pack	42
Odds and Ends	44
Featured Life Member	
Delos “Dee” Dutton	45
Blast from the Past	46
Off the List	46
A Tribute to Bill Wood	48
Member Profile Hal Werner	50
West Yellowstone 50th Anniversary	
Celebration	51
A New Future for Wildfire Training	52
Jump List	54
The View from Outside the Fence	57



SMOKEJUMPER, ISSUE NO. 35, APRIL 2002

Smokeyjumper is published by:

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION
ISSN 1532-6160

The opinions of the writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the NSA.

Managing Editor: *Chuck Sheley*

Editing: *Ed Booth, Francine Gair, Melody Martinsen*

Profiles and Features: *Roger Archibald, Jim Budenholzer, Ted Burgon, Pic Littell and Chris Sorenson*

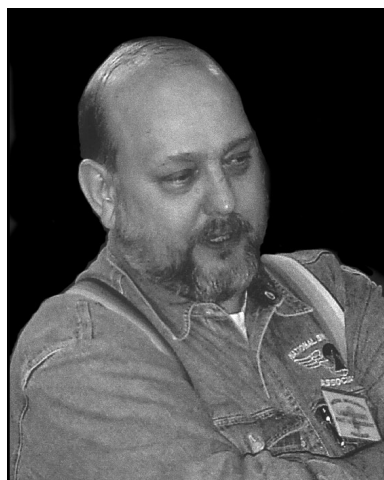
Illustrators: *McElderry Books, Nick Holmes, Chris Demarest, Ken Morris, Dan Veenendaal and Eric Rajala*

Layout/Printing: *Larry S. Jackson, Heidelberg Graphics, Chico, CA*

Cover photo: *Alaska smokejumper La-ona DeWilde (Fairbanks '99) after practice jump. (Photo by Mike McMillan/spotfireimages.com)*



Observations from the Ad Shack



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

IT'S TIME ONCE AGAIN TO remind all NSA members to participate in NSA activities.

First on this list is to pull the voting information out of *Smokeyjumper* magazine, select your favorite candidates for Board of Directors, and mail the form back to Chuck Sheley. Voting is extremely important because your Board sets all NSA policies and determines how NSA revenues will be spent. Under our bylaws, members do not vote on the annual budget or on almost any other functional issue of the NSA. Members do, however, elect the board of directors that makes those decisions.

Second, the NSA always needs members to step forward and take one of the many jobs that are available. Events like our Redding reunion and *Smokeyjumper* magazine do not just “happen.” It takes dedicated folks who accept responsibility to make them happen. Reevaluate your personal time and let us

know if you want to become involved in running the NSA. More importantly, run for a Board position or volunteer to assist one of our many chairmen. If you are not sure how you can help, give me a call or send an e-mail. We get lots of ideas but often don't have anyone who will step forward and take the idea to fruition.

Third, call a few friends and encourage all of them to become members of the NSA. If necessary, buy them a gift membership. For yourself, save Membership Chair Fred Cooper some time by purchasing a multiple year membership for yourself instead of a single year's membership.

Better yet, for only \$1,000 you can become a life member. Your life membership fee will be retained in a permanent fund that will ensure the continuation of the NSA in perpetuity. At present, we have 80 life members, nearly double the number of life members we had in June 2001.

Another 11 members are on a payment plan, which means that we will shortly have over 90 life members. That's right, if you can't pay the full \$1,000 in one lump sum, set up a payment plan that will net you a life membership. Fred Cooper has several different payment plan options he can offer you.

These 91 jumpers will have created a fund of \$90,000 that will be used to generate revenue for the NSA long after they've made their last jump here on earth. 🦋

Women Celebrate 20 Years of Smokejumping

by Tara Rothwell (Redmond '92)

Everyone was invited! If you didn't make it, you missed one hell of a good time. On December 7 and 8 the women of smokejumping, their friends and families came together in Sun Valley, Idaho for their 20th reunion. The 80 people present included past and present smokejumpers, their friends and families, representatives from the Women in the Fire Service organization and other wildland firefighters. We also gathered to honor **Deanne Shulman** (McCall '81), the first woman smokejumper. We came together to celebrate who we are. It was a unique and empowering experience to come together as women normally

NSA Members—Save This Information

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

Smokejumper Magazine & Merchandise

Articles, change of mailing address, orders
Chuck Sheley 530-893-0436
10 Judy Ln
Chico CA 95926
cnkgshley@earthlink.net

Membership

Fred Cooper 503-391-9144
NSA Membership
1445 Rainier Loop NW
Salem OR 97304-2079
frederi920@aol.com

Everything Else

Larry Lufkin 360-459-2534
NSA President
7101 Alderwood CT SE
Olympia WA 98503
JUMPERCJ63@aol.com

spread thin among bases and states, to celebrate our connections, and to realize that we are not alone.

Be Outrageous

Lori Messenger (Missoula '00) started off the event in her usual eloquent and succinct presentation style. She covered her life experiences that led her to firefighting and then smokejumping. She reminded us how important it is that women are doing this job. "It matters that we have done this. It matters that we are pushing ourselves, going after the lives we want." She spoke of the contribution and role models of her parents, especially her mother, who scoffed at the Daisy Duke standard of women of her day, choosing strength and muscle instead. (At 60, her mother has qualified for the triathlon World Championships in Cancun next year).

Lori reminded us that, as women smokejumpers past and present, we have much to be proud of. She gave a brief history of women in firefighting and smokejumping, starting with women recruited for fighting forest fires during WWII.

Lori encouraged the audience "to be our most outrageous, honest, silly and serious selves." She urged us to become visible, to share ourselves and to make a difference. We must ask each other questions, listen to the stories, and feel safe in sharing our experiences, good and bad. Then, we should take our stories to our communities, share them with the young girls and hope for a moment they forget about the color of their nail polish, the shape of their thighs. If they can disregard what their magazines and TV programs encourage them to obsess about, they can look within and become all they want to be.

Support from the Men

We were privileged to hear from a few men who have been very outspoken champions of women in firefighting and smokejumping—**Ed Ward** (Missoula '80), **Steve Dickenson** (LaGrande '78) and **Mike Fitzpatrick** (Redmond '78). They also came to honor Deanne and her accomplishments.

Former smokejumpers Ed Ward and Steve Dickenson spoke of their early acquaintance with Deanne and of jumping fires together. Steve was the

lucky old-timer who happened to be Deanne's jump partner on her first booster trip to Region 6. Needless to say, he was cautious about jumping with any rookie, but found himself quickly impressed with the rookie woman.

Mike Fitzpatrick insisted that he was not one of the Alaska smokejumpers who lost their lunch at the news that Deanne had completed rookie training and was (Grangeville '85) making her debut on the jump list. But he admitted he was equally as disheartened and upset as the rest of the Alaska bros. "How tough could my job really be if a woman could do it?" he recalled lamenting. As we all know, Mike has seen the light and grown into one of the most ardent supporters of women in smokejumping. Mike concluded by noting the remarkable contributions and changes he has seen in the smokejumper organization since Deanne's pioneering moment.

Smokejumping and Parenting

Leslie Anderson (Missoula '84) spoke about strength in diversity and reminisced about her early days and her desire to become a firefighter. The unenthusiastic negativism she met" had the "unintended effect of solidifying my determination and heading me down a road I am essentially still on." Leslie went on to work on a district crew, helitack crew and hotshot crew, and jumped for six seasons. She did all this while completing a bachelor's degree in Forestry at U.C. Berkeley and a master's in Forestry with an emphasis in fire ecology from the University of Montana.

Her life changed, she said, the day a co-worker brought his 2-year-old daughter to work. "Something about her sweet, curious face struck some evolutionary hormonal chord with me, and my brain said very clearly, 'I want one of those.'" Now she is the mother of two sons, Adam and Dan. Their births threw some real obstacles in her career path in fire management, however.

"I felt guilty for not accepting fire assignments, but I felt worse when I took them. No one can warn you adequately how much you will adore your children or how leaving them behind will feel like you are tearing off your right arm." Leslie knew that, to get her all-important red card skills, she would have to leave her family for weeks. Putting family first, she looked for a more compatible job. She landed a job at MTDC as an equipment specialist, heading the fire shelter project before her eldest child started kindergarten. She had to leave her love of fire ecology, but has now been able to make her family a priority without sacrificing her strong work ethic.

Leslie had some profound comments about mothers as smokejumpers, with broad implications to both potential parents and management. "I think that an unfortunate but necessary part of the struggle for women's professional equality had been the unspoken requirement that we be mute about our roles as mothers while at work," she concluded. "We almost had to pretend we weren't mothers. I hope now we are to the point where we can speak our voices as mothers and openly and vocally cherish our children. I loved smokejumping—the adventure, the challenge and the camaraderie—but even smokejumping pales in comparison to the joy of holding my brand-new sons and of raising them to be good men."

Meeting the WASPs

During WWII, when good men were hard to come by, 1074 women quit their jobs to become pilots for the war. **Kelly Esterbrook** (Redmond '86) introduced us to the WASP (Women Air Force Service Pilots). Unfortunately, none were able to gather with us, but we became acquainted with them via film documentary. A sense of connectedness could not be denied, as we all shared their stubbornness, tenacity and passion in doing what they loved to do. They were forgotten after WWII, but were true war heroines and pioneering examples for adventurous women of the future.

Wild Nights and Tequila

Another pioneering woman, **Kim Maynard** (Missoula '82), who rookied shortly after Deanne, jumped for eight years and became the first woman squad leader, said, "It's about being who you are—isn't it?" She spoke of a time about two years in when she doubted that jumping really was for her. She recalled listening to her guts and realizing that everything about jumping was truly her: "the jumps, being in the woods, chewing tobacco, all night digs, wild nights and tequila." She noted that the thread through her life has been all about adventure—learning and doing something that matters.

Kim is now Dr. Kim Maynard with a Ph.D. in International Affairs and is an assistant professor at George Washington University. She currently consults on post-conflict reintegration for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID) and the United States Institute of Peace. She has worked with international government, non-governmental organizations and private foundations on disaster and humanitarian issues for 23 years. In her work, she has met the women of many of the war-torn countries of our generation and has found

Celebrating 20 Years of Women in Smokejumping

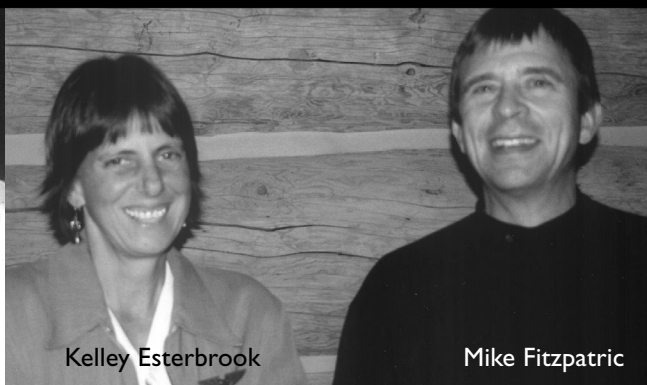
(All photos courtesy of Tara Rothwell)



Tara Rothwell

Margarita Phillips

Kasey Rose

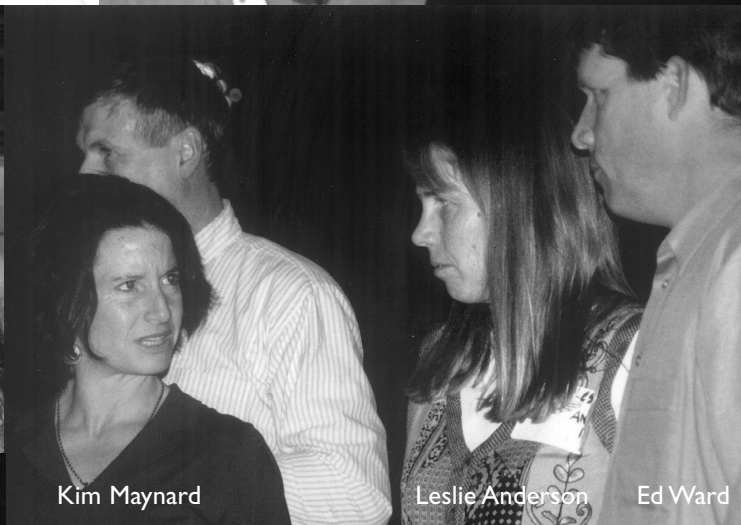


Kelley Esterbrook

Mike Fitzpatric



Doug and Margarita Phillips



Kim Maynard

Leslie Anderson

Ed Ward



Deanne Shulman

Leslie Anderson



Margarita Phillips

Karen Morrow

Kasey Rose



Michelle Moore

Shelly Dunlap



Karen Morrow

Kim Maynard

Brenda Tracy

another element in what counts: "Courage, as well as knowing and then acting."

She concluded with a quote from the book, *When I am an Old Woman, I Shall Wear Purple* (Sandra Haldeman Martz, editor): "You have earned the right to sing and dance anywhere."

Guest of Honor: Breaking Barriers

Our guest of honor and recognition also spoke to the crowd. In quiet humility, Deanne Shulman spoke of her experiences as the first woman smokejumper. "The challenges I considered the most difficult to overcome in becoming a smokejumper were the same ones all of you faced: looking out the door before that first parachute jump with eyes as big as saucers and grueling packouts. These are the great equalizers in smokejumping, as they challenge both genders and level the playing field."

Deanne was not only the first woman smokejumper, but also the first in a number of positions with Forest Service fire management. She has been quietly breaking barriers and setting standards of the highest level for women in fire through her entire career. All the while she has remained quiet and reticent, but hardworking and ever-enduring.

A few months before the reunion, Deanne began receiving e-mails from her second-grade classmates, who were organizing a reunion and had found her via

a web search that ended at the jump list on the NSA site. E-mails that circulated amongst her classmates read like this:

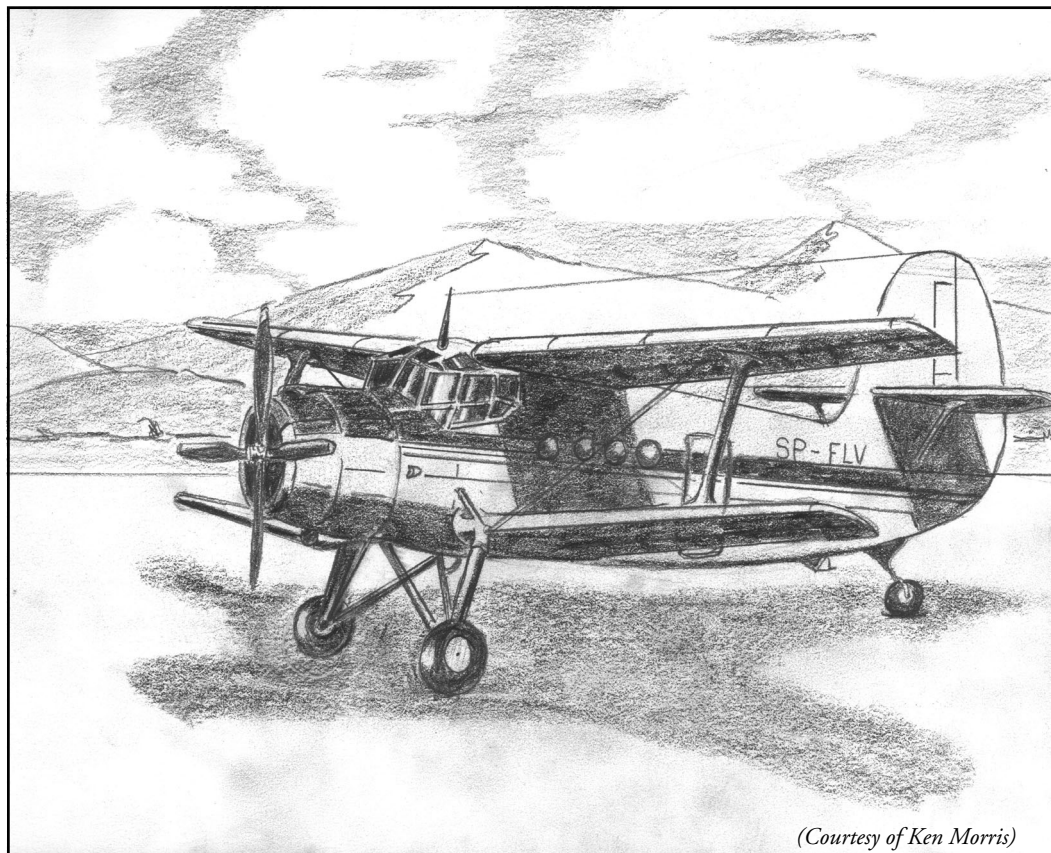
"I honestly can't imagine how you did it. Perhaps I'm wrong, or being silly, but my awe of your courage is quite real. You may want to keep a low profile, but in my book you're right up there with the women pioneers I mention below. Those smokejumpers are as brave as it gets, and to me the first woman smokejumper is somewhere above Amelia Earhart—or at least at the same level. This is really big stuff, kind of like Sally Ride. Actually, I think it would be much more difficult than Sally Ride, for that matter; there was a lot of pressure for Sally Ride, but also a lot of supervision and a relatively high profile, well-educated, well-bred, gentlemanly bunch of fellow astronauts. Smokejumpers I've met, on the other hand, are about as rude as they come, sort of like lumberjacks with a death wish and they probably hated the idea of a woman joining them. I'll bet it crossed many of their minds that it would be so easy to cut a shroud or riser and she'd be out of their hair, with few or no questions asked. Like I said, she is a hero in my book. ..."

In her soft, humble way, Deanne denies that strength of character, determination, bravery and courage are the attributes that allowed her to succeed. She feels that her main driving force has been sheer

stubbornness. Her father imprinted his values of independence, self-sufficiency and fighting for what was desired.

Deanne went on to describe herself as a "fire crone." That is fitting, since a woman in the crone phase is considered to be more authentic, creative, outrageous, powerful, funny, healing and profound than at any other time in her life.

Deanne concluded with some words of wisdom for the group: "As women in a male-dominated profession, we tend to subdue and mute our voices and truths. But



(Courtesy of Ken Morris)

we in this room need not wait until we are crones to speak our clear vision and voice. We are women and we all have experience as smokejumpers. We have unique stories to tell and perspectives to share, so let's tell them and let's be heard. As surely as my parents left their imprints on my life, let us boldly leave our indelible footprints in the workplace and the rest of the world. Fifty years from now, let's be sure our children and grandchildren know our stories and our truths."

More Honors

That night we re-gathered for dinner, drinking dancing and fun. **Richard "Deak" Dollard** (Missoula '98) presented **Deanne Shulman** with a beautiful sketch, for her accomplishments as a smokejumper. **Margarita Phillips** (Missoula '88) was honored for all her hard work in making this event happen, for her work in the Washington office and for all her contributions to the smokejumper program. **Leslie Anderson** received an award from the Region 1 smokejumpers for her contributions to the R1 smokejumper safety program.

We were honored to have **Olympic Biathlete Lyle Nelson**, Nordic Venue head at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, speak to us about following dreams and believing (not new concepts for this crowd).

He likened Margarita Phillips to Eleanor Roosevelt, who worked for the rights of the oppressed and for better working conditions for women. Eleanor changed the role of the first lady with her outspokenness, by addressing issues and general political topics. She led men and women into greater understanding of social issues and international issues. She was not a quiet First Lady, but said what she thought and changed things that needed to be changed. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do." For those of you who know Margarita, I think you can easily hear her uttering similar words.

Earlier in the day, Kim Maynard had reflected on the day she first met Margarita. She said, "I'm 30, I have two boys and I want to jump." Kim tells of looking at her in her freshly ironed pink shirt, her long flowing hair, her jewelry and her manicured fingernails, and thinking "yeah, right." Of course, we all know Margarita trained, busted butt and became a smokejumper.

Lyle went on to compare Kim Maynard to Isadora Duncan, who was a renegade ballet dancer in the early 1900s. She is said to have been gifted with poetic

vision and dance talent. She rejected the rigidity of ballet and went on to develop modern dance. A free spirit, she is described as looking to the root of dance for her inspiration.

Then he likened Deanne Shulman to Rosa Parks, who in 1955 refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama, and triggered a black boycott of the city's bus system that ultimately led to laws that ended segregation. Rosa Parks said, "My only concern was to get home after a hard day's work." I think had Deanne been asked, she might have said, "My only concern was to come to the end of the packout with 115 pounds on my back, take care of my blisters and get on the jump list."

The night progressed with lots of good food and spirits, dancing and the big flip, which was won by an ecstatic member of the *National Geographic* film crew (who did the good deed of turning part of the money over to the event and part to the bar). A silent auction was also held with donated items. The money raised was used to help cover the cost of the event.

Winding Down

Saturday morning the women smokejumpers met at the Sun Valley Nordic Center and spent the day visiting and skiing. There was lots of snow and it was a cold, clear, beautiful day.

Later that evening we all met once again. We discussed issues of importance to us as women smokejumpers—family, pregnancy, periwinkle, how things have and have not changed since Deanne's debut on the jump list, just to name a few topics. We also had more awards.

Kasey Rose (Winthrop '89) received the Tony Broderick Award for her inspiration to women smokejumpers, for her leadership, and for just being who she is. She attained the highest GS rating (GS-9) among the women jumpers (way to go, girl!). **Robyn Embry** (Grangeville '85) was honored for longest-jumping woman smokejumper. **Kelly Esterbrook**, **Irene Saphra** (Redmond '86) and **Lori Messenger** were also acknowledged for making the reunion happen.

The next reunion is likely to be in five years. You will all be invited, and we hope to see you there. 🍷

Tara Rothwell jumped at Redmond from 1992–1995. She has a bachelor's degree in physiology from U.C. Davis and a masters in exercise physiology from the U. of Montana. Tara and her husband Kirk (Redmond '92) currently live in Portola, CA, where Tara splits her time working in the Eastern Plumas Hospital and for the Reno Emergency Physicians Group. Tara is currently the first woman candidate for the NSA Board of Directors.

Memoirs of a Lookout—Part II

By Bob Scott (Associate)

One summer I was detailed to the Paysayten Wilderness. After a turn on trail crew and phone line repair, I went to the Rimmel Mountain Lookout. It was the highest mountain in that part of the state, so I was eager to get to the top where I could see the view. I wasn't disappointed, for visibility allowed a person to see south into the Big Bend area of Central Washington.

The view into Canada was equally good, and I counted a half-dozen watersheds before the haze obscured further vision.

It was an interesting but uneventful summer. I enjoyed watching pikas storing grass for winter, eagles and hawks observing them, and the company of a friendly whistler.

The smokejumpers did not have to come into the Paysayten Wilderness that summer, but I did observe the Ford Tri-Motor flying below me through Andrews Pass several times.

The next spring I was called by Frank Burge to withdraw from college, and come and help set up aircraft-warning stations. Charlie Johnson, **George Honey** (North Cascades '40) and I got supplies up to Sweetgrass Lookout, about 20 miles north of Winthrop. To get to the lookout we went on horseback for most of the way until the snow got too deep. The last two miles we had to backpack our supplies on snowshoes.

We were to report all aircraft to the Army in Seattle. Between late March and late April we saw one plane, a lone B-17 that buzzed the tower while on a training mission. We were surprised to see such a large plane so close. We were so surprised we almost didn't report it, but did so when we got over our shock.

Later that spring I also helped as a relief spotter on First Butte Lookout for two weeks, while the regular personnel got a break.

After a stretch on trail crew, again with Johnson and Honey, I got married and took my wife, Olive, to Rimmel Mountain Lookout. We stayed there until the end of fire season as lookouts and aircraft spotters. When Rimmel was closed we acted as relief spotters for Sweetgrass Lookout, First Butte Lookout and Harts Pass Lookout.

In October I enlisted in the Army Air Force and was stationed in Arizona for most of the war. After being discharged I returned to college.

Olive and I were given summer jobs on Sweetgrass

Lookout. We returned to Sweetgrass for a total of five seasons. We had a number of opportunities to observe smokejumpers in action, as well as spotter planes used to observe blind spots and areas no longer covered by lookouts. Spotter planes (which were mostly surplus L-5s)

occasionally dropped us mail and fresh produce. The plane used by the jumpers was a Nourdyn Norseman. We saw a drop on Ortell Creek about two miles east of the lookout.

A particularly interesting occurrence was a jump on a small fire in a clump of trees on the ridge, about two-and-a-half miles north of us. The jumpers had no level place to land. Through our binoculars we watched them jump, and we could see they were okay. It didn't take them more than a couple of hours to get the fire out.

After it was out they hiked to our lookout, where they waited for a truck to take them back to the airport. We were told that a chopper was on the way. It seems that a crop duster from the Walla Walla area had a contract with the USFS to explore potential uses of choppers. The pilot had fulfilled his contract but had a number of unused flying hours, so he volunteered to go anywhere they might need him. He landed on flat spot near the station.

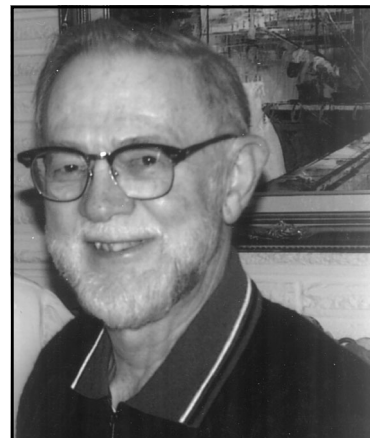
Because he was limited in horsepower at that altitude (more than 6,000 feet), he could take only one smokejumper. He asked the smokejumpers, "Which one of you wants a ride?"

One young man did not seem interested, but the other, a fellow who looked like a linebacker, was eager. The pilot asked him how much he weighed.

"Oh, about a hundred and eighty-five pounds," the smokejumper said.

"Okay. Climb on board," said the pilot.

The engine revved up and the chopper lifted about five feet but then settled back down. The engine revved up again to what I suppose was its maximum RPM and



Bob Scott (Courtesy of Bob Scott)

the craft lifted about 15 feet and nosed down among the trees, barely missing some until it picked up air speed.

I suppose that increased air speed contributes to lift.

The young fellow waiting for the truck asked me, "What's the trouble with that helicopter?"

When I told him the pilot said he couldn't carry more than 185 pounds, the smokejumper who stayed behind said, "I think he weighs about 225 pounds!"

So much for a smokejumper getting a chopper ride that was almost his last! (Incidentally, I later checked the route over which they had flown. From that vantage point I could see there was ample clearance for a safe flight out.) The helicopter returned a day or two later with some mail and fresh produce.

All in all, most lookouts welcomed the smokejumpers as their good work got fires under control in short order, and saved many a lookout a hard trek to fires and back. 🌲

Bob Scott lived on a ranch just south of the Intercity Airport where the NCSB smokejumper base is located. During the summers he worked as a firefighter and a lookout fireman. During WWII he spent three years as a flight instructor in the Army Air Corps. After graduating from Eastern Washington College, Bob taught science at the junior high school level retiring in 1984 after teaching 37 years at the same school.

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

MERL "BUD" FILLER

by Ted Burgon

BUD SPENT THREE years, 1952–54, jumping out of McCall, and then one year as a forester on the Payette National Forest before he entered the Army. During this time he received his bachelor of science in forestry and forest science from Penn State. He later received a master of forestry in forest products from the University of British Columbia.

He spent a short time in the 10 Mountain Division before it was deactivated and the 75-mm howitzers, packed by mules, were phased out. The Army sold the mules and the old wooden skis and shut down Camp Hale in Colorado. From there Bud was transferred to the 9th Infantry Division where he spent the next two years as an artillery officer. The 9th was a training division at that time.

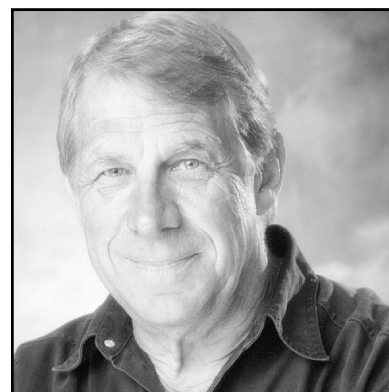
The lure of Idaho drew him back and into logging in the Clearwater River country. He was on the last of the log drives on the Clearwater before the Ahsaka Dam closed the river to logging. This was the era of "cork boots and peaveys with ice water up to your

waist all day." Over the years Bud worked in sawmills and plywood mills and up through the ranks in sales and finally into management for Boise Cascade.

In 1988 he went into business with an old friend, a hotshot firefighter and logger, Wayne King. Together they formed the Filler King Company in Homedale, Idaho. The company manufactures engineered wood products, glue-laminated beams, decking and structural lumber. The products are shipped nationwide.

Still actively running the business, Bud flies his Aviat Husky when he has the time. He writes, "I'd like to do more flying into remote mountain strips when the pucker factor allows it. When I get out of this business my plans are to do more flying back over those mountains where we jumped in the '50s. I'd like to do more roaming in those same mountains hunting with a bow and do more writing."

Many know Bud from his memoir, *Two-Man Stick*, that he had published by Burning Mountain Press. Many more will know him once they tell the family what they would like for their



birthday. The great thing about this book is that it is about the adventures a young man has in the mountains of Idaho, in the early days when aerial fire fighting was in its infancy.

Regarding, *Two-Man Stick*, Tom Kovalicky, a retired Nez Perce Forest supervisor writes, *Two-Man Stick* is about the go-to-hell years of being a smokejumper in the fifties. This book goes beyond exciting—it's a great tribute to the jumpers."

Cecil D. Andrus, former governor of Idaho wrote about *Two-Man Stick*, *Two-Man Stick* is a well-written page turner on a fascinating subject. ..."

We wish you well on fulfilling your dreams, Bud. 🌲

Recollections of Rod Dow

by Wild Bill Yensen (McCall '53)

Back in '68, at McCall, we had two NEDS with pretty long hair, **Larva Swan** and **Rod Dow**. Big Ernie, in his infinite wisdom, saw to it that I got to have one of those two long-hairs for a jump partner on his first fire jump and it was Rod Dow.

We were backing up R-6 over at La Grande, Ore. Rod and I were dispatched to the Umatilla in the old blue, Twin Beech, "Jumper Dumper," around noon on July 7, 1968. The fire's name was Rodgers Ridge. It was out in the sagebrush right next to a road. The air was calm and we had what you would call a "gravy jump." We landed, picked up our gear, tooled up and dug about 20 yards of line. A green pickup and a van full of pounders pulled up, and we were told to load our gear on the pickup and head back to base. Rod was greatly impressed. He said, "What a great job jumping is! Easy jump, soft landing, work for five minutes and go back for another go-around!" We had a nice long ride back to La Grande from Southern Washington and got three hours oats (overtime) travel time.

My next vivid recollection of Rod was certainly the most memorable. We were hauling hay to Paddy Flat for the Forest's mules to eat that winter. I was driving the five-ton truck and Rod and another guy were with me. We got to Paddy Flat and unloaded just in time to eat lunch. All the single jumpers were eating lunches prepared at the jumper kitchen by Dale Carey. As we sat in the shade to eat our lunches Rod picked up a mule turd that was hard, dry and bleached white.

He held it up, looked at it and said "I wonder what it would be like to eat this?"

Jerry Blattner (McCall '63) said,

"I'll give you a buck if you will!" Jerry Ogawa (McCall 67) and I both said we would also give him a buck. Soon enough guys had chipped that the pot was \$10.

Rod took out his buck knife and sliced the mule turd in as thin of slices as he could. He opened one of his "Dale Carey special" sandwiches, took out the meat and ate it. He then spread the sliced Mule turd on the bread and topped it with all the catsup and mustard



packets he could scrounge up. He closed up the sandwich and ate it! About halfway through, a piece of mule turd stuck to his lip and he scooped it in like a hawk swallowing a mouse. He got the \$10 and didn't even get sick!

The next year was the Shell Creek fire on the Salmon. After we had controlled the fire, we all went swimming in the river, buck-naked, of course. Rod would hand walk on the tram cable over the river and do back or front flips. He put on a great show.

The following year I did the fitness test with Rod and half a dozen other guys. At the end of the run with time running out, Rod stopped and walked the last 10 yards stepping across the line exactly at the last second. Thad Duel was timing.

In 1970 Rod came up with the idea of the "big flip," which has turned into a great jumper tradition. I even won it in 1978!

In 1971 McCall was called to back up Silver City. We took a 20-man crew and went down in a DC-4. Rod and I were at the bottom of the list. When we got there, all but the two of us got fire jumps. For the next four days Rod and I were at the top of the list and got three hours oats every night. One night we were slow getting back to Silver City and the eating establishments were about to close. Rod and I ran to the nearest one and he ordered the usual burger-fries-shake. They also had Mexican food so I ordered the first thing I saw on the menu, a green enchilada. When it came it was huge, jalapenos a little cheese and a couple of tortillas down under all those jalapenos. I tell you what, "it was hot!"

I was hungry and ate all I could. I still had a pretty good sized hunk left, and Rod had long since polished off his fare. I said, "Want to try some of this? It's pretty good."

Rod in his usual delicate manner took the whole hunk and stuffed it into his mouth. He chewed and gulped it down quickly, and then with tears running down his cheeks, said, "I think I'll amputate my tongue!"

The next day Rod and I jumped way up in the Jeffery pines on the Gila about 10 miles from the cliff

Did You Lose Your Rookie Jump Pin?

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

dwelling. We had a nice little two-manner and a good time.

During an off season, Rod went to see **Jeff Fereday** (McCall '70) who was living in New York City. He rode the subway near as he could to where Jeff was staying and walked the rest of the way. He was in his usual attire: white boots that laced up to the knees, cut-off black jeans, sweatshirt with the sleeves cut out, long hair with a blue bandanna head band. When he got to Jeff's place, Jeff asked how he got there. When described the route he had walked, Jeff about fell over! He had walked through the African-American part of New York! Those guys who saw him walk by thought he must be either the baddest or the dumbest dude they ever saw so they let him go.

At the Redding Reunion, Rod was honored for being the only jumper to serve for 32 years and never make GS-7.

After jumping in Alaska for several years, Rod came through San Diego where I was teaching. He spent a night with us on his way to Mexico for the winter. He told me he had to fill out a form for the BLM. One space said, "years of experience." He put down 13. Next the form asked, "Want to make a career of it?" He said he answered, "NO."

I only jumped with Rod during his early years in McCall, but he is indeed an extraordinary person. He was a great athlete, a very good firefighter, and one of the biggest nuts I have ever known. I am proud to be his friend. To smokejumpers, Rod is a real Bro! 🍷

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

The Jump

Coming over the target, you step to the door,
Both hands on the rail, your feet on the floor,
Jumping from the plane you feel the bind,
As your jumper cable snaps the static line.
The plane flies on and leaves you there,
To drift to the earth with but one care.
Your canopy's full, your lines are straight,
There's nothing to do now but relax and wait.
The ground below seems rising too fast,
Your jump to the earth is over at last.

Author: Unknown
Redmond Smokejumper '74
Courtesy **Ron Morlan** (Redmond '69)



Sounding Off from the Editor



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

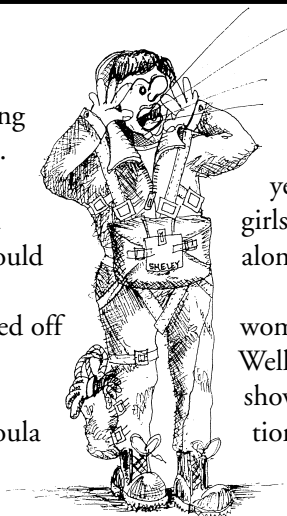
I HAD A VERY rewarding experience in December. My wife and I took the 1400-mile round trip drive to Sun Valley, ID, where we attended the gathering of the women smokejumpers celebrating 20 years of women in smokejumping. Doubts crossed my mind as to the advisability of making this trip. I really wanted to make contact with this group and see if I could stir up some interest in the NSA. Currently we only have a few female jumpers as members. Beyond that, I would probably not know a single individual in attendance. Then there were the whiteout conditions Thursday night when we were on the road to Twin Falls. This trip was turning into something else!

So it was with a mixture of apprehension and enthusiasm that this trip was made. I had the same feelings a year ago making the journey to the CPS-103 reunion in Iowa. That turned out to be a great experience meeting

many of the pioneer smokejumpers and making new friends and contacts. Even with the miserable driving conditions, I had my hopes up that this would be a good trip.

The conference kicked off Friday afternoon with a variety of speakers. Margarita Phillips (Missoula '88) and Lori Messinger (Missoula '00) were the ramrods with Lori leading off with a super presentation. New base managers Ed Ward (Missoula) and Steve Dickenson (NCSB) took their turns at the mike showing their support for the group. I was listed for a turn to speak on behalf of the NSA. Since I was down the line, I had an opportunity to take in the thoughts of the others and that got me thinking of events outside the NSA. My notes stayed in the folder and it was time to "wing it."

It was time to relate to life experiences. I've coached for 37 years, much of that time devoted to women's athletics. In 1966 I thought it was time that the talented female runners in my classes had the opportunity to compete in cross-country. I was the boy's coach at that time and there were no programs for the girls. So we started a girl's team. No other schools in the area had a girl's program so we just had an extra race at each meet with the Chico girls running against their teammates each week. I knew what would happen. Girls from other schools who were spectators



soon started asking their coaches why they didn't have a team? Each year the sport grew and girls cross-country has grown along with all other sports.

How does this relate to women in smokejumping? Well for one thing, I hoped to show that men of my generation are not close-minded in the area of women in the workforce. Too

many times we get painted with the same brush as those who have put the roadblocks in the way of women in our society. Many of us have been going around those barriers long before Title IX and the Consent Decree.

Ten years after my initial girls cross-country team, my 1976 Chico High girls ended the season ranked #2 in the nation. One runner went on to become a Division 1 All-American at Cal Berkeley; another qualified for the 1980 U.S. Olympic Team trials and still competes in ultra-distance races; another is currently nationally ranked in masters swimming. Out of that program came a runner who later came back as a grad student and acted as my assistant coach for several years. In addition, she put in six seasons on my Type II fire crews in the Mendocino N.F. She currently is a smokejumper at Boise having completed nine years in that position.

My current goals are to increase our female membership in the NSA and get female representation on our board of directors. There is too much talent

out there to ignore half of it!

I was walking out of church this morning when I heard "Hey, Chuck". It was a valued friend (Don) who is an official in the National Football League. I immediately asked why he was not working today (Sunday) and thought he might have been injured. Not the case; he worked the Oakland Raider-San Diego Charger game played on Saturday. We briefly talked and he said that he was having a great season with high marks being given for all games to this point. I personally can't think of any position which

is so "pressure packed" as an NFL official. Is there any other job where you are videotaped on every move and then have your actions dissected by a group of evaluators on a weekly basis? In addition there are always 50,000 fans and a smaller number of media types who always express their opinions regardless of their lack of knowledge of the rules. Talk about job pressure. Don has hopes that after 13 seasons in the NFL he will get to work the Super Bowl. When we parted, he related that there are many factors involved in getting that assignment, politics being

almost as important as job performance.

I've written about women smokejumpers and a National Football League official. We can see some similarities in job performances being highly scrutinized and politics playing a big part in success. My NFL friend also related that his potential Super Bowl assignment is out of his hands and all he can do now is give his best effort every moment of every game. This is a good goal for all of us regardless of the job. 🦁

Fire Shelter Update from Jim Roth

In the January issue of Smokejumper magazine, NSA Historian Steve Smith called the reader's attention to the efforts of Jim Roth to develop a new and improved fire shelter. Jim's brother, Roger Roth (McCall '92), was one of the fourteen firefighters killed in the Storm King Fire in 1994. Jim, quit his job as an aeronautical engineer and has made it his life's work to build a better fire shelter. Below is an update from Jim.

Based on your past interest, I wanted to give you the latest status on our Storm King Mountain fire shelter tents for wildland burnover protection. At the present time we have two different fire shelter designs that are undergoing performance tests by the USDA Forest Service. They are formulating and using the performance based test standards that all fire shelters will have to undergo for evaluation in the future. The Forest Service is not only testing our Storm King Mountain fire shelters, but other materials from private companies which have been sewn together in a USDA Forest Service design and shape.

Their intentions are to complete all of the testing in the next 30 days and have a complete evaluation summary finished soon after for review by a National Review Committee from the Federal fire agencies. Some of the criteria to be evaluated are the fire shelter performance in radiant and convective heat environments, durability, strength, toxicity when heated, size, weight, bulk and cost. The Review Committee will select the improved fire shelter design that will be adopted by all Federal agencies for the 2003 fire season. The General Services Administration (GSA) should go out around May 2002,

with Requests for Bids to various companies to fabricate and deliver this improved fire shelter that will be manufactured to new Forest Service drawings.

I have been told that whether or not our Storm King Mountain fire shelter is selected, we will be on the "Bidders List" to compete for the GSA production contract to build these new, improved fire shelters. In the first half of 2002, we should have a rough idea of how much fire departments should budget for the new shelters, and their final size and weight.

Over the years we have encouraged and prodded fire fighting agencies to adopt our fire shelter design. CAL-OSHA and the California Department of Forestry (CDF) have evaluated it recently, but we were never able to get any agencies to place our fire

shelters into service for test or evaluation. It appears that our efforts were not in vain...

Firefighters are now very close to getting a better fire shelter tent. This is what we have wanted during our eight year effort in pushing fire shelter development. I congratulate the people at the Missoula Technology and Development Center for moving so quickly during the past two years!

So, stay tuned. We are not offering our fire shelter to the fire community until we understand these performance test results and what decision the Federal agencies will make on the final shelter design.

Jim Roth can be contacted at: Storm King Mountain Technologies, 805-484-7267

E-mail: jim.roth@stormkingmtn.com 🦁

They Jump for Your Life

by James E. Hanson

Outdoor Life magazine November, 1956

By permission of Time4 Media Magazines, Inc.

Things looked tough for Harlon B. Davis that hunting season of 1948. He'd come 1,500 miles from his El Dorado Springs, Missouri, home to hunt the fabled big-game country of the Bitter Root Mountains, but he got lost and was soon stumbling toward death.

The 63-year-old Missourian was wandering somewhere in the mile-high back country of the Selway-Bitterroot area, some parts of which are still virtually unexplored. After five days Davis was so far gone that he'd lost his rifle, his socks, dentures, glasses, gloves, knife—everything necessary to survival except shirt, pants, jacket, and shoes. He hadn't eaten for five days. There were no berries left, no dry wood, and winter was overdue. His mind was wavering even worse than his feet.

His hunting companions were frantic. They'd called the U.S. Forest Service, of course, and rangers and other hunters had combed the vast region as well as they could. After bloodhounds failed to turn up a clue in two days and nights, the rangers pulled out the last card in their deck. They radioed for the smokejumper rescue squad at Missoula, Montana, 100 miles north.

This tough young outfit, then less than eight years old, had a big reputation—not as big as the two-million-acre Selway-Bitterroot wilderness, but big enough to offer a hope.

The Forest Service called its boss rescue man, **Bill Wood** (Missoula '43), at his home in Missoula at 11:30 the night of October 11. Wood's problem was to take a non-existent crew and find Davis in 3,000 square miles of roadless timber and mountain peaks.

Wood is a natural for such an assignment. Born and raised in Missoula, he had hunted, fished and camped in most of the regional wilderness areas long before he set out to become an aerial forester in 1943. He'd just completed two years of a wild-life technology course at Montana State University at Missoula and was all set to go to the Army. But Army medical examiners surprisingly rejected the bull-shouldered, 170-pound red-head—hay-fever allergies and poor eyesight.

So Wood with wounded physical pride turned from college to smokejumping, which was about the toughest war-effort job a civilian could find.

The smokejumpers, organized as a wild-haired experiment in 1940, gained stature when World War II drained away the big ground crews that walked in to fight back-country fires, and the jumpers took over dramatically. Their plane would be over a remote-area fire minutes after it was reported, spilling out a few men trained to float down and nip the blaze in the bud. Thus a handful of jumpers like Wood choked off the fires that once took battalions of ground fighters. They raised the

Forest Service smokejumping project from a hesitant founding into a permanent unit that now handles urgent fire or rescue jobs all over the West.

At 33, Bill Wood is getting old for jumping. His wife is alternately worried and proud of her husband's work; their two sons, ages seven and five, take it for granted.

In answer to the call for help in finding Davis, Wood said, "We'll be ready at daybreak." But he said it with his fingers crossed, for the fire season was a month past and his jumpers were scattered, going to school or working.

He phoned around and got eight volunteers who were attending Montana State U. Then he enlisted four more who were working in the Forest Service engineering shops in Missoula. They checked out their gear before dawn at the chute loft at Hale Field, on the south edge of the city, and picked up another summer jumper at the loft.

They piled aboard a Ford Tri-Motor and droned south to look over the remote mountains by air before hitting the silk over Pettibone Creek at 11:30 the morning of the 12th. Two jumpers got caught in a vagrant air current and landed along a small creek a couple of miles north of the main group; they stowed their jump gear and marked the spot with an orange streamer before hiking to where the others were hastily setting up a base camp.

Wood spread his men 50 feet apart, with the end man blazing a line to mark the edge of the area covered. For two and a half days they widened their grid over the area where the hunter was believed to be.

Meanwhile the district ranger and his alternate poked through dense pine thickets in less-likely spots. Near dusk on the 14th they came upon the brilliant streamer the stray jumpers had left.

"Hey, here's one of those streamers," one yelled above the roar of the nearby creek.

Not 100 yards away across the creek the lost man heard the shout but was too weak to call for help. However, one of the rangers spotted him and leaped over the creek.

He stayed with Davis while the other raced for help. The jumpers were just starting another swing of their grid when the ranger arrived. Though tired from 12 hours of searching the brushy woods, they ran to Davis, improvised a stretcher, and hurried him back to their camp.

The elderly hunter was at the end of his rope. He talked irrationally of having kept warm by bedding down with an elk. He'd wandered through a recently abandoned hunting camp where he stacked egg-filled cartons and potatoes in a dazed attempt to build a fire without matches. Though starving, he left the food untouched.

He stood for a while on a trail knobby with the fresh tracks of pack mules, and then shambled away into the forest. He'd had just enough mental capacity left to recognize the

jumper streamer as foreign to the woods and watch it fascinated until help got there.

Back at base camp, Wood walkie-talkied a doctor who advised him to get Davis out immediately. Wood then radioed for a plane to drop his newest invention, a standard Navy basket litter mounted on a low-pressure airplane tailwheel. From then on he tended his patient constantly through the night, feeding him thin broth and sugar water.

About midnight he looked outside the tent and cursed; a damp snow was falling. He had a dying man on his hands and 17 miles to go to the nearest road. Snow wouldn't help.

Dawn broke clear and cool, perfect for running through the mountains for hours. The jumpers struck out with their weird contraption just after daybreak—two men in special harness between the litter's extensible handles, one on each corner steadying the precious load. Three men ahead and three behind waited their turns as carriers, all 12 switching every seven minutes on the run. The other two ran ahead with axes, blazing trail and clearing away the worst obstacles. All this is a flawless procedure Wood worked out years before.

The stretcher men ran downhill, jogged on the level, and walked fast uphill. They waded hip-deep creeks, threaded the stretcher through windfalls. At one place they sidled around a

rocky bluff above a roaring river. They ate and drank on the run.

The ranger, who was riding with them on a saddle horse, decided the ambulance plane would be late at its rendezvous at the rate the jumpers were covering ground, so he pushed his sweating horse ahead to pass the word from a back-country telephone.

After nine miles of trackless wilderness, the jumpers came to a trail and speeded their pace to a steady run, stopping only to give Davis sugar water.

They crossed the Selway River on a horse bridge at Bear Creek, and there found the ranger at the phone of a hunting camp just outside the primitive area. He'd beaten them by mere minutes, and his horse was staggering with fatigue.

No, these are not supermen, but a man afoot has a horse at a disadvantage traveling with no trail over steep slopes barricaded with rocks and heavy timber. And these were young men in top condition after a rough fire season, mentally and physically tough enough to be smokejumpers.

From the hunting camp it was an easy mile to the Shearer landing field, where a plane picked up Davis to fly him 60 miles north to Hamilton.

The fact that Davis returned the following year from Mis-



Historic Photo: 1946 jumpers prior to practice jump. (Courtesy of Wally Henderson)

souri to hunt the same woods tells how well the rescuers did their work. They'd taken just four hours to carry him 17 miles.

No doubt it was Wood's wheeled stretcher that made such speed possible and perhaps saved a life. Wood had developed it during the summer with the help of a pilot friend, who sympathized with the blocky redhead's impatience with inferior equipment. Wood wanted a rig to end forever the risk of a stretcher failure. He had a personal reason for that.

Gene Fox, a close friend of Wood's, was working as a packer at an isolated cabin on the headwaters of the Blackfoot River, northeast of Missoula, in the summer of 1946. A .22 rifle went off accidentally, and its hollow-point bullet tore into Fox's face at the base of his nose and lodged near the junction of spine and brain.

Another packer got word out in due time and Wood went in with eight other smokejumpers. It was a tricky place for jumpers to land, so Wood and another more experienced chutist went first, diving into a clearing somewhat larger than a postage stamp and bordered by the flooded river. Wood won't say how low the plane was when they bailed out because "the Forest Service has regulations about things like that."

They made it, however, and hurried to the cabin while the rest of the outfit dropped into a larger clearing a mile away. What they found at the cabin shook Wood; this friend had lost more blood than any man can afford and was still losing it.

Wood argued with himself for several minutes before deciding to shoot the moon. Fox had to have plasma. Wood had never seen it administered, but it had to be done, and fast.

His nerves weren't calmed by the discovery that Fox was one of those outdoorsmen with skin weathered tough as a logging boot. Wood couldn't get the needle into the arm the manual recommended, so he jammed it into the other. "By that time I was shaking like a horse spooked by a bear," he recalls.

The plasma kept Fox alive for the moment, but Wood was afraid to move him. He radioed for Dr. Amos P. Little, a physician Wood trained three years before as the country's first paradoctor and who had set up postwar practice across the continental divide at Helena.

The doctor jumped in two hours later, at noon, took one look at Fox and said, "We've got to get him out of here." The jumpers put the patient on a stretcher and started out. They trotted steadily, rotating their turns without pausing.

Six miles out one handle broke, dropping a corner of the litter to the ground and jarring Fox horribly. Wood nearly wept with indignation as he directed repairs with a dry fir pole.

They packed another six miles to Cooper's Lake, where they borrowed a fishing party's outboard boat and whisked a mile across the lake to a waiting ambulance. From there it was a shoo-in to a plane waiting at a ranch, and on in to Missoula. Fox, though he still carries the bullet in his neck, made a complete recovery.

This trip, like most others, gave the nimble-minded Wood something to gnaw on. Within days he'd worked out a set of strong extensible handles for the litter, and there's never been another breakdown.

They were lucky on the Fox rescue, for it came during the fire season and the jumpers were paid regular wages for it. Most

rescues come in the fall big-game season, after the fire season ends. Wood is a regular Forest Service man and draws his pay whether he's engaged in rescue or routine. Most other jumpers work free.

Rescue jumpers assume that a tired satisfaction will be their only reward for success. And sometimes there's not even that.

Take, for instance, the hunter who in 1945 was shot within a few miles of where Davis was lost in the Selway-Bitterroot. He was stretched out in the sun dozing and his partner shot him for a deer when he swatted at a fly. The bullet took him in the right arm just below the shoulder. Their packer rode to the nearest phone and called the jumpers.

The jump foreman who led the rescue team seemed predestined to tragedy. He was **Wag Dodge** (Missoula '41), who in 1949 heroically tried to save his panicky 12-man smokejumper crew when the Mann Gulch fire in Helena National Forest blew up on them. Only Dodge came out alive—to live with grief and die of cancer in 1955.

Dodge and Dr. Little, who was then in the Air Corps at Great Falls, jumped with eight other men into the Moose Creek drainage and found the wounded hunter. The doctor dressed the wound and the jumpers packed him the six miles to Shearer landing field. It wasn't a rough trip, as such trips go, and they made good time. A plane took the hunter to Missoula and he was in a hospital the evening of the day he was shot.

He looked good and was recovering fast when he called the rescuers to his bedside to thank them a week later. Next day a blood clot reached his brain and he died.

That sort of thing is bad enough for morale; but it can get worse, as it did once in the summer of 1947.

A Bitterroot Valley rancher took his family up near Skalkaho Pass, where he intended to cut corral poles. When they finished setting up a small camp the rancher missed his 3-year-old son and his dog. He searched frantically, then called the district ranger.

The ranger mobilized every man on his pay roll and called in farmers and ranchers. They found no trace of the boy by dark, so the ranger called for help.

Fifty jumper-rescuers in two trucks left Missoula, 100 miles away, early in the morning and started to grid the area an hour after daybreak. They scoured the mountainside from the road to an old mining flume two miles uphill, moving up and down the slope 50 feet apart, alternating shouts and silence. They found nothing.

One of the rescuers, **John Nash** (Missoula '42), was staying behind the main body on the chance he might hear something after they passed. He cast about on both sides of the flume until dark. As he started back, he heard a dog howl.

Nash headed back up the mountain, shouting and hearing the dog answer. It was farther than he'd thought; he stumbled a quarter of a mile up the rocky, brushy mountainside before he could be sure the dog was near. Then the dog stopped answering Nash's calls. He could do nothing without the dog to home him in, so he took a compass bearing and went to camp.

Next morning he led the searchers up the hill as soon as



7-Man'er for Branson! Missoula jumpers (except one) attending a "Mid-America" smokejumper reunion in Branson, MO, in October were: Top L-R Terry West ('56) retired Col. U.S. Army, Dayton Grover ('55) hydraulics engineer, Jim Anderson ('57) retired school supt., Herb Fischer ('57) retired airline pilot, Walter Brafford (McCall'49) retired airline pilot. Bottom L-R: Roland Pera ('56) stockbroker, Bob Hewitt ('56) retired dentist. (Courtesy of Bob Hewitt)

there was light enough to see. They spread out behind him and combed every inch of the ground.

Soon Nash spotted the dog, a non-descript farm animal, standing under a small bluff. The child's body lay at the dog's feet, neck twisted from a fatal fall down the bluff. The jumpers coaxed away the dog, lifted the broken body to a stretcher, and went back to camp. They carried the dog in a knapsack.

About this time the helicopter was being talked of as a possible mountain rescue tool. Just after World War II a promising newcomer joined the outfit; to him fell the dubious privilege of testing helicopters. He's **Len Krout** (Missoula '46), a medium-sized man of tremendous vitality. He worked with the pilots of two Missoula-based private helicopters in all kinds of weather at various elevations, trying to establish specific limits. A Bell aircraft expert couldn't believe one of their altitude records and flew West to see them make their point by landing atop a peak 3,000 feet higher than the copter was supposed to be operational.

Krout found the limitations. For instance, in summer a helicopter can't get off the same ground where it zooms up 100 feet in winter. Air thins in the heat, giving the rotors less grip. There's the same loss of efficiency in the thin air at high elevations, where the copter is usually needed most.

The jumpers' enthusiasm for the copter, shortcomings or no, is likely to remain high. They have seen that when the chips

are down the little machine can mean life. They got their proof the hard way during the 1952 big-game season.

Sam Harris, a 38-year-old service-station operator from St. Ignatius, Montana, tangled with a grizzly while hunting elk in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. The great bear chewed Harris on both shoulders so that a doctor ran a probe all the way through one hole where the bear's teeth had met, through bones and all. The bruin then knocked the hunter's scalp down over one ear with a single slashing blow, hurled him into the rocks and brush, and left him for dead.

Harris' companions heard the commotion and got him to camp. They were on the east side of the jagged Mission Mountains, 20 miles from a road. One of the hunters got to a phone at the Forest Service cabin on Shaw Creek. Fourteen miles downstream, a packer had just closed the Big Prairie Ranger Station for the winter and was leading his pack string past the station when he heard the phone ringing. He answered, and forwarded the plea for help to Missoula with a radio he had on a packhorse.

The Forest Service sent a helicopter the 100 or so miles from Missoula, but there was no landing spot near the hunting camp. The pilot went on to the Big Prairie landing field and called for the jumpers.

Wood was on his way out of the Blackfoot, where he'd been fighting a fire 18 hours a day for a week near the spot

where he had started out six years earlier with his wounded friend Gene Fox. He heard the Forest Service call for jumpers when he stopped at a camp for the night. He got in touch with headquarters and spent most of the night jouncing to town in a truck.

Wood, Krout, and six other jumpers, along with a Missoula surgeon, piled aboard a Ford Tri-Motor next morning and flew to Big Prairie, where they picked up the helicopter pilot. They circled over the Harris camp while the whirlybird pilot pointed out the only feasible place for him to land when he returned with the copter.

The jump crew dropped power saws and axes on cargo chutes, then stepped into thin air. They landed close together near the tent in which Harris lay conscious and suffering silently. The rest of his hunting party rushed to help the jumpers out of their chute harnesses. One looked around at the tough, bronzed faces and said with emotion:

"You guys ain't beautiful, but you sure look like angels to me."

The mauled hunter was at the bottom of a deep, narrow canyon with trees within a few feet of the tent. A helicopter can rise only about seven feet at that elevation, then must make a running dip for momentum to carry it higher. So, since they couldn't carry Harris far, a lot of trees had to be cut down.

The jumpers started mowing trees. That's the copter pilot's description: "From the air it looked like they were using a lawn mower instead of saws and axes."

They cleared an acre in an hour, falling everything from saplings to 10-inch trees—a thousand of them, according to one of the jumpers who also was an experienced timber cruiser.

As soon as they finished, the chopper whirled down with the doctor. After emergency treatment Harris was loaded aboard and whipped away to Big Prairie and the Missoula-bound plane.

The jumpers packed their equipment on their backs and hiked 14 miles to the airstrip to catch another plane, for the helicopter had only enough fuel to fly the doctor back to town. It was plenty of walk for Wood, who'd had only half his quota of sleep and a double shift of work for the past week. When he got home he crawled numbly into bed and slept 14 hours.

It was worth it, for Harris lived.

No one knows exactly how many lives the pararescue outfit has saved. Records list each jump simply as a jump, whether it's to kill a fire or save a life. Rescue jumps probably number between 50 and 60. And there's no way of knowing how many thousands of lives this little outfit has saved indirectly through training the first paramedic and arctic rescue teams for the Army, Air Corps, Coast Guard, and Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II.

There are smaller jumper outfits in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and other parts of the Rocky Mountains, but Missoula remains the pivot of all forest aerial work. The project was born there. It's the home of the Forest Service's new Aerial Fire Depot, and its smokejumper-rescue unit is by far the largest in the country because it has the country's largest backwoods area to cover. Some 16,000 square miles of roadless wilderness, partly in neighboring states, are included in Forest Service Region I, with headquarters at Missoula.

With Wood recently assigned to a new job—regional director of work with experimental equipment—Krout now runs the rescue detail. With the parachute program expanding and busier hunting seasons coming up, he has his hands full. He's working for more first-aid training for more jumpers, better use of helicopters, and new equipment such as chemical heating pads, new foods, and a type of Indian toboggan that looks like a boat.

What rescue workers need most, however, is money. The Forest Service has no legal provision for handling rescues except for its own personnel, and moving airplanes, helicopters, and big crews of highly specialized men is expensive. Every hunter-rescue job must be financed with money from some other unit, such as reforestation or fire control. The resultant cut in the unit's operating funds can cost a regular worker his job for a few months that year.

When an airplane owner donates a plane and the services of a pilot for rescue work, he's contributing at the rate of \$50 to \$200 an hour, not to mention the risk he takes of losing his plane.

The volunteer jumper works his hardest and draws no wages. It's rough on everyone but the hunter, who is handed his life on a litter.

Davis paid each recruited jumper who helped get him out a reward of \$50. Another man gave his 12 rescuers a \$10 bill to split—and they were tickled to get it, for it was all he could afford. Some don't even say thanks.

Talk of money where lives are concerned is never popular, even with the hard-pressed jumpers. Thus far the volunteer system has worked eminently well, but circumstances change. Wood is 33 and Krout is 30, both ancient for their business, and the influx of a less-dedicated generation could change the picture drastically.

The Forest Service could set aside money to finance hunter rescues, but it probably won't, because its responsibility is primarily forests, not people. It's also been suggested that a quarter or half a dollar be added to the big-game license fee.

The sportsmen's associations could do it. A small levy on their large memberships (one association alone in sparsely populated western Montana has nearly 3,000 members) would go far toward easing the strain on jumpers and flying services without harming any pocketbooks. These outdoorsmen would shell out without hesitation. It's just that the machinery hasn't been set up, and no one seems seriously inclined to get it started. The jumpers can't promote the idea because of Forest Service regulations. Any campaign action must come from the sportsmen themselves.

And it may be that new classes of jumpers will carry on the young tradition of risking their necks with little prospect of reward.

Why? Len Krout says it pretty well: "I guess the main thing is that we're the only ones who can do it, and that sort of makes us responsible. We've got the equipment, the experience, and usually the personnel. If there's a chance we can save him, how can we leave a man to die?" 🐾

Smokejumper magazine thanks Pat Shearer (Missoula '67) for doing the "legwork" in getting this article located and obtaining permission for its printing.

Zena Creek Fire: Payette National Forest

Recollections of John P. Ferguson (McCall '43) and James "Smokey" Stover (McCall '46)

July 30, 1946, was a day of mixed weather, hot and dry throughout the morning; however, the afternoon brought in a fast moving dry-lightning storm from the west. I watched it cross over McCall and continue east over Lick Creek Summit toward the primitive area. I had more than a passing interest in the storm for I knew that **James "Smokey" Stover** and myself were listed at the top of the jump roster, on call for the next fire jump. **Stewart "Lloyd" Johnson** (McCall '43) and myself, **John R. Ferguson**, were the co-leaders of the McCall Smokejumping Unit, Payette National Forest, (the original and only unit in the



A 1944 photo shows Wesley Kern with a malfunctioning main overhead and his reserve chute wrapped around his face as he comes in for a "hard" landing at the 6-Mile Field. He was not hurt. (Courtesy of Earl Schmidt)

Intermountain Region at the time). However, it made no difference—every one of the squad of 50 jumpers took their allotted position on the jump roster in their turn. Smokey and I were next.

At the McCall Unit in the summer fire season, we could anticipate a fire call within 15 to 30 minutes following a dry-lightning storm crossing over the forest—if we did not get a call for jumpers from another forest in the Region in the meantime. Sure enough, the telephone rang and Johnson answered it. It was the melodious voice of **Harold "Slim" Vassar**, the Payette's renowned fire dispatcher, known for his cheerful manner of passing along bad news and also admonishing a person who needed it.

Slim, the fire dispatcher, said, "Fire—two jumpers, get with it."

Johnson, a man of few words said, "Right," gave me and Smokey the high-sign and proceeded to take down the fire report details. We were ready, except for putting on our jump suits.

I said, "It's probably in Chamberlain Basin or the Salmon." Smokey said, "No, I take the Boise or Challis on the Middle Fork of the Salmon."

Johnson showed up immediately at the equipment shed and enlightened us: "Wrong, it's just over the mountain, in the head of Zena Creek, on the Secesh drainage." The location made a difference as if the flying time to a fire was of any duration, we suited up in the plane on the way. Now, close to McCall with not much time, we suited up on the way to the airport while Johnson alerted the pilot, "Warm up the plane, be out there in five to 10 minutes."

So far, this yarn has been strictly routine operation; now we get down to the good stuff and a unique experience.

At the airport, **W. Penn Stohr** (Idaho's veteran mountain pilot) and the Travelaire were away on a prior fire mission. It was routine to use Penn and the Travelaire for a two-man jump. However, a Ford Tri-Motor, with pilot **Everett A. "Slim" Phillips** (the so-called "Screaming Eagle" and a good friend) had flown in from Hale Field at Missoula with what could be called "excess baggage," the Region One smokejumper safety officer Victor Carter.

Vic was a nice fellow but a tickler on safety—and rightfully so. He was paying McCall a surprise safety

inspection. As the fire was first priority, however, we commandeered Slim and the Tri-Motor. It was not much of a thing as Slim and the Ford were regularly used at McCall for fire jumps requiring more than two jumpers and up to eight. However, we also got Safety Officer Carter along for the ride. In accord with Murphy's Law or some other principle, if something is going to happen, it will happen with the safety officer present—and it did.

The short flight to the vicinity of the fire was rough. The storm had yet to completely pass; the winds were on the red line for making a jump. Johnson was the spotter, and it was his decision whether to make the jump now or wait for calmer conditions. Johnson, Slim, Smokey and I discussed the situation, and we agreed to jump but at a lower altitude.

The Ford Tri-Motor circled the fire, the winds buffeting the plane. We figured jumping about 800 to 1,000 feet above the fire. Even at that planned height with the steepness of the terrain in Zena Creek, we had the potential of missing the jump spot and drifting toward the Secesh River miles away. Johnson dropped a drift chute, but he must have caught the calm before the blast because it was not good but it was not bad either.

Slim dropped altitude. (The Screaming Eagle was cussing—the Tri-Motor was known to drive like a truck since the controls were all manual—no hydraulics—and it was doing so.) With one pass over the fire, I prepared to jump on the next pass. At this point, Murphy's Law took over. On the next pass the plane drifted closer to the steep hillside, but conditions being less than optimal, Johnson slapped me on the shoulder and out I went into the wild gray yonder. It wasn't much of a ride: as I recall, I left the plane and simultaneously got the opening shock of the parachute and at the same time my feet entered the needles at the crown of the trees and I hit the ground. After that, I recollected that it didn't take much specialized training to do that.

What had happened? The plane had blown in closer to the mountainside, and it was estimated that I had jumped from about 500 feet or lower. At any rate, I made it and was fine. On the next pass, Smokey jumped from a slightly higher elevation, but he still hit the ground in a hurry. Slim Phillips, Johnson and Carter left in a hurry after dropping the fire tools, bedrolls and ration. Smokey and I gathered the chutes up, got the fire tools and walked about 200 to 300 feet to the fire. The fire was in a stand of fir trees, a lightning strike, with a half-dozen trees on fire and the

brush burning nicely underneath them. Except for the wind, the fire presented no problem, and Smokey and I worked on it in a routine manner.

Nighttime was creeping up on us, and it began to rain hard and I mean real hard. Lightning was striking all along the ridge, so I told Smokey, "The hell with this I'm going to bed down under that big old fir tree."

Smokey said, "Nothing doing! That's the first place the damn lightning will hit."

To make a long story short, he bedded down out in the open in the downpour, and I settled down under the tree. I was, within reason, dry, but Smokey was a drowned rat. I distinctly recall looking out from my, more or less, dry place and seeing the water running down the hillside and washing over Smokey. He actually opened the snaps on the bottom of his bedroll and the water flowed in the top of the kapok and out the bottom. He was right about the lightning, it hit every place; however, I still planned to die relatively dry.

At first daylight, the fire drowned, we gathered the gear and hiked down the mountain toward the Secesh River and the road. At the Lick Creek road we were picked up and taken to McCall. Arriving at the Smokejumper Unit, I stored my gear and went home. Smokey also went home, but I understood the first thing he did was take a shower—after all he was water trained.

The Zena Creek Fire was a dud for me. Vic Carter, the safety officer, gave me a lecture about jumping low and put a reprimand in my file. I was damn glad when he left for Missoula. 🌲

NOVA—"Fire Wars"

On Tuesday, May 7, the PBS series NOVA will present a special two-hour documentary on wildland fires. "Fire Wars" is an important, high-quality look at fire in America's forests.

The Arrowhead Hotshots and the Clear Creek Fire of 2000 provide the tread that link together forest fire science, politics and the firefighters' experience. This seamless show integrates footage provided by NSA and interviews with present and former smokejumpers when it examines the fires at Mann Gulch and Storm King Mountain.

"Fire Wars" was directed by Kirk Wolfinger and written and produced by Judith Vecchione and Rushmore DeNooyer. It's worth watching.

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

FRED "FRITZ" BRAUER

by Ted Burgon

FRITZ BRAUER (MISSOULA '41) began his smokejumping career at the old CCC camp on Rice Creek near Nine-Mile Ranger Station. Over the 16 years he jumped, he was at Seeley Lake and Missoula. He also assisted in developing equipment in the early days of jumping.

Fritz attended the University of Montana for three years and lettered in football. He later worked with Nasby Rinehart, a trainer, at the university to develop the first physical-training program for smokejumpers. The torture rack was one of the results.

Fritz began his career with the Forest Service in 1937 in the Seeley Lake Ranger District as a trail-maintenance and road-crew member, as well as a lookout and smoke chaser. Then in 1940 he was based at Quartz Ranger Station on the Lolo National Forest, and headed a fire crew of 125 men in Yellowstone. That year he was on four large fires. Bob Johnson of Johnson Flying Service made the first parachute drop, a hindquarter of a beef, for a fire crew flying a Ford Tri-Motor.

He joined the smokejumpers at Missoula in 1941. There were a total of 26 jumpers, eight under Dick Lynch at Big Prairie, eight under Rufus Robinson at Moose Creek in Idaho and eight under Francis Lufkin at Missoula. This included Fritz and Bob and Frank Derry's brother, Chet. Rufus has the distinction of being the second smokejumper to jump on a fire, Francis being the first in Region 6. Fritz's second year was at Seeley Lake as a squad leader.

By that point World War II had begun and active duty called. He joined the Army Air Corps as a pilot, and flew C-46s and C-47s in the European Theater. Discharged as a major in November 1945, Fritz returned to the smokejumpers as a fire-suppressant foreman.

By 1950 he had been appointed the director of personnel, 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.

For a year and a half he had an interesting opportunity to work as a technical advisor on several movie and TV programs. A Mr. Novak from the USFS in Washington, D.C., was assigned to work with the TV and movie industry to make the role of the USFS more authentic, and Fritz was picked to help.

The first project Fritz worked on was the *Dr. Kildare* series starring Richard Chamberlin. Carroll O'Connor had just returned from Italy where he was in the movie *Cleopatra* with Liz Taylor. O'Connor portrayed a USFS ranger with the responsibility of fighting a forest fire. Fritz writes, "This was very interesting for me. Carroll's wife Nancy was the daughter of a great friend, Ralph Fields, a Fish and Game officer. Ralph and I worked together for five years in western Montana. One time we put on a Fish and Game Association banquet with a raffle that included a two-visit trip to a little whorehouse in Kooskia, Idaho."

The next *Dr. Kildare* program was with a new young star, Robert Redford. The next projects he worked on was a Charles Bronson movie and then three *Lassie* TV programs. A spin-off was a new series titled *Forest Ranger*.

Bob Brey played the lead role from Kalispell. The Weatherwaxes owned the Lassie dogs (yes, there was more than one Lassie). They became friends with Fritz, and when he left the program they gave Fritz's wife, Harriett, a Lassie puppy that they had for 11 years as a companion and family member.

During World War II, while flying in Europe during the Bastogne battle, he received the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) for his participation in flying supplies into trapped members of the 101st Airborne Division's glider drop. As a member of the 439th Troop Carrier Group, they led the airborne invasion of Europe. Prior to departure, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower walked the line and wished the pilots and crews, plus the troops, Godspeed.

When the Smokejumper Center in Missoula was dedicated in 1954, Fritz was selected to welcome President Eisenhower and present him with a painting of a Ford Tri-motor, a jump helmet, and T-shirts for his grandchildren. During the day he had the opportunity to talk to the president



Fred Brauer 1946. (Courtesy of Wally Henderson)

and mention his role with the 439th in WWII. The president did indeed remember that day, as the upcoming drop was vital to a successful invasion of Europe.

Fritz's involvement with life extends well into his community. Over the years he has been the president of the Western Montana Fish and Game Association, the Jefferson School PTA, and the first director of the Elks Lodge basketball free-throw competition. He also ran for county commissioner. In addition he was active in the Elks Lodge, Masonic Lodge, the University of Montana Athletic Association, and a 32-year member of GAA, a group that raises money for scholarships and training equipment.

Fritz now operates a mobile-home court and has a large commercial building.

Fritz was the second member of the Smokejumper Association. He writes that he still hears from "many of my 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."

www.smokejumpers.com

Jungle Creek Fire

by Phil Stanley (Missoula '43)

Probably the best way to summarize four years of smokejumping is to reproduce the only written report of a fire jump that I can find because it illustrates some of our (CPS 103 jumpers) attitudes, problems and abilities. The jump was to the Jungle Creek Fire on Sept. 14, 1943.

The official U.S. Forest Service history says that only five experienced jumpers, including the instructor, were available for the 1943 fire season. "The most strenuous efforts at recruiting had resulted in the selection of four young men whose youth or minor physical defects had up to this time kept them out of the Army ... " These men were to be our squad leaders. This history also mentions that Region I had a severe drought during September and early October. Those drought conditions no doubt contributed to the late date of the fire. An estimated savings in fire suppression costs of \$75,000 was credited to jumper action on 47 fires that season.

I had been in bed about an hour-and-a-half when **Harry Burks** (Missoula '43) woke me about midnight to tell me that eight Ninemilers were going to jump on a fire near McCall, Idaho, first thing in the morning.

Vic Carter (Missoula '43), **Art Cochran** (Missoula '42) and I started to get our equipment ready while **Al Cramer** (Missoula '43) went down to the loft to get an emergency pack frame that was to have been welded and back the previous day.

The equipment was ready by 2 A.M. Vic and Art played pool until breakfast time while I turned in for another hour of sleep. We left camp at about 5 A.M., drove to Hale Field, loaded the Tri-motor and were in the air by 7 A.M.

Slim Phillips executed the 180-degree bank into Moose Creek where we stopped just long enough to pick up Art's chutes, suit and fire pack. Slim cruised at about 10,000 feet most of the way to McCall and arrived after about two hours. The combination of lost sleep and altitude made some of us sleepy so we catnapped along the way. We borrowed a harness from the McCall equipment, suited up and were off again by about 11 A.M.

We found the first fire after about a half-hour of flying above steep, rocky and generally mean-looking country. We dumped **Ted Lewis** (Missoula '43), **Asa Mundell** (Missoula '43), **Art Geisler** (Missoula '43)

and **Herb Crocker** (Missoula '43) at a second fire just across the canyon. We found later that the McCall boys, having walked in some 15 miles the day before, were already on this fire. They left when our crew landed. The McCall crew was upset that their plane was out of commission, and they were being treated as ordinary smoke chasers.

When we liberated one of their harnesses, it was like rubbing salt in the wound. Vic made an unsuccessful attempt to contact the jumpers with the radio so we flew back to our fire.

After scouting the fire, Vic decided that the safest spot to kick us out was over the canyon between the two fires. Art talked Vic out of that and into letting him jump first to look the country over. While Art was in the air,

Vic asked me what I thought of the spot Art had picked, and I told him that it looked mean and rocky, but we should be able to land unhurt. Vic was project foreman and learning smokejumping by on-the-job training. Art was an experienced jumper, spotter and firefighter and really inspired confidence.

We agreed that Art would wave his streamer vertically if he thought it safe for us to follow. He spotted himself over a large, steep patch of brush and landed in a clump of trees on the western edge. He gave the "okay" signal immediately so I followed on the next pass with Zimmerman right after me. Vic told me to head for the same clump of trees and did a perfect job of spotting. I had no desire or intention of landing on that steep side hill if I could possibly help it. The Eagle chute lived up to its reputation of steering like a car and landed me in the same tree as Art. Zimmerman landed in the brush about a hundred feet up the hill and bruised his knee on a rock. **Ad Carlson** (Missoula '43) landed in a tree and was about 300 yards diagonally down the hill.

The fire was on the ground and running when we arrived but it began to crown out sporadically all that afternoon, night and most of Wednesday. Three smoke



*Phil Stanley, 1943.
(Courtesy of Pic Littell)*

chasers who had been walking all night arrived about 3 p.m. They pronounced their blessings on smokejumping as technique (for someone else) and put all their remaining energy into getting a trench around the fire.

Our packer arrived in the afternoon with enough grub to last

the whole crew about a week and left to report that we needed reinforcements. The plane had been over once to drop seven bedrolls—which we never did find—and came back again in the evening to drop four McCall men.

Ferguson took 14 seconds to get down, and Utterbach hit on about the third oscillation. Vic judged that they jumped from about 300 feet, and the repercussions have not stopped yet (10-17-43), over a month later. It takes careful cooperation between a spotter and a pilot to fly a contour line of a steep side hill to maintain a nominal 1,000-foot altitude. Dropping men at 300 feet indicated the plane was dangerously off course. Vic wanted to know why so it could

never happen again.

When they jumped, we already had the fire under control, and they patrolled the fire most of that night while we got a much needed rest. We all left except for the three smoke chasers who stayed for the mop-up. It was a 15-mile hike to the end of the road where a pickup truck met us and took us back to McCall.

That ride proved beyond a doubt that pickups are not designed to carry people in the box, but we were revived enough by a good dinner at McCall to pack our chutes until 2:30 a.m. On Friday we finished packing our equipment, and were put on standby. Four McCall men jumped on a fire Saturday morning, and we left in the afternoon in time for a late dinner at Ninemile. ☺

Phil played a key role in keeping the smokejumper program going during WWII. His letter-writing campaign open the doors for the conscientious objectors to become smokejumpers. He lives on Flathead Lake near Polson, Montana.

Advertise Your Business/Support the Magazine!

Send us your business card and we will run it in **four** issues of *Smokejumper* magazine for \$100. It will be an excellent opportunity to show the membership what smokejumper owned and operated business services are available. Besides being an inexpensive way to reach 1800 potential clients, you will help us to meet the expenses of publishing this magazine. **Support the NSA with your business advertising!** Send to Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico CA 95926.



MIKE McDONNELL

P.O. Box 436
331 Deinhard Lane
McCall, Idaho 83638

(208) 634-4707
Fax: (208) 634-7594

(McCall '98)

Lammers Feed & Seed Inc.
Since 1962

P.O. Drawer 729
Harlowton, MT 59036
406-632-5521
800-823-5521

John A. Lammers

Bozeman, MT 59715
Res. 406-586-3988
800-823-3988

(Missoula '71)



MERRITT STARR BOOKS

805-544-6214
285 BUENA VISTA
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93405

Featuring
books by
STARR JENKINS
CJ '48

Smokejumpers, '49: Brothers in the Sky
with photos by LIFE's Peter Stackpole:
to present or former jumpers or firefighters,
\$22 (including free shipping).

(Cave Junction '48)

**Caldwell
Securities
Incorporated**

John C. Helmer, CFA
President

931 Hartz Way #100
Danville CA 94526-3400

925-838-5525
Fax 925-838-5526
800-456-1119
john@cald.com

(Redding '59)

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

GARY WELCH

by Jim Budenholzer

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER Association would like to highlight the joining of Gary Welch into Life Member status.

Gary ("Tex") Welch jumped during 1960-'63 out of Cave Junction, Ore. While at Cave Junction, he was joined by his brothers Bernie and Larry (both Cave Junction '61), who also had distinguished smokejumper careers.

Life Member Gary Welch is an active National Smokejumper Association net worker who continues to travel widely, and especially enjoys the camaraderie evoked when smokejumpers visit him or his brothers in Texas.

Gary's story: *Red Skies over Montana* inspires the Life Member, but the Texan, though qualified, is rejected. Like many young men of his generation, Gary had been inspired by the Richard Widmark movie. Gary was 15 when he saw it. He later reminisced that an old lady had asked him why, if in the movie 13 of the 16 died, did he want to be a smokejumper?

Gary, with the logic that so many will recognize, replied, "I never thought about it that way ... I just assumed I'd be one of the three who lived." The movie inspired him with the dream of becoming a smokejumper.

Hoping to become a smokejumper Gary got his first job in the Forest Service through a Texas Tech college-placement program. He and a buddy left Texas in 1957 to work jobs on the Priest River on the Kinicksu National Forest in Idaho, where they fought "blister rust." Blister Rust was a fungus that grew on gooseberries or currants before it infected white pine.

His job was to spray gooseberries and currants with the herbicide 245D. This herbicide killed the plants on which the fungus grew before it migrated to white pine, which would then become diseased and rot. In the middle of August the Life Member got a similar offer doing the same thing with the National Park Service, with his older brother, Bernie. The Parks Service position seemed a better situation.

That was a big mistake. He wasn't aware that at the time that an applicant had to have "90 consecutive days" of Forest Service work to be considered eligible to be hired as a smokejumper. Gary had about 80 days in the

Forest Service.

It was a great disappointment for him the following summer of '58 when he got turned down by all five bases. All the bases believed him when they received an application and a letter in which he explained that he had "roughnecked the toughest oil jobs in Texas," and that, if it wasn't obvious, he was "fearless and badass!" on oil rigs and derricks 90 feet high or taller.

One base, in the person of Jim Allen, project air officer at Cave Junction, Ore., responded to Gary Welch "that, yes, he was good, but that he still had to have the 90 consecutive days of Forest Service employment."

The future Life Member appreciated the letter. It clued him in on what the true story was. So he stayed on and worked in the oil fields as a roughneck, which at the time was the highest-paying unskilled job in Texas.

In the summer of '59, he worked through the full 90 days at a fireguard station in Detroit, Ore.

Even before he left Oregon that summer to take a trip through Europe and return to Texas Tech, he filed an application with the Cave Junction base. In the spring, back at Tech, he got the hiring letter. He reported for training to Cave Junction for the summer fire season of 1960, along with 18 other rookies, one of the largest rookie classes ever trained at Cave Junction, whose entire roster rarely exceeded 30.

A hot rookie season and a tragic end to his second season

Norman "The Pollack" Pawlowski, who put them through seven practice jumps, trained them. Then, fully trained, as soon as he had his seventh practice jump, Welch remembers that they were sent immediately to LaGrande. In short order he was dispatched on five fire jumps.

"We were seasoned veterans in a week or two," he recollected.

When asked to describe one of those jumps, Welch recalled:

"I particularly remember one fire that Owen Riffe and I jumped. It was a two-manner. Owen was from Crab Orchard, W.VA. It was probably a four-man fire, but there were too many unmanned fires burning elsewhere for us to put four jumps on one fire, so we jumped in



(Courtesy of Gary Welch)

just the two of us.

"We were spread thin. We jumped in. It looked like a two-manner from the plane but the fire got to 50 acres. We saved the chutes and our other gear. It just went the wrong way and burned up the bedrolls.

"As the fire got bigger, we just worked straight through, just the two of us. We thought we'd put out a distress signal that we needed food and water. A plane came by and kicked out cargo, which turned out to be five gallons of chicken-fried steak, five gallons of green beans, five gallons of new potatoes and five gallons of coffee.

"It was obviously food meant for another fire. But there wasn't much we could do. We ate all we could. We mopped up with coffee. We got out of there and back at the base we turned in our time: First day, 24 hours; second day, 23 hours; third day, 23 hours.

"When they saw this they called in old Riffe. I don't know why they didn't call me in, but they didn't. 'This don't look right!' they told Riffe, complaining about the number of hours we'd put in for. 'How do you explain all these hours?'

"Riffe told them: 'we knocked off an hour a day—whether we needed the rest or not!' And they paid us."

Welch finished 1960 with eight fire jumps.

He had two brothers who also jumped; they came to Cave Junction the following year. Bernie Welch jumped for a year and then joined the Peace Corps for two years, serving in India, and returning to Cave Junction for one more year in 1964. Larry Welch trained in Cave Junction in 1961, jumped there in '62, jumped in Alaska from 1963 to 1969, and returned for about 15 years in Cave Junction, circa 1970-'85.

Losing a bet on a fire jump; breaking a back; winning a fight

In the 1961 season, Gary Welch and his older brother, Bernie, were dispatched Aug. 8 as a two-man resupply mission on the Siskiyou National Forest to augment a fire already manned by four jumpers. While in the plane, they saw that the fire had been partially lined along a ridge top, where the fire had died and where the jump spot was.

Between the two brothers, they "had a little dollar bet going on who could get the closest to the fire."

Gary Welch remembers vividly he spiraled down exactly over the fire line and pulled a slip, but the skirt of his chute caught the first tree outside the line. The chute collapsed and he fell about 40 feet, hitting the ground virtually headfirst. He got his air back, got up, and during the next 36 hours put the fire out. He didn't know it then, but he had broken his back—the sixth, seventh and eighth dorsal spines.

When they had de-manned, they took him to the county hospital where X-rays were taken. But there was no radiologist on staff at the time, so he drove himself back to the base. The next day, he got an emergency call and was told to get back immediately to the hospital. He was going to drive himself, but was ordered not to.

Once he got there, the hospital staff strapped him on a gurney and told him they were going to keep him for a long time. They didn't him get up for 18 days.

"I thought I just hurt myself," he recently said, laughing.

There were two other jumpers in the hospital as well, one with a broken pelvis and one with a broken ankle. All of them had rookied together the previous season, and each had injuries that ended the fire season. Gary Welch remembers once he got out of the hospital he returned to Texas, where he collected \$258 a month in workman's compensation, though in his mind he still felt fine.

"It was the 'sugar' that paid my way. You could go to college for a year on a thousand dollars."

Even though he was in a brace, he

remembers going to a Golden Gloves boxing match, where he was a spectator. Welch got to talking about boxing with the promoter, and the promoter said to Welch, "Why don't you fight heavyweight tonight?"

In his tennis shoes, Gary won the bout that night and in the next two nights won two more fights, and he was then crowned a Golden Gloves district champion. A picture ran in the local paper.

But his doctor, who had to sign the workman's compensation papers on a monthly basis, saw Gary's photo and the story in the local newspapers and told Gary that he wasn't going to sign the papers again.

For Welch, "that ended the sugar."

When asked about the bet he had made with his brother as to which of them would land the closest to the fire, Gary Welch groused that, "I think he still owes me a dollar."

Welch attains success in banking

In the summer of '62, Welch came back to smokejumping in Cave Junction, but it was to be his last summer as a smokejumper. His other life commitments began to overtake him.

After his refresher training, he was ordered, as a ROTC officer, to Fort Lewis for six weeks. He didn't get another fire jump. After the fire season petered out, he reported to the U.S. Army, where he served as an infantry unit leader, 1963–65.

The day after he left the Army, he reported to the U.S. Treasury Department to begin his career in finance, working as a national bank examiner, stationed in various regional posts in Texas, including Amarillo, Abilene and Waco. These positions were made possible by his education, which included a B.A. in accounting from Texas Tech University, and a degree from the Southern Methodist University Southwest Graduate School of Banking

By 1969, Welch left government service and became the first vice-president of the Community State Bank, in Waco. In January of that year he bought his own small bank, the First State Bank. When the owner retired, Gary went from being an employee to being the principal. Initially the bank specialized in personal paper, but over the years Gary moved it into agricultural (25 percent), real estate (50 percent) and commercial loans (25 percent).

Welch sold his bank in 1993 and went into semi-retirement as a

cattleman, breeding stock and selling calves. At one time his herd grew to almost 300, but is now at a "more manageable" 100 head.

Welch came back to banking briefly to serve as the chairman, and then as the president, of the FNB Hamilton First National Bank, of Hamilton, Texas, in 1998–'99. He is currently retired from banking.

During his career, Welch was active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce, where he was selected as the Officer of the Year in 1970 and one of the Outstanding Young Men of America in 1971 for his successes in banking. He was also recognized for his involvement in the United Way and the Lions Club. He has been married 38 years, has four grown children in whose accomplishments he takes pride, and three grandchildren, each of whom he has given a calf every year.

"The best job I ever had"

"I'd have liked to been able to jump for a number of years, 15 or 20, like my brother Larry. Knowing him and all the stories, I've sometimes felt that life cheated me a little, because you need to have two shots at something like smokejumping, and I got in one really good shot in the three years I jumped.

"You can't always have both. I wanted my other careers, too.

"My brothers taught school, for example, so they could do it: jump year after year, and get that second shot. You can't take off from a bank like that. But all of us always agree that it 'was the best job we ever had.'

"And it's the other jumpers who are the best part of the whole thing. We've all had our share of good deals, screwy pack-outs, barroom brawls, and the works. Just this week, my brother and I met with a guy he jumped with in Alaska. He came to my brother's ranch, and we drank beer and shot the breeze. We knew a lot of the same people. He was an Air America guy. Just an old b.s. session.

"It was time of your life when a major screw-up was funny. Later in life, it's not. There were a lot of characters jumping ... guys who were just unique." 🍷

Editor's note: We are grateful to Gary "Tex" Welch, as one of those unique individuals, for his inspirational life story and for his life membership commitment to NSA. Gary may be reached by mail at 2524 Cedar Ridge Rd., Waco, TX 76708; by telephone at (254) 753-4174; or by e-mail at: gwelchexsj@msn.com.

Ford Tri-Motor Pin

Two-inch lapel pin

\$5.00 S/H included.

**Use merchandise order
form: Item #1943**

Pyramid Peak Fire

by Tom Albert (Cave Junction '64)

July 12, 1964, was a good day on the small outpost called the Gobi, especially for 10 of us who were in the final stages of rookie training. The next day was the big timber jump and the culmination of rookie training, which was a milestone we all were excitedly looking forward to (even though the old guys made it well-known that we were rookies until our first fire jump).

We had a pretty fair class—a typical class made up of guys from all over the country:

“Animal Ed” (**Ed Weisenback**, a New York stater who was tough as nails. Riding in the car he was driving was scarier than jumping the Umpqua. Ed went to Vietnam and served as a LRRP’s team member. After the Army, he went back to Southeast Asia with Air America. The C-123 in which he was the kicker hit a “hard cloud” (mountain) on his first week on the job.

“Zee Dick” (**Dick Zedicker**), an Oregon boy from the Medford area who early on had aspirations of becoming a pilot. Dick hated tree-climbing even worse than I did. Dick did become a well-known and respected ag pilot, but was unsuccessful in navigating around a brain tumor.

Ray Farinetti was the best tree-climber in our class. He joined the Air Force rather than be drafted, and spent his whole enlistment overseas, in Thailand, Spain and Korea in Top-Secret CRYPTO communications. He returned to jumping and was on the first Region 8 detail. Ray retired from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the FMO at Merritt Island and the Kennedy Space Center. He resides in Florida. He is a Type One burn boss and his expertise is in demand throughout the Southeast.

John Kirkley, an Alabama boy, was on the University of Alabama track team and it showed each morning. Pineapple sandwiches—can you believe it? John went to Southeast Asia with Air America as a kicker. He later spent time in Alaska and now lives in a sunnier spot, Hawaii.

“Lead Hook” (**LeRoy Cook**), a Texas boy who came up through one of the Southern California hotshot crews. Leroy was like the Energizer Rabbit—he just kept on going and going ... Leroy was on a Green Beret A-Team in Vietnam. He became an avid fly fisherman and is finishing up his government career with the BLM in Idaho.

“Eric the Black” (**Eric Schoenfield**), another Energizer Rabbit from Oregon who, because of his feet, was the only rookie allowed to sleep in the “Old Barracks” which had individual rooms. We swore he could throw his socks against the ceiling and they would stick. Eric spent his military time on the Dew Line in the Air Force. He is a legend in his own time. He retired from the Alaska Smokejumpers and now resides in eastern Oregon.

Keith Lockwood, a Chico, Calif., teacher who was second-to-none on the rope climb. He was the “old man” of the class, though you wouldn’t know it. Keith retired from teaching and still lives in northern California.

Mike Johnson, a local who only jumped two years. We’ve lost track of Mike.

“Pear Shaped Ed” (**Ed Jones**) was a tough guy, though he didn’t look it. Ed was good-natured and enjoyed life. He was drafted and spent three tours in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division. The big “C” (cancer) finally got him a few years back.

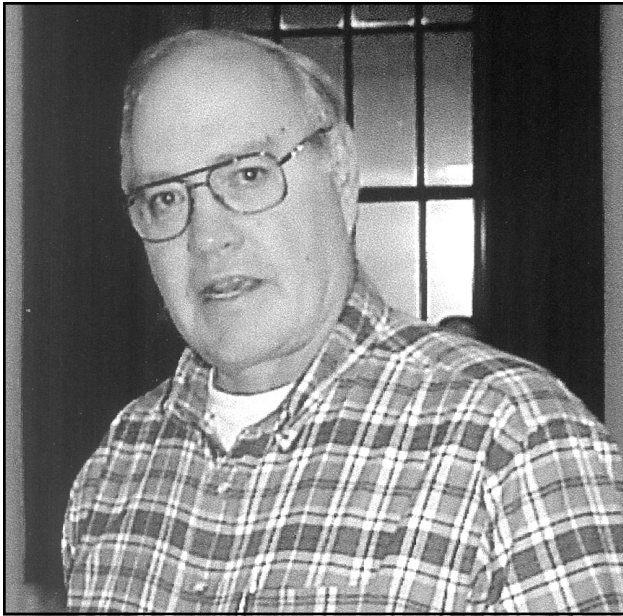
Me, “Gravity” (**Tom Albert**)—because I never defied the law (of gravity, that is). I stayed in the government and transitioned out of the jumpers in 1971 (a very traumatic event) and became a fire-control officer. I later transferred to the new OAS to pursue my lifelong desire to be a pilot. To make a long story short, I retired from the U.S. Forest Service as the Region 5 North Zone Aviation Manager.

Well, that was our 1964 Gobi class. Like most rookie classes, a diverse and interesting bunch, but not unique. Just a great bunch guys to be with. Now on with the story, and for those of you who know me, “this is a true story.”

The evening before, the seventh and last training jump, developed into one of those memorable nights that all jumpers remember with fondness and expectation. Lightning was striking all around. Fire orders were stacking up on the office counter. The old hands were oiling their boots and the “normal” nights’ activities were curtailed, as all knew there was plenty of work ahead. **Jim Allen** (North Cascades ’46), had already made the decision to jump us into the timber at first light for our last training jump, and then truck us back to the base. We did just that.

Because we didn’t pack back to the base, which to my best recollection (this getting old isn’t all it’s made out to be) was to decide our order of insertion onto the jump list. Instead, we drew out of a hat. Shortly thereafter, my fellow rookies were heading off to southwestern Oregon and northern California to become official members of our great fraternity. They were lucky as they were drawing two-manners, paired with an old hand.

My turn came early that afternoon—a four-manner on the Klamath. You have to remember, I was a Texas boy who spent one season on an engineering crew on the Galice Ranger District of the Siskiyou. I had never been on a forest fire in my life. Back then, I don’t even recall seeing fires on the TV news. Hell, I think the only fire I had ever seen was on a film (“A Fire Called Jeremiah”) that our ranger, Don Woods, showed a select few he recruited to interview with Jim Allen.



Tom Albert (NSA file)

John Cowan fired up the Twin Beech while our spotter, Mick Swift (Cave Junction '56), checked each of us three rookies: Ray Farinetti, Zee Dick, and me. Mick's easy-going manner was reassuring. For the first time in a month, knowing we would be with **Chuck Sheley** (Cave Junction '59) was also comforting. Before then it was the dreaded sight of him each morning prior to taking us on our morning run and obstacle course. They didn't call him the "Red Rabbit" for nothing—"Red" for his hair and "Rabbit" for his running.

I still remember the smell of the exhaust of the old Twin Beech when we climbed aboard. Time became blurred. We were soon accelerating down the runway and as we passed the loft, the remaining jumpers on the base gave us the "Gobi." We honored the tradition and returned the single-finger salute. The "good luck" salute was well-appreciated at that moment.

It was a short flight. I honestly can't remember my thoughts en route to the fire. I do, however, remember my thoughts when we first saw the fire. It was several acres and burning very actively. "So, that's what a forest fire looks like," I remember thinking. I figured that was a normal fire that smokejumpers routinely jumped. It was not until I overheard Chuck saying to Mick, "Four Men! Four Men!!?" that I started to think otherwise. Mick reassured him that he would get more jumpers.

There was no defined jump spot, which was common in that country. I manipulated to what looked like a little grassy area between some nicely sized trees. It was not until my arrival on the mountainside that I learned the grassy area was in fact 10- to 12-foot brush.

Not only had I not been on a fire, I didn't know the "lay of the land." Klamath was just another Indian name to me. It became instantly obvious that the Klamath should have been named "Klamath National Brush" instead of Klamath National Forest. I now realized that the look of disdain on Chuck Sheley's face as he climbed into the plane contained a message

of which I should have taken note. I had just received my first lesson on a good-deal fire and a bad-deal fire.

After crawling through the brush, we gathered at the base of the fire, knowing that we were going to be working our asses off. Chuck smartly chose an indirect attack strategy. We anchored off and started an indirect line up the left flank, burning out as we went. I was flabbergasted when Chuck said, "Take a break and drink some juice." It was just a short break and we started back working. He had us take these short breaks often and we were able to continue building line throughout the night.

Mick Swift did as he had promised and dropped four additional jumpers, **Truman Sandelin** (Cave Jct. '61), along with two other rookies from my class: Animal Ed and Mike Johnson. **Dave Towers** (Cave Jct. '60) finished out the stick. They started up the right flank. We met at the head sometime during the wee hours of the morning. After we had successfully stopped the head, several of us were sent to improve the line at the base and trench it.

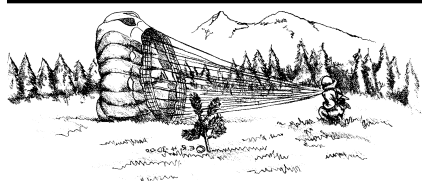
The next morning, Chuck told us to get our gear and pack it up to the ridge. How I found my chute was a lot of luck and a little fear. Being a brilliant rookie, after I landed I stuffed my chute under some brush out of sight to keep it dry in case of a passing thunderstorm. The jump gods were kind to me because there were some suspension lines hanging over the brush. Anyway, I packed my pack just like we had been taught with lots of inner tube "rubber bands" around the pack, thinking, "Chuck will really like my pack job."

I took one step, or maybe only half a step forward, and that was it. There was not a chance in hell that I was going to get that pack through that brush. I unpacked it and shoved the seamless sacks up through the brush and crawled up to them, repeating these steps all the way up to the ridge. It may have well been during this climb (crawl) that becoming a pilot leaped up on my priority list.

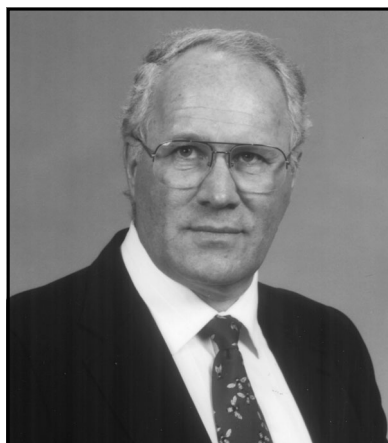
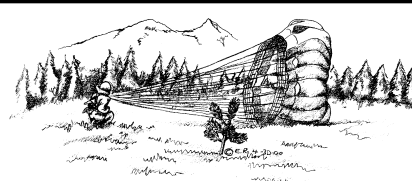
I got my first helicopter ride that morning. I thought the pilot was going to just lift the Hiller 12E (or D) off the ground and fly straight to the road that was three drainages away. Wrong. He picked it up and then dove off the ridge. I thought we were goners. We eventually arrived in Happy Camp where the Klamath was gearing up for a project fire—*ours*. The word had already gotten around that the jumpers contained the fire and all these troops were not now needed. There were many looks and comments of respect from those who were lining the runway and ramp preparing to man the fire.

It was a good feeling to know we lived up to the Gobi tradition, and for us five rookies to have contributed in a small way to that tradition. On the Gobi, we played hard and worked hard. Both the fun times and the hard times etched lasting memories that will be with us the rest of our lives. The Pyramid Peak Fire is one of those memories. 🙏

Tom (Gravity) Albert jumped for seven years in Oregon and Alaska before moving into fire management. While at Cave Junction, he formed the Gobi Flying Club and eventually became a pilot. Tom retired from the Forest Service in August 1999 as the Region 5 North Zone aviation manager. He currently is working during the summer as a contract lead-plane pilot, call sign "Lead 77."



Checking the Canopy



by Jim Cherry
(Missoula '57)

THROUGHOUT LIFE WE ARE facing losses. Sometimes they are painful—both emotionally and physically but there are also losses that we tolerate very willingly—sometimes even eagerly. What makes for the difference?

A young child experiences a loss when they begin school. Their loss is that they are no longer able to be care-free and at home. However, their loss opens up a whole new world for them. They may grieve for a short time as they make their adjustment away from the familiar safety of home and mother, but they soon look forward to their new adventures with eagerness. There will eventually come a time when they will move beyond the school years and that may mean a loss as friends are separated as they begin to journey a variety of career paths.

When we make a commitment to another in marriage we leave behind one style of living and take on another. The same is true when children become part of your life. These are losses we easily understand as being gains—joyful rather than sorrowful.

As we look to the other end of the age spectrum we can see a person experiences a loss upon retirement. Some will grieve that change in their life while others look forward to it eagerly

because it will open new opportunities to them. It can be helpful to make a list of the gains and losses for each one of the life-changing moments that we move through. It can help us put things into perspective whether it is the loss of a job, a dream, a member of the family, a marriage. Sometimes the gains can be hard to identify. It may take a long time to see them, if ever.

When a person grows weary of battling the snows of winter they may decide that the loss of experiencing 4 seasons is worth the gain of going south for the winter. When a person wearies of being caretaker of their own home and property they may decide to sell the home (a loss) and move to a condo or an apartment because the loss will free them from what has become an unpleasant burden so they can devote their energy to things that now hold a greater interest for them.

If health conditions come into play a person may decide that they are ready to give up even more of the responsibilities they carried at one time (a loss) in order that they might have more help available to them (a gain). At that point a person may choose an independent living or assisted living environment that will provide services such as meals, recreational opportunities, assistance with health issues, etc. Some may eventually choose to enter into a care facility and, while recognizing it as a loss from a former life style, it may also be seen as a gain because it provides the person with a level of care that they see as a benefit, given their present health/strength status.

Losses are difficult and painful



when they come suddenly and are extreme rather than the measured kinds of losses mentioned above. The suddenness of a job loss, broken marriage, death of a loved one, heart attack, stroke, cancer or a fall can thrust a person from independence to dependence more quickly than they can adjust emotionally. Sudden losses require a special

sensitivity and understanding on the part of family members, friends and caregivers. It may be helpful to emotionally place yourself in the other person's shoes and then make a mental list of the losses the person is experiencing. Ask, *What are the losses I would be grieving? How would these losses change my outlook on life? How would I want to be treated? Are there words or actions from family and friends that would help or that would hurt?* Taking a little time to do a personal inventory with these questions can prove helpful in sharing moments of painful loss with family and friends. 🕊

Jim is currently the head of the NSA Life Member project. He graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelors in forest management in 1961 and later received a masters in divinity from Wartburg Theological Seminary in 1965. Jim directed church camping programs in Minnesota and Iowa and also specialized as an interim pastor for congregations. He is currently serving as chaplain at a Lutheran Retirement Home and working as section executive for the American Camping Association's Great Rivers Section (Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and western Missouri)

Across Three Divides

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

During the spring and summer of 2000, I crossed three mountain ranges in Alaska and Europe. They included the western Alps skiing the Haute Route, a traverse of the Alaska Range over Denali, and through the Wrangell-St. Elias Mountains in an ultra-marathon race called the Wilderness Classic.

During the 1970-71 school year I skied for the Universite de Grenoble on the world university circuit. The one trip I had wanted to take, but had neither the time nor money, was the Haute Route. This April I was able to ski across the western Alps from Zermatt to Chamonix sur la Haute Route.

For 10 days we skied hut to hut from the base of the Matterhorn to Arrolla, Cabin des Vignette, Cabin de Dix, Courmayeur and over the shoulder of Mt. Blanc. It was a moving tapestry of mountains, glaciers and culture that enthralled me.

Learning German and Italian involved me in the steep learning curve I crave. I would endeavor to speak both languages.

When I was a teenager and first worked in Alaska during the 1960s, I remember seeing the Denali massif towering above the Susitna River floodplain. More than to climb it, my dream became to traverse the Alaska Range over Denali. It would be 33 years before I would live that dream.

The summit ridge of Denali drops off steeply on both sides for thousands of feet. Better climbers than I have died here. I clip into running protection and begin the last 300 feet of ascent at 22:00 on this Solstice day of the new millennium. This is a place where one can look down on passing aircraft and view almost 125 thousand square miles of Alaska. We have climbed into the rarefied air, and the jet stream can drop at anytime and blast us with winds of 100 mph.

There is about 40 percent of the oxygen available at sea level, so one functions at half the mental capacity. At minus-20 degrees Fahrenheit, with a 25-mph breeze, the windchill is minus-45 degrees. We don't even take our packs off at the summit—we just hug each other, take a few photos and prepare to descend out of the Death Zone.

The adventure was just starting for our team for we were doing a traverse of the Alaska Range over Denali. Beginning June 2, we had started on the southeast fork of the Kahiltna Glacier and spent almost three weeks

staging 120 pounds of gear each up to Denali Pass at 18,200. Essentially we had climbed the mountain twice, making camps at 7,800, 9,800, 11,000, 14,200 and 18,100 and doing two carries to each camp.

We were climbing the West Buttress Route pioneered by Bradford Washburn in 1951.

The most difficult section for me was between 16,200 and 17,200, where we made one carry with packs so heavy we needed help getting them on. It was here at 16,500 that former Seward resident Mike Vanderbeek fell to his death trying to rescue a climber.

I paused on the ridge where Mike fell for a moment of silence. Mike and I had both grown up in Salt Lake City, skied Alta, attended the University of Utah, and climbed in Little Cottonwood Canyon. A climbing scholarship program in his honor has been established in Talkeetna.

Most of the 1,000 climbers who attempt Denali each year use the West Buttress route and cache supplies at several camps for the return. Our traverse team would be unique in that we would be the first of the new millennium to traverse Denali. Instead of arriving at Denali Pass with just survival gear headed for the summit, we had made two carries of 50 pounds each and camped at Denali Pass. On the Solstice we were one of the three highest camps in North America (there were also teams on the Cassin and South Buttress routes).

Now we had to descend and traverse out to Wonder Lake on the north side of the Alaska Range about 26 miles carrying 90-pound packs. The adventure began right on top as Alan started losing his sight. Alan is a world-class climber who had climbed Everest twice in one week during May '98, once to within 300 feet of the summit without oxygen.



Jerry Dixon (Courtesy of Jerry Dixon)

After tying his Australian flag to his ice ax for a photo of what is his fifth summit of the highest point on seven continents, his vision started to fail. HACE, or High Altitude Cerebral Edema, can affect anyone at these heights, even world-class climbers. There is no doubt in my mind that the action of our three Alaska Denali Guides saved his life.

The only cure for HACE is to descend, descend, descend. We started back down the summit ridge and another party was on our protection. A guide yelled, "We have someone who needs to descend immediately. Would you let us through?" They willingly obliged.

Alan made it down to 19,000 and then virtually collapsed. The ADG guides took Alan's gear, short-roped him and began a forced march to our camp at 18,100. Only seven of the original 12 climbers (including three guides) had made the summit. Four climbers dropped out because of altitude sickness or other concerns. One was back at high camp because he could not feel his toes for 12 hours.

As the last climber in the party, I picked up wands we had used to mark our second summit ascent. We were essentially a rescue squad bringing back one of our own team members.

This is the section of trail where entire teams have disappeared into the rarefied atmosphere. In July 1967, when I was working on a cabin above the Indian river just west of Talkeetna, a team of six men died when the jet stream dropped, and all were trapped in 100-mph winds. A guided team was trapped just a few years ago by the same velocity winds, and several lost all their fingers and/or toes. Our camp at 18,100 is three tents surrounded by a wall of snow blocks six feet high.

We descend the Harper to where it is a cascade of ice, then head for Brown's Tower to camp. Mike kicks out several crevasses so we can see them and then Ben falls into a hidden one almost to his waist. Our training to keep the rope tight pays off when someone punches through a snow bridge. We had three team members punch into crevasses.

We awake the following day at the top of Karsten's Ridge. This is the route pioneered by the Sourdough Expedition of 1910 and Hudson Stuck in 1912. These incredible men, often climbing unroped, chiseled steps up the ridge with snow shovels and showed the way. We descend in four feet of snow. Even though I am an extreme skier and love powder, I would not have gotten on that slope as I considered the avalanche potential too high.

Mike said, "I have set off climax avalanches here before. We will be right on the crest of the slope. My track will be waist-deep. Stay in it." On the descent Ben

commented, "I had a guide in front and behind. My only other rope mate had climbed Everest twice." Life is good.

In the '70s I hiked most every drainage on the north side of Denali. Then in 1976 I flew a light twin over Denali. During my career as a smokejumper, I got lots of air time over Alaska's mountains. Descending Karsten's Ridge is delightful mix of alpinism and the feeling of flight. The exposure takes our breath away. We love it. This is the wild side of the Range and we encounter no one until 11,000, where we find a team that is cheering us on as they now have a path to the summit.

We spend three more days snowshoeing out the Muldrow and hiking over McGonagall pass, then across the wide plain to Wonder Lake. We are roped right to the pass, as an Austrian climber plunged into a crevasse here last year. Crossing the McKinley River demands our attention as a Russian climber drowned here in '98 when his packed pulled him under. The Denali Traverse has been a journey not only of geography, but of the soul.

The Alaska Wilderness Classic, across the Wrangell St. Elias Range from Nabesna to McCarthy in August, is a complex race with simple rules. You traverse a mountain range with no trails, carrying everything on your back, and do a marathon a day for six days. Having traversed both the Alaska Range and raced the Classic several times, I can say the commitment level is the same.

We blew up our backpack rafts where Glacier Creek enters the Chitistone. I would finally get off my feet after 130 miles of hiking on rocks and glaciers. My ankles were the size of grapefruits. My Curtis Raft felt like a light rain coat filled with air. I put on my dry suit and make sure my survival gear was around my neck. This was my 29th year of running whitewater, so I was excited about the descent.

We started down the Class III run of flowing ice water in our toy boats. My raft continued to fill with water. Finally my Thermarest, which I was sitting on, popped straight up and I fell into the water-filled center of my tiny boat. I ran the boat up on a gravel bar and saved my gear. This happened three times and I decided to walk. Other racers have had their rafts chewed by bears or lost them in the current and had to do solo traverse of glaciers to get out. Three months after the finish I am still dealing with swollen ankles. I'll heal and be back.

When I crossed the finish line with my friend, Dick Griffith, there was a photographer taking pictures. I recognized him and said hello. "You must be having a good summer," he said to me.

I responded: "Best summer of my life." 🐻

Jerry currently teaches gifted students in Seward, Alaska. He can be reached at js2dixon@hotmail.com

My Shortest Time Aloft

by Dan Tomich (Missoula '61)

My shortest time aloft on a jump had to be a fire jump on the Kootenai National Forest back in '62. I was on a DC-3 plane load with Len Krout as the spotter. The wind conditions at the fire were pretty stiff, so our jump spot became a large clear-cut that would give us plenty of room to land.

Only trouble was, the clear-cut had some very large larch trees left scattered around as seed trees, and lots of logs, stumps, and slash to miss on the way in. Well, Len must have thought it looked pretty good, and being close to the fire, out the door we went.

I didn't get much of an opening shock, and looking up, I saw that I had lines over the canopy and sort of a Mae West situation. Training told me to throw my reserve out and away from the main chute, but I hesitated on that because of the strong winds. I didn't want to go downwind out of control with my reserve acting as a spinnaker.

Yanking on the risers, I noticed that I could move the lines across the canopy, and decided that would be a better option. After a lot of tugging, I managed to get the lines off, and the canopy opened. Only trouble was, now I had an inversion to deal with.

Checking my drift, I saw I was getting pretty close to the ground and speeding downwind. I was rapidly approaching a tall seed larch, but it looked like I would pass just to the right. Not wanting to brush the tree branches, I pulled hard on my right control line, and forgetting the inversion, spun left into the tree! I plowed through the top of the tree and out the other side at high speed. The canopy caught the top of the tree, and it broke off!

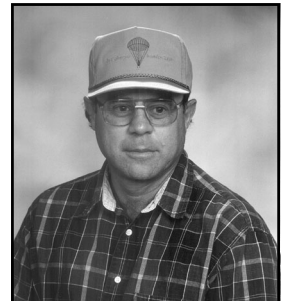
The next thing I knew, I was falling backwards, looking

up at my canopy with the treetop in it. I landed with a loud thump in a soft pile of dirt that a dozer had pushed up. The pile of dirt was surrounded by tree stumps and downed logs, so I guess there are little angels out there after all!

The impact broke my backboard, and left me somewhat dazed. A squad leader ran up and asked: "Are you dead?"

I wasn't, and went on to set a record for my shortest time aloft! 🍄

Dan Tomich was raised on a farm near Glenns Ferry, Idaho, and graduated from the University of Idaho in 1966 with a degree in civil engineering. He worked one season on the Boise National Forest, then trained at Missoula in 1961. He jumped five seasons there with his last year as a squad leader at Grangeville (1965). In 1967 he jumped with the BLM on the Anchorage District in Alaska before reporting for duty with the Navy.



Dan Tomich (Courtesy of Dan Tomich)

He served as a Civil Engineer Corps officer at Guantanamo Naval Base, Cuba, and then in Vietnam with the Navy Seabees. He worked various engineering jobs with the BLM and Bureau of Reclamation, and took an early retirement from federal service after 27 years.

He now works for the Idaho Department of Water Resources as a staff engineer, and enjoys raft trips on the rivers in the West and in Alaska.



1965 Grangeville crew. Bottom L-R: Doug Howard, Marty Mueller, Dick Hughes, Jim Clark, Dan Tomich, Roy Williams, Roy Korkalo, Larry Fite. Top L-R: Jim Darr, Doug Conklin, Bruce Stranger, Barry Hicks, Jerry Smith, Eric Hansen, Steve Anderson, Bruce Cameron, Bill Allred, Frank Borgenson. (Courtesy of Dan Tomich)

SMOKEJUMPER MILESTONES

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

Starting with this issue, the April issue will contain the complete listing of the marks obtained and recorded. The other issues will contain the marks submitted since the prior issue. The following is a cumulative listing of entries received over the past four issues:

Fire jumps in one season:

29-Bill Murphy	(Missoula '56)	1961
28- Bruce Yergenson	(McCall '54)	1961
28-Robert Turner	(Redding '99)	2001
27-Lynn Sprague	(McCall '59)	1961
27-Chas Bull	(Missoula '57)	1961
27-Ted Mason	(NIFC '88)	1999
26- Fred Rensmeyer	(McCall '58)	1961
26-Ted Mason	(NIFC '88)	1994
26-Chuck Sheley	(Cave Jct. '59)	1961
26-Shannon Orr	(Redding '92)	1999
26-Steve Price	(Missoula '95)	1999
26-Shannon Orr	(Redding '94)	2001

Easternmost fire jump (longitude):

Longitude 79 W, George Washington N.F., Virginia, 1974.

Ron McMinimy (Redding '65), **David Oswalt** (Cave Jct. '65), **Tom Emonds** (Cave Jct. '66), **Gary Thornhill** (Cave Jct. '68), **Walt Congleton** (Cave Jct. '68), **Pat McNally** (Cave Jct. '67), **Mike Marcuson** (NCSB '64)

Westernmost fire jump (longitude):

Longitude 170° W, Little Diomed Island, 1991.

Rod Dow (McCall '68), **Robert Collins** (Redmond '69), **Al Biller** (Fairbanks '82), **Jon Larsen** (Fairbanks '89), **Lance Clouser** (Fairbanks '85)

Northernmost fire jump (latitude):

Latitude 70° N, Alaska, 1993.

Dustin Matsuoka (Boise '93), **Steve Theisen** (Fairbanks '86), **Bruce Ford** (Missoula '75), **Mike Niccoli** (Boise '93), **Rod Dow** (McCall '68), **Bob Hurley** (Fairbanks '87), **Pat Kenny** (Missoula '87), **Al Seiler** (Fairbanks '85)

Highest elevation landing:

12,187'—White River N.F., Colorado, 2000.

Mike Tupper (Fairbanks '85), **Dennis Terry** (Redding '90), **Todd Jenkins** (NIFC '98), **Mel Tenneson** (Fairbanks '86)

11,193'—Humbolt N.F. Nevada, 1966.

Bill Yensen (McCall '53), **Nick Kennedy** (Idaho City '64), **Bruce Yergenson** (McCall '54)

10,700'—Shoshone N.F. Wyoming, 1965.

Tony Peiffer (Missoula '61), **Jim Thompson** (Missoula '63), **Vern Bush** (Missoula '63) **Jerry Lebsack** (Missoula '62), **Gary Romness** (Missoula '62).

10,690'—Custer N.F. Montana, 1947.

Wally Henderson (Missoula '46), jump partner unknown

10,100'—Shoshone N.F. Wyoming, 1974.

Steve Clairmont (Missoula '62), **Ted Kamrud** (Missoula '66)

Longest letdown:

270'—Olympic National Park, Washington, 1970.

Larry Hyde (NCSB '70)

Most consecutive seasons with a fire jump:

34—**Jerry Ogawa** (McCall '67) 1967 through 2000

Oldest first year jumper:

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

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

Oldest active jumper:

Age 59—**Murry Taylor** (Redding '65) 2001

Age 58—**Walt Currie** (Missoula '75) 2001

Age 57—**Bob Reid** (Missoula '57) 1995

Longest break in service between fire jumps:

35 years—**Bob Reid** (Missoula '57) 1960 to 1995

Number of different bases employed:

Six bases—**Willard Lowden** (NCSB '72)

Five bases—**Pat McGrane** (Boise '76), **William Ferguson** (McCall '70)

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

14 states—**Mark Corbet** (LaGrande '74)

Number of aircraft types jumped (on the job):

25—**Bill Moody** (North Cascades '57)

13—**Richard Fox** (Fairbanks '80) (unconfirmed).

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



Touching All Bases



Due to the lack of action during the winter, this column will only have a base report from the Boise jumpers that we missed in the January issue.

BLM Boise Smokejumpers—2001

by Steve Nemore (Redmond '69)

There were 76 jumpers on the rolls in 2001. That's an increase of 16 people from 2000. Our increased headcount is a result of the big money Congress invested in the federal wildfire program after the huge fires of 2000. One third of our crew was new to the Boise jumpers in 2001. Eleven (11) rookies finished out of 15 starters, and we had 17 jumpers transfer to Boise: from Redding (8), McCall (4), Missoula (1), Redmond (1) and Grangeville (3). We had 3 women on the crew; their combined total is 24 jump seasons. Kevin Stalder is our pilot on the BLM Twin Otter (13 years of flying jumpers). Also, we overworked (and underpaid) Rhonda and Jessica as they took care of the payroll and the confusion of administrative paperwork.

Refresher training began in mid-March. We had three jump training sessions. BLM Boise rookies trained for the first time in Boise. The rookie trainers made a rookie camp up in the Boise National Forest, 25 miles from town. The camp made for very effective woods and fire skills training and camaraderie. Rookies became brothers (no women rookies this year ... job offers were made but no women accepted) in a camp rather than having to house themselves thru out metropolitan Boise or living in their trucks in whatever parking lot they could find (no government housing/barracks in Boise). Each rookie received a minimum 20 practice jumps (that's about 4 years worth in the old days) and were on the list by late May.

Boise people made 2308 total jumps this year; of that total, 1506 were practice jumps. That's an average of 30 jumps per person! Wally Wasser was the first Boise person to go over 500 total jumps; he also went over the 250 fire-jump mark by 16.

Boise Smokejumper operations made 1104 fire jumps; however, only 14 jumps were made when the



plane took off from Boise. This illustrates the expansive operational area for Boise smokejumpers. We did standby and fire jumps from 6 sub-bases: Battle Mountain, Nevada; Grand Junction, Colorado; Cedar City, Utah; Carson City, Nevada; Ely, Nevada; and Twin Falls, Idaho. Our fire action is not close to Boise; it's anywhere the federal landowners order us to go.

We had 421 Forest Service jumpers join us for varying amounts of time. We sent 123 Boise jumpers to the other smokejumper bases. Mixed loads (mixed load means ram-air and round parachutes on the same airplane) did not happen in 2001, so our visits to

F.S. and their visits to BLM were done in full planeloads, usually Otter loads of 8 smokejumpers on each plane.

We had two major parachuting injuries in our operation. Tyler Dogget broke his femur on his last rookie practice jump, and La-ona Lydic (Alaska) broke her femur on a fire jump in Nevada. Both should recover fully by next season. We also had one minor injury, a concussion, from a hard landing.

We did 31 prescribed fire projects. Some were fuels reduction projects and some were actual burning projects. A total of 105 Boise jumpers put in 935 workdays for the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and BLM in Montana, Oregon, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, and Idaho. The new money mainly funded these prescribed fire projects.

Boise jumpers were students in many fire-training classes. Most of the classes were in the new prescribed fire curriculum and were attended here at NIFC (National Interagency Fire Center). This is very fortunate for us as the training center is right across campus from the Loft.

Boise (the most urban smokejumper base) jumped 203 fires. Boise smokejumpers were away from Boise an average of 95 days each. That great amount of travel was for Initial Attack standby, actual on-the-line firefighting, prescribed fire projects, and training.

Our aircraft fleet (at full strength) was 5 Twin Otters and one Dornier 228. They flew a total of 831 hours, and that's double our average annual flight hours. Smokejumpers are in an ever-increasing mobility mode, being quickly dispatched to where the action or predicted action is. We had several airspace incidents; other aircraft flew into an active jumping airspace and once our airplane was directed into an already occupied airspace ... these incidents are taken seriously and analyzed thoroughly to prevent future incidents.

The Loft built LOTS of smokejumper gear ... a big job because we had to increase the inventory by 30 percent. All our jumpers are main parachute riggers ... so we had to train 30 new Ram-Air riggers. That's a lot of practice packs and an equal amount of pack inspections. The loft bought 98 new mains, 32 new reserves, 190 new drogues, and 150 new cargo chutes.

Nationwide, smokejumpers continue to increase their responsibility in overall fire management. We are now expected to do much more than jump a small remote fire, pack out, and go back to base to wait for the next one. Our flexibility and expanding capabilities

are keeping us in business. The Federal wildfire force increases in people and equipment each year as do state and local agencies. We remain strictly attentive to the basics of smokejumping as we add responsibility and capability. The Boise organization chart is reflective of these increased requirements and near year-round availability. Eighty percent of our people are permanent employees, working a minimum of 6 months a year. These permanent smokejumpers now get job benefits, such as health and life insurance, retirement, and job security ... we're professional smokejumpers! Our organization has been "upgraded" and many on the crew now make a living wage, enough to have families and own houses.

BLM Boise smokejumpers are now preparing for 2002 and anticipating more fire jumps, more prescribed fire projects, more large fire team participation, continued great cooperation with Forest Service jumpers, and an increased head count to 85. Bring on fire season 2002! 🍄



Trail Crew Project Report

Blackfoot Divide Crew

by Cliff Dalzell (Missoula '61)

As usual, we met in Missoula on Sunday morning. I met four of the other five crewmembers that day for the first time, three in Missoula and one at the trailhead. The crew consisted of **Chuck Dysart, Tom McGrath, Jim Phillips, Rudy (Skip)Stoll, Bob Whaley** and me. The fact that we were strangers to each other on Sunday did not hold us back and we jelled as a single great group in a very short time. We were all Missoula-trained jumpers who rookied anywhere from 1951 to 1968 with the youngest being 58 and the oldest 69. Four were working the trail project for the first time.

Don Schusted of Missoula, in his mid-70s, was our packer. He was supposed to be assisted by another short string from the Bitterroot, but they didn't arrive until late in the day and only had one pack animal. Good thing Don had his daughter there to help him on Sunday. She is a seasonal packer for the good ol' F.S. at Nine Mile. Don camped just down steam from the trailhead and was in to see us a number of times.

We decided to make it all the way to our camp on Sunday rather than camp at the trailhead on Sunday evening and walk in Monday. This worked fine even though we did get away from the trailhead late. By the time we were about half way up the trail, we encountered a good rain shower. When we did get to our campsite, Don had already dropped off some of our gear and we proceeded to set up camp in the rain. What fun!!! It rained again at least three times during the week. One morning we actually delayed leaving camp because it would have been unsafe to work/walk. Camp was set up on the edge of a rather open spur ridge just above a small lake about a half a mile outside of the boundary. The boundary being Young's Pass and Jenny Creek on the wilderness side.

One of our crew had pre-positioned a cache of Anheuser-Busch product in the area of our camp a week or two before. What a deal!!!! Therefore, each evening before dinner a few cans of liquid would appear cooling in the little stream below our camp. This unique liquid also worked well for steaming the main dinner course one evening and it always enhances the flavor of the morning hotcakes. I never was sure just how many cans of this magic fluid were in that cache, but I do know we left at least a case with the packer at the end of the week.

Oh, I suppose I should say something about our project. We were to clear trail #278 from Young's Pass to the Dunham Creek trail #400 which is just over three miles. BUT! there were many, many, count them, many, down logs that needed to be crosscut once, twice, and sometimes three times to get them out of the trail. Often we had both crosscuts working at the same time. We finished our assignment except for 13 lower logs (stock or people could step over) near the top of the Jenny Creek/Dunham Creek saddle. This trail still needs a lot of tread

work as it goes through a couple of very wet places about a couple of miles up.

Late one afternoon we had some visitors from NSA headquarters!!! **Roy** (Willy the Bitterroot Kid) **Williams, Jon McBride**, and a friend showed up. They also thought it was nice to have a cool one so far out in the woods. One suggestion, I think it would be better to have more than six people on a crew. 🐾

Cliff lives in Boise, Idaho, and can be contacted at: cdalzell@mindspring.com

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

It's always interesting to read through each issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. Probably no one remembers me, but some may remember one or both of my brothers who also jumped in Missoula where we did our undergraduate studies. Danny was in forestry, I in physical education and Jerry studied business.

After his first year in Missoula (1953), Danny jumped a year in Yellowstone, the year I rookied in Missoula. Danny and I were always on the UM swim team and filled our dorm rooms with ducks, pheasant, sockeye salmon or whatever we could get and keep cold by blocking off the heating vents. We also lived one year in the "shack" where the only place that things wouldn't freeze was in the refrigerator.

Unfortunately Danny was killed by a drunk driver in a head-on in Montana while back from California where he had worked for a few years. He had just landed a good job in the woods and loved every minute of it. He left a wife and two sons. One son is now a successful engineer and the other an Air Force fighter pilot. His wife did an incredible job in raising those two on her own.

More people may remember Jerry. He lived 17 years in Laos and Thailand and was the best man the Hmong ever knew. He personally screened thousands of the Hmong who came to the U.S. Probably every one of them who moved to Missoula did so because they knew Jerry and how much he loved Montana. Jerry died mysteriously in Bankok at age 41 the same age as Danny when he died.

Jerry was the last American to leave Laos and I'm sure he had lots of tales to tell but never had the time. I was honored to be presented (in Arlington) the three medals that he was awarded for outstanding service and bravery during his years in Laos. I wish he were still alive because he would be in the middle of the current terrorists problems we now face.

I didn't make the same impact on forestry or government work that Danny and Jerry did, but I did spend military time in Korea and was able to win medals at two Olympic games. Our brother Kent still lives in Montana where he twice won the state high school heavyweight wrestling championship. He also won a state championship in trap shooting. Kent had bad knees from football so he never got a chance to jump. However, he more than any of us, has gotten to take advantage of living in Montana. I like to think our time with the smokejumpers shaped our careers and deepened our love of Montana and this great country in which we live.

—**Jack Daniels** (Missoula '54)

Cortland, New York 🐾



NSA Guest Book



Our Web site, www.smokejumpers.com, gets about 700 hits per day. One of the many features of our Web site is the "Guest Book" where individuals log on with their comments. Here is a recent sampling over the past months:

G'day.. my name is Rachel and i live in the Blue Mountains, Sydney, Australia and am part of the NSW voluntary bush fire service- air operations, which means we don't exactly jump out of planes but we have the helicopter... and so i just wanted to say g'day from us down here.

Rachel Swindell medusa779@hotmail.com Sydney, NSW, Australia

Greetings bros, finally entered the 21st century, have computer will travel. Any jumpers from 77 on from Redding drop me a line. See ya and take care.

Ralph (Ryson) Ryan ryson6@cs.com USA

This site is awesome!!! I was very impressed. I to, have an extreme reluctant desire to compete with the world's best smokejumpers. I am a proud Canadian, but would prefer a career in the United States.

Jonathan Baillie J_baillie7@hotmail.com Halifax, NS Canada

My dad, Mike Wright, jumped at RAC in 70-72 then NCSB 77-80 and i was wondering if any of his jump buddies could e-mail me and tell me stories about "the Good old days" as my dad calls them.

Erik Wright Pastrana2@aol.com Battle Ground, Wa USA

To all those Canadians interested out there, smokejumping is alive and well in Fort St. John BC, Canada. To my American brothers, have a safe and prosperous fire season.

Paul Erik Andersen

paulerikandersen@hotmail.com Duncan, BC Canada

As a point of reference I am 62 years old. I am the grand-nephew of Claude Cunningham who lived in Hamilton, Montana and worked for the forest service out of Missoula in the '30s '40s and '50s. He inspired my interest in the forest service in the '50s, but I never followed up. I found this site very interesting.

Lee R. Cunningham lcunning@gte.net Goshen, KY USA

I just wanted to say thanks and everybody stay safe! Rudi Monument Helitack 2001 Monument, Colorado.

Rudi FireFtr4Lfe@CO USA

Would like to hear from some of my old jump bro's from C.J. and Grangeville. Glad I found this site, would be nice to get reacquainted.

Ralph Dickenson rdandbert@centurytel.net USA

I would just like to send out a big thank you for all the smoke jumpers who dedicate your lives so those of us can appreciate the beauty of the wild that still is out west. I want to work out West next summer. Keep up the good work guys and gals.

Doug North doug_north_mi@yahoo.com. Findlay, OH USA 🇺🇸

Update on Grievance by Eight Missoula Smokejumpers

by Willis Curdy (Missoula '71)

TO: All USFS firefighters who received a civil service appointment prior to 1984

As has been mentioned in previous articles in *Smokejumper* magazine, eight firefighters/smokejumpers who worked with a civil service appointment in Region One prior to May 1984 filed a grievance against the USFS/Dept. of Agriculture to recover the additional six months of retirement credit given to firefighters who worked with a civil service appointment after May 1984. A recent decision prompts an update to this issue.

In the spring of 2001, a Merit Systems Protection Board judge held a hearing in Missoula concerning the grievance. Mr. Craig James of Boise, Idaho represented the eight firefighters and Mr. Hugh Maxwell of the Washington Office USFS represented the USFS. In mid-summer, the judge ruled that the Forest Service must grant the additional six months credit back to Octo-

ber 1980. As a result, the USFS recalculated the retirement credit of the eight appellants prior to October 2001. At a recent fire directors meeting the USFS Washington Office Human Resources indicated that they were going to begin the process of recalculating retirement benefits for other firefighters based on the MSPB judge's decision.

In the meantime, the eight firefighters/smokejumpers have appealed the MSPB decision to the United Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, D.C. By the time this update reaches publication, the legal documents necessary for the hearing will have been submitted. The hearing is scheduled for late April or May. A decision by the Court of Appeals will probably be announced in mid summer. An update on the Court's decision will follow. 🇺🇸

Elmer Neufeld (Cave Junction '44): In His Own Words

An Interview by Steve Smith

In 1999, I interviewed Elmer Neufeld at the Smokejumper Center in Boise, Idaho. Parts of that interview were used in the *History of Smokejumping* documentary.

Rather than try and probably fail to describe Elmer, I'd prefer to let Elmer speak for himself. This is an edited transcription of that interview.

Note: Elmer Neufeld died Monday, June 18, in Boise at age 80. He grew up in Inman, Kan., and was drafted into the Civilian Public Service as a conscientious objector during WWII. While at a CPS camp in 1943, he heard of the CPS-103 smokejumper unit that was being formed. Elmer was accepted in 1944 and joined the jumpers at Cave Junction, Ore.

When did you start jumping?

My rookie year was 1944.

How old are you?

Seventy-six years old.

Why did you become a smokejumper?

Note: During the Second World War Elmer was a conscientious objector, who refused military service on religious grounds. He was one of the Civilian Public Service (CPS) jumpers. These men protected the western forests and held the smokejumper program together.

As I was tellin' ya, we had jobs to do. We always had work and we always stayed with the work, but sometimes you figured you were just spinnin' your wheels, you weren't getting anything accomplished.

And all of a sudden, here we've got a job where it looks like we are going to do something. It's going to be worthwhile. And that's when I signed up. I signed up in March of 1943 and they had every slot filled, so they said, "Well, sign up in 1944," so I did.

How was training back then?

It was a little bit tougher than it is now. 'Cause we trained hard. We were in good physical condition because we'd worked all our life. The instructors just poured it on. And we kinda surpassed the instructors in a lot of cases.

Tell me about your rookie class.

I would say about seventy percent of them were farm kids. Then we had a Quaker who was going to study to become a doctor, then we had another guy, and I can't



remember what he was studying to be. He was in college, **Bill Laughlin** (CJ '43).

Tell me about the first time you stepped out of an airplane.

"Crazy," I'm saying to myself, "what the hell are you doin'?" You're gonna splat into the ground and they won't have to worry about you again." I'm sayin' to myself, "You signed up for it, now get goin'." So I did.

You were jumping the Eagle chute back then—how was that?

You knew it was open, let's put it that way. It was very, very positive that it was open and I loved it. When that thing opened up, I looked up and said, "Thank you, God."

How was the opening shock?

It just shook the hell out of ya. That was a good feeling as far as I was concerned. I talked to one guy that had his back broke by the opening of the Eagle. What was his name ... Stucky, Stucky. I can't remember his first name now (**Winton Stucky**, CJ '43). But the Eagle broke his back.

Now if you go out there in the right position, then the Eagle can snap you, but it won't break anything.

Did you jump on a fire your first year?

In '44 I had three fires. Three fire jumps. Out of a military C-47. Captain Little was flying. I landed maybe 100 yards from the fire. Everything was going fine. Not a thing wrong with that. That was a good fire jump.

Then they called us out of there. They said, "The ground crew is coming in, you guys get out." That's not the way we were taught. Because when you get on a fire, you leave it either when it's out completely or a ground crew relieves ya. It's either one or the other. There's no two ways about it.

Were you jumping out of Winthrop?

No. Cave Junction. My first year was out of Cave Junction.

A lot of CPS jumpers have said they had something to prove. Did you feel that way?

A lot of them and I'm one of them. Now we've got a job that we can do. Now we got a job, not only can we do it, but it's fun. It's a heck of a lot of fun to do this smokejumping job. It's a lot of hard work, so what? We hired out to be tough and we did it.

Tell me about how jumping was different back then.

We had a fire and I helped the guys on the top of the list suit up in the truck as we went to the airport. And put 'em in a Fairchild and they were on their way. Then Jack Heintzelman (CJ '43), the spotter, said, "The next three guys get ready because we may need you too."

I looked down at my shoes, and I've got these farmer shoes on that are both of 'em split down the heel, clear to the ankle, clear to the Achilles heel. I've got no support in them at all and I don't have any socks on. I can't drive, because I don't have a government license. So I said to myself, "Just shut your mouth and get yourself ready." And I did. I jumped on a fire with those shoes the way they were and I never had a bit of trouble. That's just the way she went.

If they'd have found out about it, they'd have probably fired my butt and sent me home. 'Cause that's not a good trick to pull. That's a good way to break an ankle. Didn't break anything, didn't hurt anything.

Did you ever get hurt jumping?

Nope.

Do you remember how many jumps you had?

Exactly eighty. The reason I know that is because I got the last jump by hook or by crook instead of the legal ways. I had one jump to go to get to eighty and at that time I was a smokejumper foreman at Winthrop. I don't remember all the details of it. I said, "We've got to have some practice jumps for about three or four of these guys. They need some practice. They've been too long without a jump." And Francis (Lufkin, NCSB '40) said,

"OK. Get 'em ready to go." "Well, it's a pretty good-sized airplane, so I'm probably going to go with 'em," I said. Francis said, "Have at her." So I did.

Tell me about Francis Lufkin.

He was the most wonderful guy to work for that you ever worked for. He had everything put together. And he gave you all the help you wanted. He could run people, he could run a crew, he could run a base. He did a good job of it.

Let's talk about 1946, when the war ended and the vets returned. Did the COs feel pushed out or were they ready to go home?

No, very few were upset about that, very few. Most of them wanted to go back to their homes, to their former life. They were discharged.

So, fine and dandy—we can go back home and start making a living. So most of them did that. Because of circumstances beyond my control at that time, I didn't have a job. What do I do then? I gotta find me a job. So

I ask Francis if I could go to work for him and he said, "Well, possible. Put in an application." So, January '46 is when I put in the application. I was accepted. They did not have enough veterans to fill the slots. There just weren't enough there. There weren't enough who wanted this kind of a job. 'Cause this was strictly an experimental job. This was strictly experimental, even in '46, '47, '48.

No problems with the vets?

When we first went to Winthrop in '45, we had no bunkhouse, no cook shack, no nothing. We were putting up 3-C buildings, the first six of us who went there. That was our job. So I had heard that (NAME DELETED) was gonna be on our butt. Fine, let him, he was gonna work the hell out of us and really make us toe the line. Well, we got started and he came around and never chewed us out and never did anything.

We'd been there one week and he came over with his lunch bucket. "Elmer, can I have lunch with you?" "Sure." And he started out, he says, "When you first got here I figured I was gonna work the hell out of you guys and make you quit. Work you that hard. Hell, you guys beat me workin'. There's no way in the world I can work you guys hard enough to make you quit. You never stop, you don't even take breaks in between time."

"As far as chewin' you out, as far as hassling you is concerned, on my part, that's stopped as of right now. It

"... Hell, you guys beat me workin'. There's no way in the world I can work you guys hard enough to make you quit. You never stop, you don't even take breaks in between time."

doesn't do me a bit of good to hassle you any further. You can't work any harder than you been workin'." All right. He got up after while, saying, "So from now on we're friends." He stuck out his hand and shook hands.

He says, "One thing to keep in mind, as long as you're workin' for me: every chance I get I'm gonna egg you on to go ahead and join the Army. Whether you want to or not is up to you, but I'm going to egg you on a little bit." I said, "Go ahead! That won't hurt our feelings one bit." So he was my friend for the next thirty-five years until he died. Quite a guy. Quite a man.

That's one of the things that we found out about COs who worked for the Forest Service. As long as you applied yourself, you had no trouble with 'em. Absolutely none. You always had a few of them that were gonna egg you on to join the Army or say, "Why didn't ya?" So tell 'em the story and let it go at that.

What did you tell 'em?

I didn't believe in killing. Very simple—that just covered the whole thing. Nope, I'm not going to go out there and kill somebody. OK, my upbringing didn't allow for that, so we just didn't do it.

There must have been something you liked about smokejumping. What was it?

All of it. It was a lot of fun. You get to know the people you work with, you get to know your fellow jumpers absolutely, completely close. Close-tied, because they're going to have to depend on you for their life and you're going to have to depend on them for your life. So we worked very close together.

So the comraderie was a big part of the job for you?

A very big part. Come hell or high water, I would never trade that for all the money in the world.

Tell me about the guys you jumped with?

I jumped with a guy named Jack Larson (NCSB '46) ... on the Bunker Hill fire. This was the second Bunker Hill fire in '46. In '45 we had a Bunker Hill fire that went to three hundred acres. And that one had ten smokejumpers and 97 negro paratroopers on it. We had a big fire. The Negro paratroopers did a whale of a job fightin' fire, did a good job.

But in '46 I jumped with Jack Larson. I thought he was pretty much indoctrinated with what was going on. He was a little bit behind me in experience. But anyway, we jumped on the ridge, got our chutes, our cargo dropped to us and he said, "Well, let's go down the hill." I said, "It's not there, Jack, that won't get to the fire." We

couldn't see the fire from where we were. "Ya," he said, "that's the way we gotta go." So down the hill we went. We missed the fire, I knew that already. So, I says, "Jack, you climb this tree and take a compass with you, place that fire and take a compass reading on it."

"Oh, there's the fire over there. So we missed it." "Yup," I said, "damned if we didn't." So, after that there were very few people that doubted my direction. Because I have a direction ... a direction instinct, that many people don't have. It's built in.

Editor's note: In 1958, while dropping cargo on the Eight Mile Ridge fire, the smokejumper aircraft, a Twin Beech from NCSB, crashed, killing the pilot and two smokejumpers.

Then I took a crew of rookies up on a fire. Eight Mile Ridge fire. A crew of seventeen rookies up there. They hadn't made their first parachute jump yet, but they were in the middle of their fire training. This wasn't very far from their base camp, so we drove them up in a truck.

I got on the radio and I heard the lookout say there was a big ball of smoke. And I got on the air and I said, "What happened to the Twin Beech?" And the lookout said, "I think he went in." Oh geemanie.

So I divvied up the crew, and I took the whole rookie crew and we went to the jumper crash. Gus Hendrickson (NCSB '47) was one of 'em, one of my best friends, and he was in there. But we got to the fire. And out of those seventeen rookies, not a one of them quit. Not one. That was one of the bad incidents of smokejumping. Not a fun one, but it was there.

You touched on something, the 555th, the black paratroopers. Tell me about them?

They were a good group, they were a very good group. I liked to work with them. We got off on the right foot with them guys.

We took 'em in, oh crews of about fifteen, eighteen. We put one

smokejumper in charge and we took 'em out and trained 'em. Trained 'em how to do fire line, how to fight fire, how to do mop up. As much as we could in about an hour's time. So you're not gonna get all the training in them that you want.

And they worked that day and all that night. And after that, the Bunker Hill fire was under control, had a line all the way around it. And the next day, what we called the "Brass" came in—that's the higher echelon of the Forest Service. And they came in to take over the fire. And, of course, the first thing they said was, "There's

"... Whether you want to or not is up to you, but I'm going to egg you on a little bit." I said, "Go ahead! That won't hurt our feelings one bit."

nothing that they did to stop this fire; it stopped of its own accord.”

We had a big line around that whole fire. We had the whole thing surrounded. I won't name some names, because they were actually a good bunch of Forest Service officials, but when they turned their backs, these jumpers evaporated. They showed up for supper that night. They evaporated, they were gone. They went out into the bushes and just stayed there.

That was a good group, a very good group. We used them twice, but I wasn't on the other one. The other one was the Monument '83 fire. And that was about a week after the Bunker Hill fire.

Tell me about the changes in smokejumpers over the years.

The guys in the 1940s, they'd get out and get a job done. And they wouldn't worry too much about it. And if they had a better idea, they weren't afraid to tell you about it. You would take it under consideration and if it was good, you'd put it to work. If it wasn't good, you'd tell them why and they'd say, "OK, forget it." I never said a word.

And the last year that I was training, 1969, it was just a completely different breed of cat. They wanted to do things their way. They always had a better idea than you did. And they would always say, "We can't do it this way." *They used to control every fire, now they let some burn. What do you think about that?*

I think there's a lot of things that they should have done many, many years ago that they're doing now. Many, many years ago—in fact 1945—I fought fire, and I went out and burned slash with a man who was sev-

enty-one years old and I had to run to keep up with him going up hill. His name was **Henry Dammond**. He taught me an awful lot about fire. He said to me, "When you've got this logging, you've got to come in here and burn the slash. Otherwise you're goin' to have a lot of fuel here." And he says, "You've got to burn that stuff in good burning conditions, and let it spread. Let it take all of that extra fuel out of there." That was way back in '45.

Boy, it sure made sense, and I did it, I won't tell you where, but I did a little bit of it. Well, quite a bit of it. I didn't tell the Forest Service about it. Didn't do a bit of damage, but it took all the vegetation on the bottom, it took it out of there. All the fuel on the bottom. It didn't kill a tree, didn't burn the tree.

How did Mann Gulch impact jumpers?

It impacted jumpers all over about the same way. We are in a career that has some hazards with it and if the hazards catch up to you, so be it. What it did is make us a little more cautious of what we're doing, of how these fires get to spreading, what causes them to spread, can we recognize the actions of the fire and what's it's going to do.

NCSB, was it a good place to be?

It was. It was the best base. Cave Junction was all right, but it doesn't even come close to being what NCSB was. 🌲

Steve Smith is producer of Smokejumpers: Firefighters from the Sky. He has been producing television news and documentaries for 25 years and has received three Emmy Awards.

—Reunion Information—

Mark These Dates!

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

Parallels

by Charlie Palmer (Missoula '95)

Note: This month is the 3rd anniversary of the shooting at Columbine High School. This is an appropriate time to remember those involved.

They died in the mountains of Colorado, and yet Interstate 70 was a mere rifle shot away. More than a dozen of them perished, mostly young and with dreams still to fulfill. The bodies were found in an array of positions and groupings: a single, solitary figure stooped as if in prayer, an assemblage of corpses huddled together seeking refuge from the onslaught. A few had made it tantalizingly close to safety, but there would be no reward for such effort on this day. Collectively, their deaths would be labeled a tragedy and would earn the distinction of being the largest loss of life ever in such an event.

The victims were doing the things they enjoyed most: living, learning, working, and being surrounded by those who shared similar aspirations. If asked whether such a tragic event were possible, most of those killed would probably have said "yes," but that it would never happen to them. They were the best and the brightest, and our world will be a little dimmer without them in it.

Survivors are left with the haunting memories of that day, and with the gnawing question of why they survived when others so close to them did not. One of those who did live through the ordeal remarked, "I thank the Lord a thousand times for saving me, but I curse him a thousand more for taking my friends." Yet another noted, "Everybody who made it out is very fortunate. But those who didn't make it out, and those who are walking with God tonight—I almost wish I was there, because they're not feeling any pain and they're in a beautiful place looking down on us, and we have to go through this."

In the aftermath, family and friends gathered to honor those who fell. Thousands mourned, shedding tears, holding hands, and contemplating how so quickly and inexplicably life can be taken away. Memorials were quickly set up to handle the overflowing number of flowers and other gifts. Subsequently, permanent markers have been set in place to remember those who died. Still, the flowers and gifts continue to come. One writer, in covering the event, remarked, "Many just stand and blankly stare at the others' gifts and words before leaving their own offerings, placing them softly, lovingly atop the mound." In *Young Men and Fire*, Norman Maclean remarked, "They were young and did not leave much behind, and need someone to remember

them." While his words were meant for the victims of the Mann Gulch fire, they ring just as true for those killed here. May we never forget.

Inevitably the question of "Why?" would be asked, but the answer remains elusive to this day. Inevitable, too, has been the quest to assign blame. The family members of those who died have filed lawsuits. They contend that the people in charge had seen the storm coming and should have warned the victims before it was too late. These suits also assert that the response to the tragedy was woefully inadequate. Perhaps it was. In hindsight, though, our vision is always crystal clear. Can anyone, or any organization, be completely prepared to respond to a situation that is the antithesis of normality? Obviously, court settlements will not bring back the dead. It remains to be seen what good, if any, can come from multi-million dollar awards to surviving families.

Buried deep within this tragedy can be found the seeds of positive change. On this we must now focus our attention. Then the deaths will not be meaningless, but rather will lead to tangible and beneficial transformations. These changes should come in the form of better training for all involved, more comprehensive policies, and an increased awareness that, "Yes, it can happen here—now let's do what we can to see that it doesn't." This is something we can do for those who died, making sure that their deaths will lead to lives saved in the future.

Unfortunately, many agree that somewhere, at some time, it will happen again. In *Fire on the Mountain*, John Maclean, Norman's son, writes, "The wind that once fanned blowups, and will again, now reaches across the years to join in comradeship those who fell. And they call out to those who follow, 'Let our sacrifice be enough.'" Only time will tell if the sacrifices of those who died on Storm King Mountain will be enough.

The same can be said of the victims of Columbine High School for it is to them that this story pays tribute. 🕊

Charlie Palmer was a rookie in 1995 and is now in his eighth season of jumping. He has B.A., M.A. and Ed.S. degrees from the University of Montana and is currently working on a doctoral dissertation in educational guidance and counseling, with the goal of becoming a certified sports psychologist. You can reach Charlie via e-mail at msocharlie@earthlink.net. or write him at 91 Campus Drive #1911, Missoula, MT 59801.



Items from the Fire Pack



Lifetime Best

I made the decision in 1956 to participate in a track & field tour of Europe and Scandinavia, where I was able to compete against some of the leading javelin throwers in the world. That included Egil Danielson of Norway, who later won the championship in the Olympics.

It was in Finland that I established my lifetime best in the javelin of 70 meters, 82 centimeters (approximately 228") with a wooden spear. Now, javelins are made of metal.

Hal Werner
(North Cascades '48)

Second Camp Director

I was transferred to the smokejumper unit in Missoula where I served as education director and later as Camp Director when Roy Wenger left. Later I earned my Ed. D. degree from Stanford and assumed the presidency of Fresno Pacific College a position I held for 15 years. I cherish my memories of the many friends in the smokejumping unit.

Arthur J. Weibe

Among the First Selected

I graduated from a small country school in Iowa where I played football for three years being selected all-conference two times. I was working at a CPS camp in California when a letter came which stated that 60 volunteers were needed to become U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers. I was among those first 60 selected to begin basic training on May 17, 1943, at Seely Lake, Montana. After training, I was among a group of ten chosen to go to Oregon to set up a smokejumper unit at the Redwood Ranger Station on the Siskiyou National Forest.

Floyd Yoder
(Cave Junction '43)

Tractors to Oxen

I graduated from the University of Pennsylvania trained as a teacher of vocational agriculture. I had received

the most up-to-date techniques on tractors only to find out that my students on my first job in western Pennsylvania still used oxen to plow.

When I was drafted into the CPS, I was based at Big Flats where I learned to drive the big six-by trucks which later became invaluable when driving the Burma Road in China. I spent the 1945 season as a smokejumper at Missoula with 16 jumps to my record.

Later my work with UNESCO took me to more than 100 countries over a 20-year period as I worked on administering agricultural programs. I became known as the "Chinese specialist" during my seven years assisting in China. After retirement in 1982, I have another year to go as the mayor of Pleasant Hill, Tenn.

Philip Thomforde
(Missoula '45)

Earl Cooley Respected By All

In the fall of 1941 I entered Guilford College in North Carolina, was playing football and was elected vice president of the freshman class. I took part in clubs related to peace and race relations. Two years later the tough athletes still remained friendly to me but most hostile and bigoted toward other COs. Ten years later when an anti-black group approached our school board, I reminded the board that every elected official must uphold an individual's rights granted by the constitution.

Being in the smokejumpers was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. Getting into shape was the equivalent to football training. The Mennonite administration with Roy and Florence Wenger as camp directors was great. Earl Cooley was respected by all. His example made us want to satisfy him.

Bradshaw Snipes
(Missoula '44)

A Watched Pot Never Boils but a Paper Bag Does

Ray Phibbs and I were dropped on a two-man fire and after putting it out, had trouble finding our way out due to an incorrectly marked map. My prior knowledge of the area helped as we finally made it out eight miles on the trail.

During this time we had only two days' worth of rations, some of which were spoiled. We had eaten everything but the bouillon and the container was crushed. I tried something I had read about. We took a paper bag used to carry our flashlight batteries, filled it halfway with water, and set it in the middle of the campfire to watch a "miracle."

The bag burned down to the level of the water and the water soon boiled. Not long afterward we were enjoying hot bouillon, scooped out with empty cheese cans.

When we finally arrived at the ranger station, we discovered the war (WWII) had been over for two days.

Maynard Shetler
(Missoula '45)

Warlords to Smokejumpers

Being a member of a minority was a very early experience for me growing up in Honan Province in China. We were introduced to the ravages of war as local warlords carried on bloody battles close to our home and grade school. The majority of Chinese were friendly but as the war escalated, we were easily picked out as targets for zealous foot soldiers who would aim their loaded rifles at us with a finger on the trigger. We came back to the U.S. in 1927 as it was getting too dangerous for white-skinned people in China.

I enrolled in a private school in New York and was able to graduate with the help of a scholarship to meet the \$750 tuition which was very high.

The Blood Donors association also helped as they bought 500 cc's of my blood every six weeks. In 1936 \$37.50 was more than a weeks pay and you could eat three meals a day for a dollar.

Drafted in 1942 with a 4E (conscientious objector) classification, I was sent to the Mono Forest. The forest engineer has some intriguing stories to tell about a new method of fighting fire call smokejumping. Region 1 was having a great difficulty in getting and keeping qualified smokejumpers due to the war. It occurred to me that the CPS (Civilian Public Service) had more than enough strong, able-bodied men who would volunteer for that duty. I started a two-pronged letter-writing campaign. One to Region 1 Fire Control and the other to my brother Jim in Washington. Jim was on detached service there and I asked him to alert the Service Committees in the event the Forest Service was interested in the proposal.

Apparently all parties were interested and the first group of CPS trainees arrived in Missoula, Mont., for training about the middle of May 1943.

Phil Stanley
(Missoula '43)

Woman Ahead of Her Times

Soon Roy (Wenger) was transferred to Missoula to be a camp director and set up the CPS Smokejumper Camp at Seeley Lake. To keep busy, I took the strenuous smokejumper training and was ready for the practice jumps but was not permitted to. I've always felt a bit cheated. I could have been the first woman smokejumper (1943). Alas! I was ahead of the times.

Florence Wenger

Better Clothing at Salvation Army Store?

Dave Flaccus (Missoula '43) and I were chosen to jump a fire that I think was the first fire jump by CPS jumpers. I had patched and darned a denim work outfit with my newly acquired sewing skills learned in rigger school. I was pretty proud of the life and service I had added to the jacket and pants. The ranger that picked us up after the fire apparently was very

disappointed with my appearance. He had the tact not to mention it to me but apparently was very persuasive with Fire Control at Region 1 headquarters. He and my outfit were responsible for getting CPS 103 jumpers a clothing allowance.

Phil Stanley
(Missoula '43)

The Montana Press

After my CPS days, I tried many different jobs one of which was working as a printer in Pasadena, California. Then, I heard that Dave Flaccus (Missoula '43) had started a print shop in Missoula. Dave had started the *Montana Press* and I ended up working for him for over 11 years.

Edwin Vail
(Missoula '44)

Also in the First Class

Allen Moyer (Missoula '43) and I were at a camp in Colorado when we were selected for the jumper program. Loren Zimmerman (Missoula '43), whom I had grown up with in Illinois, was also in that first class. I stayed with the CPS 103 until the program was closed after the 1945 season.

Dick Zehr
(Missoula '43)

Not an Auspicious Way to Start as Smokejumper Pilot

My first contact with smokejumping was at Cave Junction in 1952. I signed up with the USFS as a temporary pilot until they could find a replacement for Larry Sohler who was leaving. The regional office put me on a train to Grants Pass. I rode the train all night and met somebody who hauled me out to C.J.

Hank Jori flew up from Redding in his Super Cub to meet me. He rode around with me in the Noorduyn. We made a few takeoffs and landings, hauled a couple loads of practice jumps and then he flew back to Redding.

My first "operational" flight was a rescue jump northeast of Mt. Shasta where a forest service ground crew member had been hit by part of a falling snag. We landed at Shasta City to pick up a forest service man and flew

to the accident scene only to find a big sign on the ground—"DEAD". I think Orv Looper was the spotter. He dropped the two men and then spotted himself. This was not an auspicious way to start my career as a smokejumper pilot.

Wally Tower
(smokejumper pilot)

Educated and Scared

As a veteran jumper heading out to a fire jump, I was seated next to a rookie, heading for his first fire jump. This rookie—who had worked on hotshot crews for the past four years and had just graduated from college—was my jump partner. He wanted to spend his last summer as a smokejumper before he started his professional career.

The rookie had fought plenty of fires before, but was sitting there quite sad and looked a bit pale, so I struck up a conversation.

"Scared, rookie?" I asked.

He replied, "No, just a bit apprehensive."

I asked, "What's the difference?"

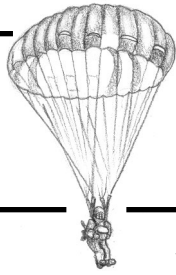
The rookie replied: "That means I'm scared with a university education."

Jim Ransom
(North Cascades '65)

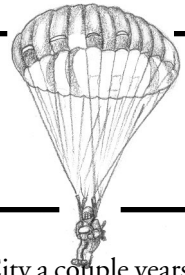
Ed Guy Is Missed

At the reunion in Redding, perhaps the most authentically spiritual jumper who ever jumped out of McCall showed up after being gone for 30 years. His name was Ed Guy. He was "Phil" in my book. He had been a missionary in Central America during those years. I asked him, at the last minute, to read the psalm at the Sunday morning memorial service. He did. I think Ed saved my life years ago and I mentioned that to him that morning. Later we said goodbye. I knew I'd never see him again. In the January issue of *Smokejumper* magazine, I saw where he went back to Central America and died shortly after the Redding reunion. I believe the Almighty God directed me to have Ed help lead the service that morning. I will miss him very much.

Rev. Dr. Stan Tate
(McCall '53)



Odds and Ends



by **Chuck Sheley**

Tim Aldrich (Missoula '62) and others in Missoula are starting work on the next national reunion to be held in June 2004. No dates as yet. Just get ready! Tim also mentioned that his group got an elk this season, which they had to pack out eight miles. Sound like Tim's in shape to jump another season.

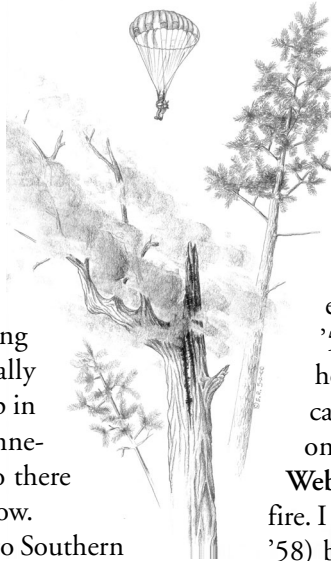
Sunil Ramalingam (NIFC-'93) is recovering from reconstruction of a knee originally injured on a jump in '95 and finished up in a soccer game last March. His wife Anne-Marie has passed the Idaho bar exam so there will be two lawyers in that household now.

I just returned from a 1000-mile round-trip to Southern California to meet with **Michael Steppe** (Idaho City '61). Michael answered my call for help with the merchandising end of the NSA. I had my first ever tour of an Equine hospital where Dr. Michael handles his clientele's horses at the Chino Hills Equine Hospital. Picture a regular hospital with x-ray machines, pre-op rooms, operating room and recovery but magnified many times to fit the size of a client as big as a horse. It was an amazing facility. I'm looking forward to getting assistance from Michael's office manager Mary Ann who will take a considerable amount of the merchandising load off my hands.

In what looks like a mini-reunion, **Herb Fischer** (Missoula '57) got together with **Bob Hewitt** (Missoula '56), **Roland Pera** (Missoula '56), **Terry West** (Missoula '56) and **Jim Anderson** (Missoula '58) in Branson, Missouri, in October. Herb says they had a great time.

NSA president **Larry Lufkin** (Cave Jct. '63) was successful in his annual moose-hunting trip to British Columbia. Mentioned that a couple grizzlies checked out their camp during the hunt. The local game management agency had to remove another one, which had killed over 30 cattle belonging to a local rancher. It weighed in over 1,000 pounds.

Stan Tate (McCall '53) has just finished working on an hour-long movie for Idaho Public Television called "Idaho-Eden's". It all came about because the producer, Bruce Reichart and Stan officiated Ken



Smith's burial in Idaho City a couple years ago at which time he obtained a copy of Stan's book. Reichart read it and made the movie. Stan talks about his spiritual (smokejumping) experience in the Seven Devils Mountains. It was very well received at Idaho State University.

A bit of history appeared in an intercepted e-mail recently from **Buster Moore** (Redding '57). "If you want to know the 'real story' on how the Redding base got its first chain saw, I can fill you in. We stole it from a ground crew on a fire in the Mendocino in 1960. **Warren Webb** (Cave Jct. '54) was the squad leader on the fire. I remember him and **Bruce Engstrom** (Redding '58) being on the fire. **Fred Barnowsky** (Missoula '42) dropped **Jim Freeland** (Redding '60) and myself onto the fire after the original crew (4-manner) making it a 6-manner. Being stung by a scorpion is mostly what I remember about the fire—other than liberating the chain saw.

Good news! NSA past-president **Carl Gidlund** (Missoula '58) was back on the ski slopes this past winter after some downtime with an illness last fall.

You will see a new byline for the "Jump List" starting with the July issue of the magazine. **Bill Eastman** (NCSB-'54) will be replaced by **Chris Sorenson** (Associate). Many thanks from the NSA and the readers for the job Bill has done for us over the past two years!

I had always thought that "**Wild Bill**" **Yensen** got his nickname because of certain behavior as a jumper. Believe it or not, he got this moniker after pitching four baseball games in high school where he did not walk a batter. I guess "Not So Wild" Bill wouldn't have sounded good.

Scott Warner (Redding '69) recently returned from China where he has been working in the forested regions of the Northeast part of the country. His forestry work took him to China three times in 2001.

Col. Mary Ann Moffitt recently received the Defense Superior Service Medal for her achievement as commander of Defense Intelligence agency field activities in the Balkans.

Col. Moffitt is the daughter of Dr. Bob (Cave Jct. '48) and Clara Moffitt.

We have had two of the pioneer smokejumpers move "Off the List" this last quarter. **George Honey** (NCSB'40) and **Bill Wood** (Missoula '43) are recognized names in smokejumping.

Received a note from **Delos Dutton** (Missoula '51) who said that the Forest Service 30-Year Club held a memorial service for Bill in King City, Ore., in conjunction with their monthly meeting. In addition to Dee, **Hugh Fowler** (Missoula'47), **Jim Allen** (NCSB '46), **Bob Walkup** (Missoula '50), **Tom**

Uphill (Missoula '56), **Bill Selby** (NCSB'61) and nephew **Mark Freese** (NCSB '70) were in attendance.

Mark Corbet (LaGrande '74) the keeper of records in this magazine's "Milestones" column recently made some milestones at the end of the 2001 season at the Redmond base. Mark now has 633 injury-free jumps in his 27-year career that started in 1974. Add to that some 300+ miles of packouts from 275 fire jumps. Quite an accomplishment in all cases. 🍄

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER DELOS "DEE" DUTTON

by **Chuck Sheley**

DELOS WAS BORN IN HUGHENDEN, Alberta, Canada ,and moved to Montana with his parents when he was four years old. He grew up working the family farm with his father Allen.

Dee worked his way through Montana State University getting a degree in accounting and an ROTC commission in the Air Force. He rookied in 1951 training at Nine Mile and being stationed at Fort Missoula. Working his way through the smokejumper ranks, Dee obtained the position of foreman in charge of jumper training and parachute loft operations at Missoula.

In 1966 he transferred to the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base at Cave Junction, Oregon taking the position of project air officer. After his tenure at Cave Junction, Dee took the equipment specialist position in the Region 6 office. His assignment was to standardize firefighting equipment for all forest in R-6 and later he worked on a team that accomplished this nationwide.

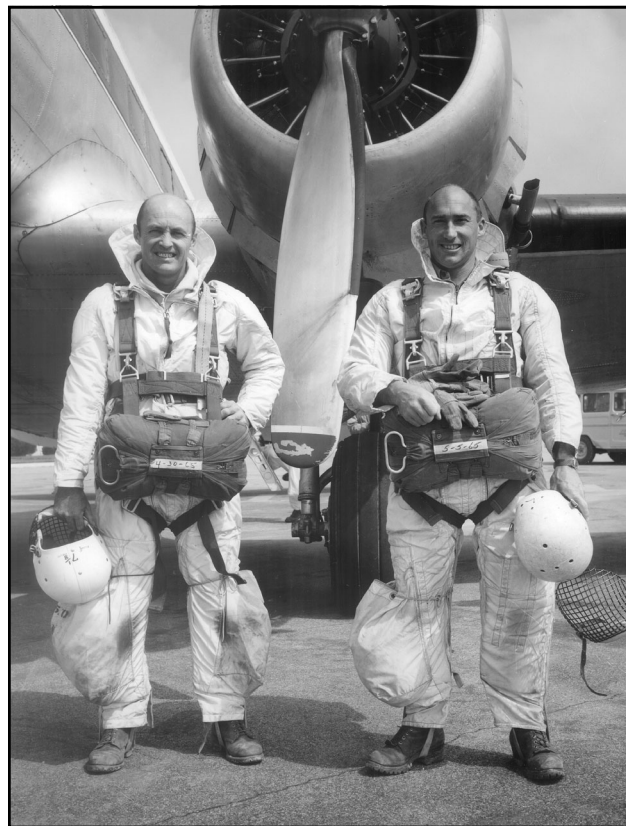
While at Cave Junction, Dee was responsible for the establishment of the smokejumper program in Region 8 at Wise, Virginia. This accomplishment was covered in the October 2000 issue of *Smokejumper*. In addition to this pioneer effort in starting smokejumping in the eastern U.S., he had the ability to work with forest personnel which resulted in many job assignment for his jumpers in the off-season. Many hours were obtained working seeding and slash burning projects. Numerous Cave Junction jumpers have mentioned and are thankful for Dee's efforts to come up with work for them after the fire season was over.

In an unusual assignment in 1965, Delos appeared on the CBS TV program *To Tell The Truth* where the

panelists were to pick the "real" smokejumper from the lineup of guests.

After two years of active duty with the Air Force in 1953, Dee transferred to the Air Force Reserves where he spent 30 years.

Delos and his wife Marlene have three daughters and are currently living in Tigard, Oregon. Cutting wood, hunting and fishing now take the bulk of Dee's time. 🍄



Len Krout (Missoula'46) to the left of Delos Dutton. (Courtesy of Delos Dutton)



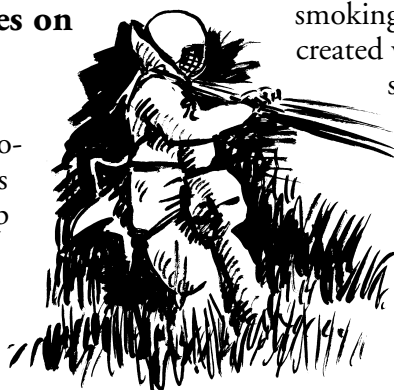
Blast from the Past



Missoula 1947-How Many Fires on One Jump?

I returned the summer of 1947 as a squad leader which meant no more two-man fires which I regretted. Eight of us jumped on an eight-acre fire near Steep Hill Lookout on the Nez Perce N.F. The lookout was named Van Arsdale and had been on that peak for 15 seasons.

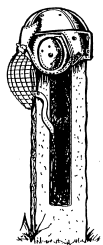
About the time the fire was controlled, Van Arsdale showed up to say that he had spotted another fire. Two of the guys volunteered to handle this smoke. The next afternoon the lookout showed up again with another fire and in addition, reported that the second fire was smoking up pretty good. Two guys took off for the most recent fire and I took one person with me to check on the fire that was



smoking up. We found that the smoke was created when the jumpers fell a snag which spread some fire when it hit the ground. After helping them beat that one down, we headed back to the main fire which was hard to find as there was no longer any smoke coming from it.

When I got there, I found it deserted! Van Arsdale had found a fourth fire and the crew was working on it. I was hoping that the old boy didn't find any more fires. He told me later that he quit looking after the fourth fire because the only people left to get it would be "me and you." 🍄

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



Off The List

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

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

Byron E. Johnston (Missoula '60).

Byron died Oct. 8, 2001, aboard the vessel *Wave Dancer* off Belize during Hurricane Iris. His wife, Shirley A. Johnston, also died in the same incident.

Byron, who jumped from 1960 through 1964, was born Dec. 3, 1940, and graduated from Missoula County High School, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of California at Berkeley.

Just prior to his death he had retired from developing and marketing industrial chemicals to pharmaceutical companies. He and Shirley had lived in Brandermill, Va., since 1986. He loved fishing, people watching, hiking, walking and anything outdoors.

Two sons and a daughter and their families survive the Johnstons.

The family suggests donations in their memory to the National Smokejumper Association, P.O. Box 4081, Missoula, MT 59806-4081.

William G. Henry (Missoula '49)

After a nine-year battle with renal cancer, Bill died November 20, 2001, at the Veteran's Hospital in Santa Clara, Calif. He rookied in 1949 and jumped through the 1951 season. Bill spent most of his life employed as a pilot, flying many years for the Wyoming Department of Wildlife.

Francis E. Anywaush (Missoula '46)

Francis died June 16, 2001. He jumped six seasons at Missoula after serving in the U.S. Airborne during WWII where he received the Bronze Star among many other decorations. Francis and his wife, Margaret moved to Bemidji, MN, in 1980 where they continued to live after his retirement from the U.S. Forest Service in 1986. After cremation, his ashes were taken to Montana and spread at Lost Johnie Creek on the Flathead River. Drummers from the Blackfoot Tribe were in attendance during the ceremony.

Sherwood C. "Johnny" Trotter (North Cascades '55)

Johnny Trotter 80 died December 18, 2001, in Missoula after a 10-year battle with Parkinson's disease. He enlisted in the Army in 1942 and joined the 101ST Airborne Division where he had combat jumps on D-Day and in Holland. Later he fought at Bastogne and into Germany. Johnny received three Purple Hearts, the Bronze Star and four Battle Stars for the European Theater.

After graduating from Oregon State with a B.S. in forestry in 1948, he began a long career with the U.S. Forest Service retiring in 1980.

His first job was on the Umpqua Forest in Oregon. From there he became district ranger on the Okanogan N.F. where he was known as the "smokejumping ranger." In 1969 he transferred to the regional office in Missoula and was director of soil, air, watershed and geology until his retirement.

Johnny especially enjoyed reunions with "A" Company 506th parachute infantry buddies who were closer than brothers. As the 101ST Airborne Screaming Eagles would say, "Another eagle has soared."

George Phillip Honey (North Cascades '40)

Smokejumping lost one of its original pioneers with the passing of George Phillip Honey on Dec. 3 in Entiat, WA, at the age of 95.

George Phillip Honey began his career with the Forest Service in 1940, jumping out of Winthrop. He was also a spotter and cargo dropper and patrolled the wilderness for fires. From 1943 to 1946, he lived at 8 Mile Ranch and managed the ranch and the Forest Service horses and mules. During the '40s, George and his partner, Francis Lufkin (NCSB '40), trapped in the Pasayten area and hunted cougars.

In 1948 he went to work for the Road Department and became construction and maintenance foreman for roads and trails in the Chelan National Forest, which at that time included the Okanogan National Forest. His first project after becoming foreman was the Great Flood of '48 and he was deluged with work on washed-out roads and trails. He continued with the Road Department until his retirement in 1967.

George was born on Feb. 10, 1906, at Fort Walla Walla, WA, to Allen and Anna (Enfield) Honey. That same year George moved with his parents and two older brothers by riverboat up the Columbia River to homestead on Tunk Mountain near Conconully. He attended school in Conconully and Pleasant Valley.

George was an avid horseman and worked at that trade for many years, participating in many area rodeos. He enlisted in the Army and served in the Philippine Islands. While in the Army, he became a professional boxer. Returning from the Army, he boxed professionally under the name "Soldier George Honey."

On Sept. 7, 1932, he married Hazel Zackman. They had two sons, George, Jr. and Raymond.

After retiring from the Forest Service, he worked for

Wagner Lumber as foreman in the rock crushing operations, as well as for Rollie Schrier's Cement Plant and Archie Walter's feedlot in the Basin. George was an avid hunter, bagging many species of big game. His favorite hunting was in British Columbia with his brother, Leonard, and son, George, Jr.

Robert Jay "Rob" Talbot (Missoula '69)

Rob Talbot passed away at his home in Seattle on October 12, 2001. He was a practicing criminal attorney at the time of his death. He graduated from Eastern Washington University in 1967 and then earned advanced degrees from Gonzaga University. Rob was licensed to practice law in Montana, Washington and Alaska.

In addition to three seasons at Missoula, he jumped two more seasons at Boise.

Gary Lee Williams (Redding '75)

Gary died January 17, 2002 when a van in which he was traveling overturned on an icy stretch of Interstate 80 near the California-Nevada border. Friends and family remember Gary as a free-spirited outdoorsman, a community volunteer and a loving father. Every year he raced in the legendary Kamikaze mountain bike race at Mammoth Mountain once finishing in the top 10. He worked as a carpenter and is known for his craftsmanship and wood-working skills.

His ex-wife Linda said that Gary did about everything you could think of in the outdoors. He climbed the rock walls in Yosemite, sailed around South America and hiked in Mexico.

William C. "Bill" Wood. (Missoula '43).

Bill died Dec. 17, 2001, in King City, Ore., at the age of 79. Born in Missoula, Mont., he attended grade and high school there, then the University of Montana for two years. He began working for the Forest Service in 1942 and became a smokejumper the following year. During World War II he trained conscientious objectors as smokejumpers, and continued as a jumper squad leader and foreman until 1953.

He then transferred to the Missoula Equipment Development Center where he helped design and fabricate fire shelters and smokejumper suits. He served in the agency's Washington office from 1961 to 1965, then returned west, to the Portland Regional Office. There, he designed the first helicopter water buckets and other fire-related gear.

He was a member of the National Smokejumper Association, Elks, Sigma Nu Fraternity and the Forest Service retirees' 30 Year Club.

Survivors include his wife Ruby, two sons, seven stepchildren, four granddaughters and 17 step grandchildren. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. William C. Wood, 11700 SW Ridgcrest Dr., Beaverton, OR 97008. 🕯

A Tribute to Bill Wood

by Robert Walkup (Missoula '50)

Some time in February of 1950, I received word that the smokejumpers in Missoula had accepted me to be one of them. Now I would really be in the big time and the big money. The letter told me to report to the Ninemile Creek Remount Station on June 8th. I arrived on time and reported into the smokejumper training base with about thirty other new recruits. That first day we signed all the papers, got our bedrolls and a bunk. Breakfast the next morning would be at 7:00 A.M. with work to start at 8:00.

Right on the stroke of 8:00 A.M. the superintendent stood before us and made his welcoming remarks. He introduced the foremen of each department. These foremen would be our instructors in their specialties. The fire foreman would be in charge of fire training, the parachute equipment foreman, Bill Wood, would be in charge of parachute training, the dispatching foreman would be in charge of all other skills we had to master. Each training section would have returning squad leaders as assistants. Training would get down to one on one as the session evolved or the need became apparent. Unlike the military services, the USFS did not build in a "wash out" factor. Every new hire was expected to learn how to jump and work as part of a team to put out forest fires.

On the day of the first practice jump, we put our jump suits in a seamless sack and walked through the woods from camp to the airstrip nearby. A light rain was falling and clouds were low on the surrounding mountains. Whatever apprehension we felt inside, we covered up with small talk and jokes. The rain continued to fall as we stood around waiting for the Ford Tri-Motor to come swooping in over the trees.

About ten o'clock the jump foreman, Bill, called us together and said, "Men, today is scrubbed. The plane can't get here from town and we don't want to take a chance on jumping in the rain, so we'll wait for tomorrow. Go back to barracks and we'll have more fire training exercises." Fire training in the rain?

The next day we retraced the trek through the woods to the airstrip and soon enough the Ford Tri-Motor roared overhead and came in for a landing. "Wow!" we all

thought, "Those three engines do make a noise." As the plane flew a course parallel to the runway, two bodies appeared in the sky, shortly to be jerked from a fall and to float down as the static line pulled the chute from the pack. Whoomph, whoomph, we would hear as the chutes blossomed open. Some of the chutes were all white. Others had alternately white and red panels. The steering slots in the back of each chute were clearly visible.

The jump foreman spoke through a bullhorn to each jumper. He directed, "Pull on the right steering line, now pull on the left, turn 180 degrees, look straight ahead, flex your knees and roll." After hitting the ground each jumper would get to his feet, undo the parachute harness, and take off the jump gear. Once in a while there would be an exuberant yell from someone's throat.

Just before the Ford landed after the third load, the parachute foreman checked the gear of the jumpers in my planeload: the three-point harness was locked with the safety clip in place, the parachute was hooked to the harness, the headgear was tightened. The collar was up, the letdown rope was in the pouch on the leg and the static line tie string was secure. By the time the eight of us were checked out, it was time to load the Ford.

"I'm really going to do this? I'm going to get into that airplane, sit while it takes off and climbs to a thousand feet above the ground and when my turns comes, I'm going to get in the door and jump into empty space? I'm really going to do this?" Such were my thoughts as we loaded the plane. The first two sticks jumped. Now it's my turn to get in the door. Follow the procedures you've been practicing for the weeks just past. I get to sit in the door and put my foot out onto the step. The number two man stands behind and has to step out the door and hit that little step just before he clears the plane.

The spotter steers the pilot on course, waves his arm down in a signal to cut the engines, turns and slaps me on the back and yells, "Go!" I push out the door, the eighty-mile-an-hour wind catches me, turns me upside down and wham, the chute opens and pulls me up with a bang. This was not quite the same as the drop from the thirty-foot



tower. Look up, check your chute. Ah, a circle of white nylon is complete and whole and stable. As I look down at the ground under my feet, my mind returns to the rightful place in my brain.

I listen as Bill yells instructions, "Pull the right steering line and turn right, pull the left steering line and turn left." The parachute behaves just as advertised. "Look up, flex your knees and roll when your feet hit the ground." Calumph! There's the ground, there's the landing roll. One jump down, six more to go and I will be a smokejumper.

I was part of a crew that spent two weeks on the Lochsa District on the Lolo National Forest. The crew developed a sense of family and we worked hard and diligently for a ranger named Bud who became renowned throughout the Forest Service as a developer of people. His leadership brought out the best in the men who worked for him. His dispatcher was Wag, the jumper foreman who had survived the Mann Gulch fire the summer before.

Later in August a film crew from Hollywood showed up in town. They wanted to hire all the smokejumpers to work on an epic film that came to be titled *Red Skies of Montana*. "Where's the action? Why aren't you guys putting out fires? We have to get some ideas and some film in the can."

Soon there would be action. One of a two-man crew dispatched to a small snag fire down in the Bitterroots had landed hard amongst the rocks and broken his leg. The call came into Missoula to load up a rescue crew to get him out. At the same time the brass decided to try a helicopter rescue to test procedures. The first two of the jumper crew would determine if a helicopter could safely land and pluck the injured jumper off the mountain.

With a helicopter rescue the injured man could be in the hospital in Hamilton in an hour.

With a jumper rescue, it would be at least eight hours before he would be out.

Riding in a helicopter would be windy, but smooth and fast. Riding in a Stokes Litter-wheeled stretcher would be rough and agonizingly slow.

Our airplane was a Douglas C-47 of WWII fame, well worn, but the engines cranked over and all the other controls worked just fine. It was loaded with two pilots, a jump spotter, eight jumpers, the rescue gear, and three Hollywood types. I figured they were idea guys. The Stokes Litter and other assorted gear were stacked in the middle of the floor. We sat around facing one another. An airplane has a distinctive odor, composed mostly of fumes from gas, hydraulic oil and engine oil. The smell is always present, but not overwhelming. It was a mild August afternoon and the air became a little bumpy. Soon one of the jumpers emptied his stomach contents onto the gear in the middle of the floor. He quickly had company as about half the

crew decided they didn't need lunch any more. The character of the odor in the cabin changed. I looked at the Hollywood types to see how they were reacting to the scene of America's finest firefighters vomiting all over the gear that in just a few minutes would be manhandled out the door.

We arrived over the injured jumper's position quite soon thereafter. The spotter checked the wind conditions. Satisfied, he lined up the plane and started a jump run. The lead jumper was Bill, the parachute-training foreman, who also was an experienced rescue jumper. The best jumper we had. The jumper who had taught the rest of us how to jump.

The spotter tapped him on the leg and called, "Go!" He leaned forward to start the jump and then grabbed the side of the door as if to pull himself back into the airplane. It was too late. His momentum and the rush of air carried him out and away from the plane.

"What on earth was that all about? If the best jumper we have acts like that, what are the rest of us going to do?" Such were my thoughts as we lined up to drop the next jumper. He went out without an incident. The pilot climbed the Doug a little as we waited for word from the two jumpers on the ground. The questions were "All of us jump and carry him out, or land the circling helicopter and fly him out?" The word came: Fly him out.

This, to our knowledge, was the first helicopter evacuation of an injured employee of the U.S. government. During the course of the next three years many more employees of the U.S. government would be lifted to safety and life in Korea with essentially the same procedure—an open-air ride in a litter on the side of a helicopter.

The next day when the two rescue jumpers were back at the loft, several of us who had been in the plane asked the foreman, "What was going on with you? Why did you try to climb back into the plane?" His calm reply was, "The plane was too low. I didn't think we were more than five hundred feet above the ground. Way too low to jump. When I got under the chute, I could tell that with the ground falling away from me so steeply, I had been fooled. I was looking into the side of the mountain about five hundred feet away from me. Everything worked out fine. Let it pass." Cool guy, Bill. He was the best we had.

On Friday, December 28, 2001, family, friends and fellow workers met at the Elks Club in Beaverton, Oregon, to remember the life of William "Bill" C. Wood. Bill left the travail of a debilitating illness to join the jumpers who have preceded him to find a place where the fires are only small puffs of smoke, the air is always smooth, the jump spots are big grassy meadows and the pack string always carries out the gear. 🌲

MEMBER PROFILE

HAL WERNER (NORTH CASCADES '48)

H.L. "HAL" WERNER, whose articles appear from time to time in this magazine, earned his bachelor's degree in physical education with a minor in geography from Brigham Young University in 1958.

He began teaching in 1959 after completing classes and research for a thesis, which was in partial fulfillment of a master's degree in physical education. His first teaching assignment was at a small, rural high school in the Yakima Valley in Washington—prime apple-producing country. Werner was able to establish a track and field program, which began an association with coaching that has exceeded 40 years.

Werner completed his M.S. in 1961 from Washington State University and spent five years at the high-school level before moving to university competition. He taught at Eastern Washington University, Simon Fraser University (Burnaby, B.C.), Whitworth College and Western Oregon University. As a

visiting professor, he's now in "retired" status but coaches young athletes at University of Cape Coast in southern Ghana, located in West Africa.

"This part of Africa is quite interesting," Werner explained, "as Ghana was the first sub-Saharan country to gain independence from colonial control (in this case, the British). It's a leading third-world country among the other emerging African nations."

Ghana is located 2.5 degrees

north of the equator and the temperature is therefore constant—about 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime and 75 at night. Daylight is exactly 12 hours every day, with the sunrise at 6 A.M. and sunset at 6 P.M.

"In areas where there isn't any electricity, one goes to bed early and rises quite early as well," Werner said. "By about 6 A.M., everyone is moving about."

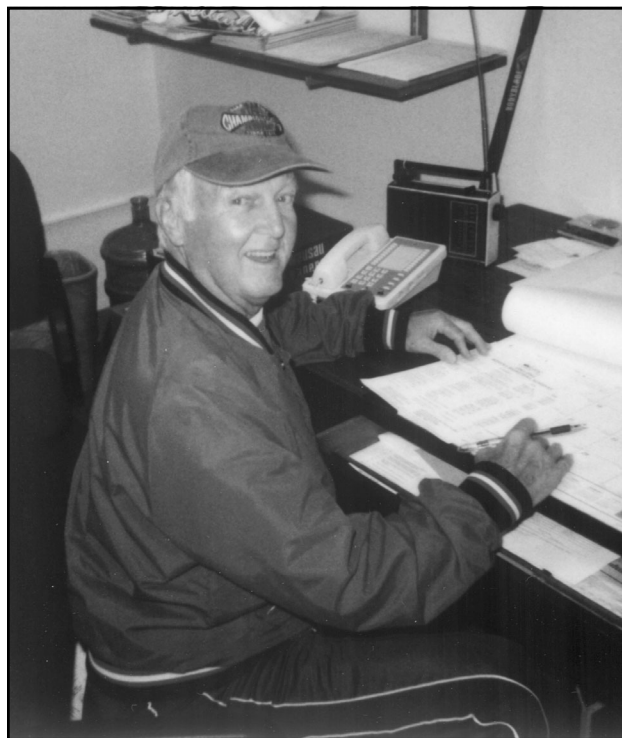
"And a person needs to get used to the heat ... sweating occurs

most of the time, if you move about outdoors. One way to get used to the heat is to swim at the beach, which abounds along Ghana's southern coastline."

Werner stated that people need to "wash down" at least twice a day, and malaria is a prevalent threat—Werner himself has contracted the disease three times in the seven years he's spent there.

Along the way Hal has been an active participant in track and field establishing a conference javelin record while at BYU and winning the gold at the World Masters Championships later in life. Between his teaching years, he served in the Air Force for ten years working as a survival training specialist and is currently retired from the reserves with the rank of major.

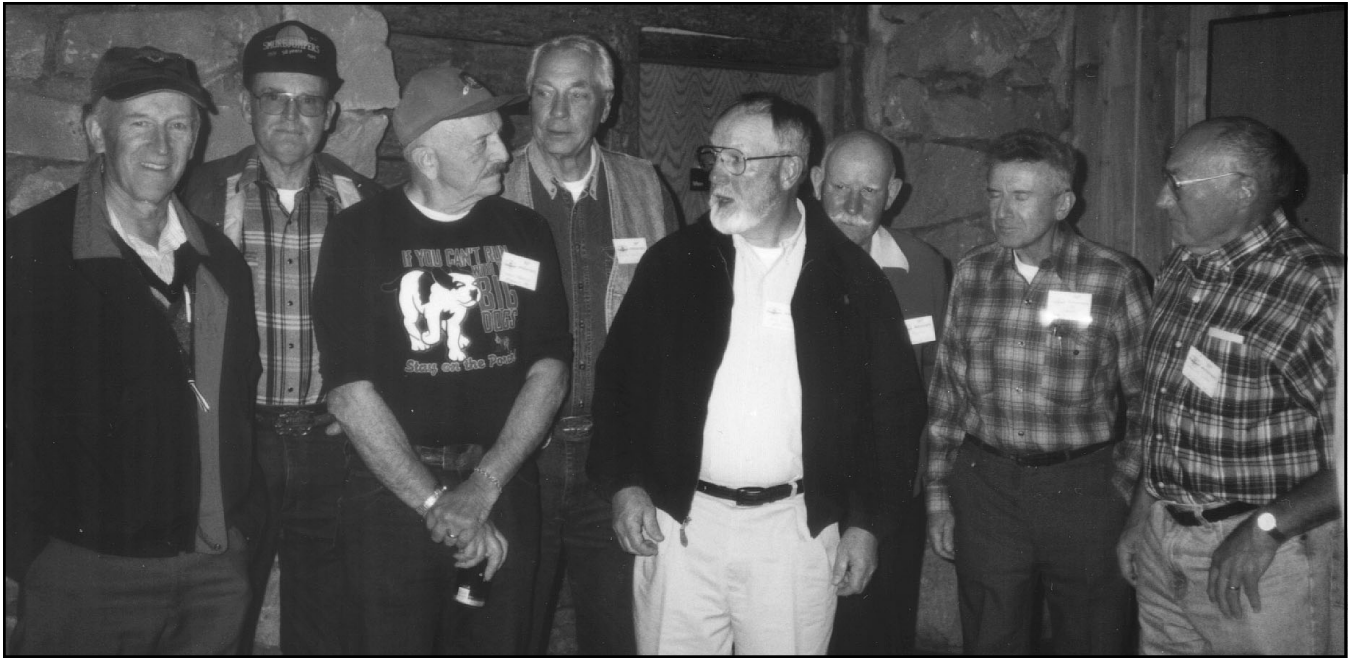
Hal has come back to the United States this year to take a position as field events coach at Lane College in Eugene, Oregon. 🏈



Coach Werner at his desk at Lane College. (Courtesy of Hal Werner)



Hal in Winthrop in 1949



Pictured are Missoula and West Yellowstone men who jumped a half century ago. L-R Ted Nyquest (54), Mark Greydanus (60), Hans Trankle (51), Fred Wolfrum (53), Ed Courtney (58), Jim Manion (54), Joe Gutkoski (50), and Delos Dutton (51). (Courtesy of Betty Wolfrum)

West Yellowstone 50th Anniversary Celebration

by Delos Dutton (Missoula '51)

The 50th anniversary celebration of the West Yellowstone (WYS) base was held Sept. 14–15, 2001. It was a great reunion for the attendees, even though the airline restrictions eliminated participation.

Jumping in the park was handled from Missoula until 1951, when West Yellowstone was set up as a base for the Forest and Park Services. The original crew was led by **Bob Gorsuch** (Missoula '47), and consisted of **Bob Clithero** (Missoula '50), **Joe Grillo** (Missoula '51), **Joe McDonald** (Missoula '51) and **Stan Young** (Missoula '51). West Yellowstone was run as a Missoula sub-base from 1951 to 1971.

There have been a lot of changes at WYS during the past 50 years. The first time I saw the park was Oct. 18, 1952, when I jumped the Madison fire with **Hans Trankle** (Missoula '51), **Joe Gutkoski** (Missoula '50) and five other jumpers. For the return trip to Missoula we were picked up at the WYS base for a ride back in the Ford Tri-Motor. The crew was made up of students and unemployed jumpers who volunteered for the late-fall weekend fire.

The original base has been replaced by a new Interagency Fire Center located at the new airport. It is a complete facility with dormitories, kitchen, a ready room parachute loft with rigging, repair and manufacturing equipment, and supplies. They also have a retardant base and a four-engine retardant airplane (P-3 Orion), piloted by Bill Waldman, that hauls a 3,000-gallon load. His co-pilot is Wendy Wetzel, wife of squad leader Charlie Wetzel.

The Fokker aircraft owned and operated by Abe Bowler (deceased) was used during the '50s, and Jerry Wilson flew it for several years. The Fokker only carried two jumpers, fire packs and a spotter, and was very crowded. Over the following years, several airplanes were used and now have been re-

placed by a Dornier. It is a very good jump ship that hauls an eight-person jump crew and has long-range coverage.

WYS was always a tough assignment, due to the high elevation and fallen trees hidden by a new green canopy of timber. It is even more hazardous now because of the 1988 fire that left a huge area covered with dead trees. The roots are rotting away now on the snags and they are a hazard for jumping and for fire fighting.

The base was managed on a rotating basis for several seasons. One-time base managers attending the event included **Bob Gorsuch**, **Jim Manion** (Missoula '54), **Hans Trankle**, **Ted Nyquest** (Missoula '54) and **Roger Savage** (Missoula '57). **Joe McDonald** (Missoula '51), **Francis Polutnik** (Missoula '52) and **Ed Courtney** (Missoula '58), who were early WYS jumpers, were also in attendance.

A proficiency jump was made for the occasion. Pilot Randy Leypoldt flew the Dornier with Base Manager **Greg Anderson** (Missoula '68), check-spotting trainee **Derrek Hartman** (Redding '98). Squad leader **Ashley Sites** (WYS '98), **Mark Belitz**, **Lesley Williams**, **Andreas Luderer**, **Brian Wilson** (WYS '98), **Mike Hill** (WYS '95), **Carlos Trevino** (WYS '92) and **Bill Werhane** (Missoula '66) made the jump.

The NSA Board of Directors held its quarterly meeting at the base. This is a hard-working group, doing a great job on work that is not easy. If you would like to help them, they could use physical help or income that you could provide by extending your dues or by becoming a life member.

The social gathering took place Friday and Saturday evening at the Union Pacific dining hall. It was a great place for the meeting, but the acoustics made it tough on the guest speakers. The jump careers of **Greg Anderson**, **Bill Craig** (Missoula '66), **Chuck Flach** (Missoula '68), **Jiggs Parker** (WYS '79) and **Bill Werhane** were celebrated. 🐾

The Meeting of Hard Lessons and New Technology: A New Future for Wildfire Training

by Charlie Roos (Redmond '97)

Unfortunately, history really does repeat itself. Fortunately, progress is inevitable—and sooner or later progress will dominate history. We re-learned the lessons of Mann Gulch and other old ghosts in 1994. This year we learned new lessons at 30 Mile through the loss of four of our youngest. Fortunately, we are at a point in time where progressive minds and technology can defeat a history of repeated mistakes.

The world that our grandfathers were born into was marked by horse-drawn travel and wrought iron technology. In less than three generations we have put men on the moon, mastered supersonic flight, and created electronic technologies that would boggle the mind of even the greatest turn of the century visionaries. Yet, as the snow fades 30 miles north of Winthrop, there are those that still say that there are no feasible solutions to improve training—I couldn't disagree more.

On a windy winter day in 1997 I sat down with Frenchtown Fire Chief Scott Waldron and lamented about this very issue. Although neither of us were the type to throw a gripe onto the table without a solution in mind, we simply couldn't contrive the answer—only that it was a problem that needed solving sooner rather than later. A few days later the answer appeared, clear as day, and out of the sky as if it were a lighting bolt. Although it's not shocking to anyone, real experience is the greatest teacher. But, the answer to bringing reality and real experience to the classroom is what appeared as I slipped off into a daze while driving down I-90. Three-dimensional modeling—just like a flight simulator—was the key to reality; and without question or thoughts of impossibility, we had bring this concept to the wildfire classroom. What came of that day four years ago is 3-D Composite Wildfire Evaluation—a completely new course built on old foundations that has begun to take the wildfire world by storm.

While the idea appeared in a flash, developing a working course would take infinitely more time. The first model was a foam and glue creation that looked more like a third grade science project than a professional prop—so back to the drawing board. The next step was a “back to basics” move: dirt. However, regardless how many dirt piles there are in the world, I decided that there had to be a better, more feasible way to present the issues (even though the USMC has been having great success with their sandbox training).

So the first “working” model turned out to be a plastic model built in a Frankenstein fashion with various parts and pieces from Home Depot. It was painted white and was com-

patible with dry-erase markers and was more reminiscent of a seventh grade science project—but at least it was progress. While it was certainly more functional than aesthetically pleasing, the first impromptu test group at Kootenai Fire was more than enthusiastic about the learning methodology. A few weeks later, I stumbled into a map store in a quest for the perfect teaching prop, and I walked out with a three-dimensional software program that was the “end all” answer to the modeling problem.

But something seemed amiss still, and that was in the presentation of the scenarios. After hours of conversations with various fire people and a talented corporate trainer, I had a format based on Paul Gleason's Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, and Safety Zones principles (LCES). Basically the students work through the fire, which is digitally projected onto a dry-erase marker board, by focusing on the LCES principles one at a time.

Once again, Scott was back in the picture and graciously agreed to host the first official class with his seasonal crew as test group #1. The first group to experience the mostly finished product was a young and eager urban interface mitigation crew who had recently gone through the S-course series. The consensus opinion from that first crew, and this opinion has held true since then, is that this course is the closest thing to reality; and it makes the standard checklist lessons more applicable to those who haven't experienced a lot of wildfire. Essentially, teaching wildfire in this manner makes it make sense—especially to new firefighters. And, fortunately these opinions fit perfectly with the current design: the intent is not to replace the S-course series, but to provide a way to tie all of the information together and integrate it into a working format. In other words, it combines the standard lessons into a composite format that is more conducive to the workings of the human mind.

After Frenchtown, I traveled to Bozeman, MT, for the next full session; and since then I have given preview courses to groups throughout Idaho, Washington, and Montana—and everyone who has taken the preview course has requested the class for their entire organization for the 2002 season. Additionally, requests for previews and the full course have come from federal agencies and other entities in Colorado, Wyoming, and California.

So what makes it work? Three-D Composite Wildfire Evaluation is a performance-based learning method with the primary purpose of instilling proven thought patterns rather



Charlie Roos (Courtesy of Charlie Roos)

than routine checklist memorization. It merges the elements of several fatality fires; some “near miss” fires; advanced fire knowledge; and LCES principles into various reality-based interactive scenarios. While there are seemingly many elements to the course, its format merges all components into a smooth and highly effective presentation that naturally leads to higher levels of mental integration and retention.

Maximum effectiveness of the course is found in the Theory of Focused Proximal Reality. Simply put, it allows the student to associate the course materials with reality via a minor mental shift; and maximum focus is obtained by elimination of extraneous clutter. Because the course is closer to reality within the mind and the components all display immediate mental relevance, the student is brought much closer to possessing the capabilities of intuitive recall as needed in the field.

The core of the course is built on two symbiotic elements: scenario based learning and topographical modeling. The scenarios are combined with computerized three-dimensional USGS 7.5 minute series topographic maps that are projected

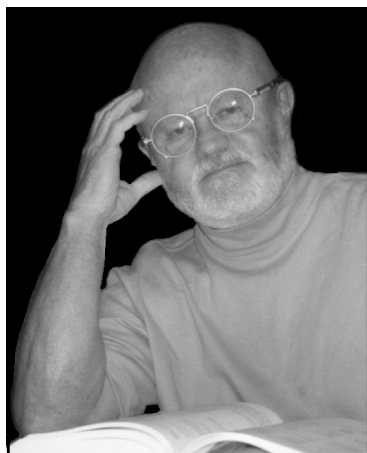
on a dry erase marker board; and the students are allowed to work through the fire in a “play by play” manner with guidance from the instructor. According to overwhelming student feedback, the topographical model has proven to be the most effective way to represent reality; and the format where the situation is actively built by the student one piece at a time tends to clarify multiple fire issues in a very efficient manner.

There are several composite scenarios with level of expertise ranges from beginner to expert. The core tenet of the scenarios is to enhance safety through practical and “outside the box” interpretation of LCES principles as they relate to weather, terrain, fuel type, and fire behavior; but strategies, tactics, and air operations are also very easy to discuss in this format. Additionally, students are taught how to recognize potential project fires; and incident priority analysis is incorporated into those advanced scenarios.

All students who have participated in this course have given it excessively higher ratings than any other wildfire course that they have taken—especially in terms of “big picture” understanding. According to student feedback, the division of scenarios into LCES components combined with three-dimensional modeling allows for ample mental incorporation of large amounts of information; and the interactive nature of the course keeps students focused on learning—leading to higher rates of retention and recall under pressure. Essentially, the course teaches wildfire principles in a manner that is more effective than anything we have ever experienced; and just as important, it instills the basic thought processes that are necessary to be a safe and effective wildland firefighter.

But, it would be foolish and excessively naïve to not fully acknowledge that the greatest reasons for the initial success of the course are those that came before and those that helped along the way. All of the previous wildfire courses have laid the foundation and framework; and we owe an especially large thanks to Paul Gleason and LCES—which has provided one of the greatest keys to mental integration of large amounts of material. Additionally, Scott Waldron provided the final keys to the finished product; and the donation of a plane ticket for the first course and his willingness to help along the entire path has not gone unnoticed. Most importantly, there are those who have fallen that we must honor the most. We are at a place in time where technology, progressive education, and hard lessons have come together in a manner that can honor their ultimate sacrifice—and we can do this by fully embracing progress and defeating a past that has stolen some of our best and brightest. 🙏

Charlie Roos (RAC '97) holds a master of public administration in natural resource management and is currently employed by the Seattle Fire Department. He has also spent the last two years working on urban interface issues with local fire agencies and insurance companies; and this past year he has jumped head first into the training arena with the 3-D class and a Structural Damage Appraisal Course for urban firefighters. The spring of 2002 will mark his return to smokejumping at a soon to be determined location. He can be reached via e-mail at <mailto:c.j.roos@att.net>, or by phone at (206) 525-6293.



Jump List



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

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

Alaska

La'ona D. Lydic, '99, rookied with her husband Gabe. They are the first married couple to rookie together. While earning her masters degree in biology at the University of Alaska, she is focusing on landscape burning patterns and human impacts. She has been a tour guide and a guide hunter, and was a hotshot for four years. La'ona and Gabe have four good ski-jouring huskies.

Anthony M. Beck, '94, jumped for five seasons. Since then he has been an Alaska state trooper living in Ketchikan. Before jumping fire, Tony was a fireman at Eagle, Alaska, and then a Chena Hotshot.

Cave Junction

Clifford E. McKeen, '58, after earning a Ph.D., served as a child psychologist until he retired last year. Cliff lives in Merlin, Ore.

Clem L. Pope, '46, earned a masters degree in forestry and then spent 40 years in the lumber industry. Clem is now retired and lives in Parkdale, Ore.

Idaho City

Stephen M. Carlson, '62, jumped for seven seasons and then taught eighth-grade science for one year. Since 1972, he has been with the Weyerhaeuser Company. Steve is presently working in computer technical support, living in Gig Harbor, Wash.



McCall

John E. LeClair, '77, is now the logistics manager for Alaska Chadux Incorporated, an oil-spill response organization. After jumping fire, John went to work for the BLM at the McGrath Field Station and then for the state of Alaska in regional logistics out of Anchorage. He then became the fire-management officer in the Kenai-Kodiak region for the state of Alaska. John lives in Anchorage.

Charles A. Holcomb, '74, earned a bachelors degree in range and forest management from Colorado State University. After jumping fire, he was hired by the USDA Soil Conservation Service and is still working for them as an area agronomist. Charlie lives in

Grand Junction, Colo.

James J. Cole, '55, served for 35 years on the research faculty of the medical school at the University of Washington. He was a member of the group that developed the technique for maintaining the life of patients with irreversible kidney failure. He was also the co-developer of the apparatus and methods for providing long-term access to the blood vessels and spinal cord of cancer patients for treatments and pain management. Now retired and living in Arlington, Wash., Jack is involved in the management of two companies that he co-founded and is a board member of several other companies.

William L. Floyd, '53, earned a bachelors degree in business administration and then spent 42 years in the Idaho potato industry. Bill is now retired, but sells men's clothing two days a week at Demario's in Idaho Falls.

Richard K. Travis, '55, has been working in tree service and landscaping for 22 years. Prior to that

period, he served 12 years as a teacher and then 14 years as the owner and manager of an employment agency. Kens lives in Helena, Mont.

Missoula

Michael D. Goicoechea, '99, earned a bachelors degree from the University of Montana in health and human performance, and has been teaching and coaching in the high school at Victor, Mont. Goke is still jumping.

Stephen R. Goetz, '79, earned an MBA from Texas A&M in 1985. Steve is now the director of Total Energy Management in the Conoco Natural Gas Clearinghouse. He lives in Tombal, Texas.

Kenton D. Wahl, '67, earned a masters degree of public administration from the University of Alaska. He is now a regional non-game migratory bird coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, working out of Anchorage. In addition, Kent is a U.S. representative of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Program (CAFF) and the chair of the Circumpolar Seabird Working Group of the CAFF.

Kevin P. Brown, '66, jumped for four seasons and had a total of 32 years with the Forest Service in fire management. Kevin retired in 1999 and has been working part time during the fire seasons at the Southwest Montana Coordination Center. Living in Frenchtown, Mont., he is having fun riding, hunting, fishing, and hanging out with his wife.

William P. Locklear, '63, earned a masters degree in forestry from Louisiana Technical University in 1975, and then became a zone silviculturist and a divisional forest officer for the U.S. Forest Service. In 1984, he moved to Belize to be their forester. After three years, he moved back to the U.S. Forest Service, where he retired in 1994 as a district silviculturist for the Kisatchie Forest. Bill lives in Salisbury, N.C.

Bernard D. Shanks, '62, jumped for five seasons. After earning his Ph.D. in natural resource development from Michigan State University, he taught environmental-resources courses at the university level and worked in environmental research policy at the state level, becoming director of the Fish and Wildlife Department for Washington state in 1996. He is now the Wildlife Program coordinator (the national coordinator for wildlife research) for the U.S. Geological Survey. Bernie has written three books: *Wilderness Survival*, *This Land is Your Land*, and *California Wildlife*. His permanent home is in Deer Harbor, Wash., in the San Juan Islands.

Barry W. Reed, '60, earned two bachelor's degrees, one in forestry and one in business. He has worked for the state of Montana as an auditor and in the Division

of the Budget since 1979, Barry lives in Missoula.

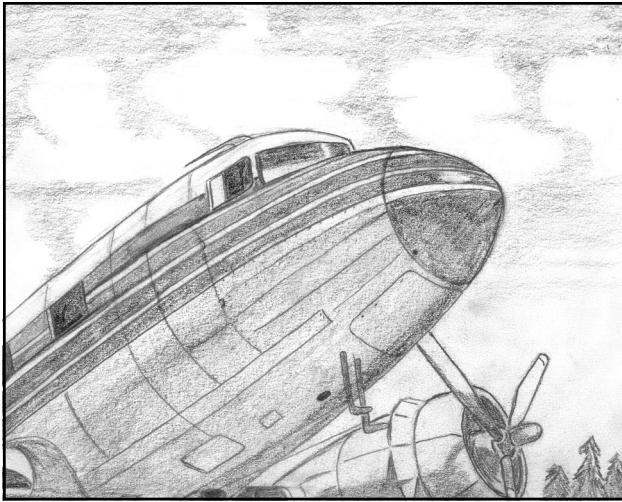
Daniel J. Schroedel, '57, earned a bachelor's degree in forestry from the University of Montana, and worked as a forester for the St. Regis Paper Company and the U.S. Forest Service from 1959 to 1973. He then worked as a Safeway night manager for four years. In 1977, he switched to logging: setting chokers, bucking, and falling. Dan's last job, before retiring in 1998, was selling real estate in Plains, Mont., where he now lives.

Milton E. Carter, '55, is retired from the Fresno County Environmental Health Department where he worked as an analyst for 27 years. Milt is now selling military surplus in Fresno, Calif.

Jack T. Daniels, '54, earned a Ph.D. in exercise physiology from the University of Wisconsin and then became a professor and coach at the University of Texas and the University of Hawaii. He worked for the Nike Company for six years before taking his present position at the State University of New York in



Gary Lawley on a 1957 rookie practice jump. Original photo taken by John Rolf who later died in the Tri-Motor crash at Moose Creek in 1959. (Courtesy of Fred Donner)



(Courtesy of Ken Morris)

Courtland, where he coaches track and cross-country running.

Carl J. Wilson, '52, is retired, living in Wallace, Idaho. Joe was a printer for 40 years, laying out ads for a newspaper. He is now a volunteer caretaker at the local cemetery.

Patrick E. Harbine, '51, served 40 years as a physical therapist before retiring in 1999. Living in Spokane, Pat is skiing, kayaking, cycling, and golfing.

Robert V. Potter, '51, earned a bachelor's degree in forestry from Penn State and an MPA from Harvard. During 30 years in the Forest Service, in addition to serving in the Ozark, Bankhead, and Talladaga Forests, and in the regional and the Washington offices, he was on administrative leave to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome, Peshawar, Pakistan, and Maseru, Lesotho. Now retired, Bob has sold his small farm and has built a new home in Mocksville, N.C.

Monroe C. DeJarnette, '49, taught music in schools and performed as a clarinetist for several years. He is now teaching in a private studio. Living in Auburn, Calif., he is also the president of the 49er Lions Club, a board member of the Auburn Symphony and of the Auburn Performing Arts Center, and treasurer of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce. Spud recently served as the secretary of the National Smokejumper Association.

Bill B. Risken, '49, served 44 years as a lineman in high-voltage line work before retiring. Living in Liberty Lake, Wash., Bill is hunting, fishing, and training bird dogs.

Howard Paul Jernigan, '43, served as a school principal in Charlotte, N.C., from 1949 to 1982. Paul is retired and living in Charlotte.

Amos R. Little, '43, is a retired general-practice physician living in Helena, Mont. Bud graduated

from Dartmouth and earned his medical degree from Johns Hopkins.

Earl C. Smith, '43, has been retired since 1988, but works part-time as a maintenance mechanic for the local rescue mission. Before retiring, he was an insurance sales representative for the Farm Bureau. Earl lives in Biglerville, Pa.

North Cascade

John R. Button, '75, has been jumping since 1975 and is still jumping. John lives in Twisp, Wash.

Murray G. Lawson, 73, jumped for seven seasons. Murray has worked in the metal trades as a millwright and is currently employed by a company that manufactures aluminum boats in Sitka, Alaska.

Harold J. Weinmann, '47, had a distinguished smokejumping career that spanned 31 years. Starting in Winthrop, he worked out of Intercity Airport for 17 years. In 1964, he moved to the new Redmond base where he was the unit manager for 10 years. After retirement from the Forest Service in 1978, Hal worked as a Gelco courier and later, until 1991, as a Pony Express driver. He now lives in Redmond.

Redding

Monty Wilburn, '72, jumped for seven seasons.

Monty is a chiropractor in Fort Collins, Colo.

Charles W. Earhart, '69, is a log scaler for the Northern California Log Scaling and Grading Bureau. Charlie lives in Greenville, Calif.

William C. Croxson, '65, retired after 30 years with the Lake Arrowhead Fire Department in California—he retired as fire captain. Bill is now serving on the lake patrol for the Arrowhead Lake Association.

Pilots

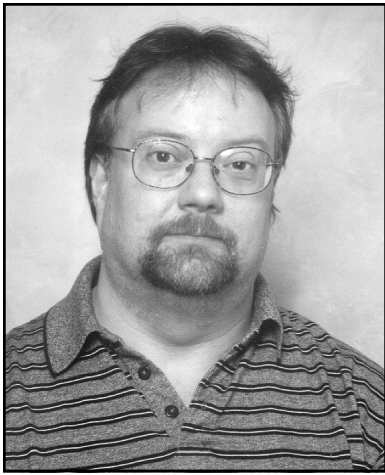
Raymond G. Caryl served as a U.S. Forest Service pilot from 1974 to 1986, carrying jumpers from Intercity Airport in '76 and '77 and from Boise in '78. He was also a U.S. Customs pilot from 1986 to 1998, and is currently a contract helitack pilot flying a Bell 407. Ray lives in Oro Valley, Ariz.

Robert D. Ellis flew for Johnson Flying Service from 1961 through 1966. Living in Corvallis, Ore., Sandy is now the director of maintenance for the Helicopter Transport Service.

Associates

Danny L. Veenendaal is the vice president of George's Plastic Laminating Company in Sandy, Utah. He has been a volunteer fire fighter since 1978 and an education specialist in the Sandy Fire Department since 1993. Dan has produced many drawings for the *Smokejumper* magazine. 📖

The View from Outside the Fence



by Chris Sorenson
(Associate)

AS ADMIRAL JIM STOCKDALE said during the 1992 Vice-Presidential Debates, "Who am I. Why am I here?" My name is Chris Sorenson. I have been an Associate for about five years and have been helping with the copy editing of your magazine since the October 2000 issue. I am working on a masters degree in environmental management and policy through Denver University. My professional interests are in regulatory compliance, environmental management, failure analysis and I have a special interest in occupational cancer in firefighters. Chuck Sheley has been gracious enough to allow me to write this column from the perspective of someone outside the resource agencies. In this column I hope to stimulate discussion, ask some hard questions, pass on news and give a few bureaucrats heartburn.

I have been interested in smokejumping since I was a youngster but my interest really took off after reading Earl Cooley's *Trimotor and Trail* in 1985 and

subsequently purchasing a copy of *The Pictorial History of Smokejumping*. In the years before e-mail, e-commerce and the creation of the NSA, I purchased copies of both books as gifts for friends and we corresponded through the mail. It is my personal loss that I have not yet met Earl in person. He is a fine gentleman. Shortly after purchasing *Trimotor and Trail* and *The Pictorial History of Smokejumping*, I began searching for a copy of *Tall Timber Pilots*. Eventually I found a copy in a used bookstore in Missoula and promptly paid what back then seemed like the outrageous price of \$35.00 for it.

A tip of the ol' hard hat to Stan Cohen and everyone else at the Museum of Mountain Flying for bringing the Mann Gulch Johnson DC-3 back to Missoula. This plane is an important part of smokejumper history as well as being a piece of Montana history and it belongs here. Are there future plans to acquire a Ford Tri-motor? I can dream can't I? Over a million tourists pass through Missoula on their way to Glacier and Yellowstone. The Aerial Fire Depot, Museum of Mountain Flying and the Ninemile Remount Depot are logical stops along the way. Ground was broken last fall for a hangar to house the Johnson DC-3. How can we increase the number of tourists visiting these sites and supporting them? Should the NSA become involved in promoting these sites? The only advertising I am aware of is an ad for the Aerial Fire Depot and Ninemile Remount Depot in the *Lively Times*, a statewide monthly entertainment

tabloid.

On the subject of museums, I am in favor of a series of museums featuring the history of smokejumping rather than one centralized museum. Your association has entered into an agreement with the Evergreen Museum in McMinnville, Oregon, to offer a smokejumper display and to store and catalog smokejumper records and historical items. As with most things, the bottom line is money. The Evergreen Museum has the resources and people to do what needs to be done. Historical preservation is work for professional historians and archivists. Special care must be taken to preserve and care for paper documents and photos as well as equipment. It is imperative that the first 60 years of history is preserved and maintained for the next 60 years. It is also important that everything be catalogued and available to researchers, writers and historians in the future.

November 24, 2001, marked the 30th anniversary of Dan "D. B." Cooper's one-man stick near Lake Merwin in southern Oregon. There was no D. B Cooper. Someone in the press used those initials and they stuck. The name on the airline ticket was Dan Cooper. Otto Larsen, a University of Washington sociologist who studied the case, described the public's admiration for Cooper this way: "It was an awesome feat in the battle of man against the machine—one man overcoming, technology, the corporation, the establishment, the system. Thus, the hijacker comes off as a kind of curious Robin Hood, taking from the rich—or at

least the big and complex. It doesn't matter whether he gives it to the poor". Ralph Himmelsbach, the FBI agent who chased Cooper until retirement in 1980, said in previous interviews Cooper probably was an outcast who died with his money in the wilderness of the Pacific Northwest. "(Cooper) was very likely an ex-con who was going to make one last, desperate go for the big one, if he made it, fine. If not, he probably felt he had very little to lose" Ten years ago Himmelsbach was asked how he felt about the fugitive outlaw. "I think he was a sleazy, rotten criminal!" Someone in law enforcement told me in 1973 that the FBI knew who Dan Cooper was and that he lived in Washington state. Agent Himmelsbach continues to supplement his federal retirement on the back of Dan Cooper. Ironically, there was also a passenger on board named Michael Cooper, traveling from, of all places Missoula, Montana, to Seattle. He was not involved and never a suspect. Whomever Dan Cooper was, he was an expert parachutist who liked bourbon and Raleigh cigarettes. He shifted the paradigm and thought outside the box long before those terms were popular.

As I write this in mid-December there isn't a lot of snow in the Rockies so the drought will probably continue this year. The book *Ground Water and Wells* (the *Green Book*) states that in the past 300 years droughts have lasted an average of seven years in Nebraska. I also heard recently that climatologists now say that in the past on three occasions droughts have lasted an entire millennium. Climatologists are also predicting that the climate in Minnesota is going to become more like that of Kansas over the next thirty years. The carbon cycle, it's a beautiful thing.

In a case concerning the secu-

urity of Web-based records pertaining to Indian trust monies, a federal judge ordered the shutdown of the Department of the Interior Web sites containing information that could be stolen by hackers. The DOI shut everything down including the National Park Service, BLM and NIFC Web sites. Employees are unable to e-mail each other but could send and receive messages outside of the agency. Security experts said the agency did not need to take down its entire Web presence in order to secure the Indian trust fund data. It sounds like an overreaction on the part of the Department to me. One would think they could isolate and shut down the vulnerable areas without taking down their entire Internet capabilities. One can only speculate how such a complete shutdown might affect fire fighting operations and safety had it occurred in July?

At deadline the NIFC site has been restored, the NPS and BLM Web-sites remain shut down along

with numerous Web sites within the Department of the Interior. During the big fire year of 2000 it was reported that the government had trouble recruiting young people for seasonal wildland fire fighting positions due to the lure of the dot com craze. With the collapse of the dot coms we will have to wait and see if young people migrate back to more traditional summer employment like fire fighting. If not, perhaps the government is going to have to make some changes to make a career in wildland firefighting a more viable and attractive option. Controlled burns and other activities are beginning to make smokejumping an almost year round job. The West Metro Fire Department in Denver currently pays around \$53,000.00 a year after three years. That's not a whole lot less than a regional director of one of the federal resource agencies earns. 🐼

Chris Sorenson can be reached at: ward_lafrance@hotmail.com or Smokejumper magazine.

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

Several years ago at the start of the Dyea to Dawson Ultramarathon, a 600-mile race, I was talking with fellow racer. He introduced me to his wife and said, "This is Jerry Dixon, be careful what you tell him, because he remembers everything." I took it as a compliment.

However, when I write about fires of 30 years ago it seems I should be checking my journal and fire notes. In my article "Of Fire and Rivers" I said Smokey Stover (MYC '46) packed Bill Newlun and I out of Chamberlain. I confused a legendary jumper, Smokey, with a veteran packer, Shorty Derrick. I have written Smokey several times and admitted the same. Bill Yensen (MYC '53) has an uncanny knack of remember every fire and jumper yet even he has admitted that his memory is not perfect. He informs me that it was Bruce Yergenson and not Jerry Blattner on our August 7, 1973, MacKay Bar jump and I took the film that is in *Firefighters* that documents it.

I am not going to argue with "Wild Bill." One of the beauties of having an article on jumping peer reviewed by 1800 jumpers and associates is that if someone remembers it differently they tell you. Typical jumper.

—Jerry S. Dixon (McCall '71)

Seward, Alaska 🐼

Triple "J" is proud to be the *Official*
Screen Print and Embroidery Company for the
National Smokejumper Association.

T-SHIRTS • HATS • KEYRINGS • JACKETS
CLUBS • CORPORATE • COMMITTEES • SMALL BUSINESS



Here's what Chuck Sheley, NSA Vice President
and Editor for "Smokejumper" magazine has
to say about Triple "J":

*"In over 30 years as an athletic director, I've worked
with many vendors. Triple "J" is at the top when
it comes to providing a quality product, on time and
at a reasonable price."*

**SATISFACTION
GUARANTEED**

STRIPLE "J"

Screen Printing & Embroidery
www.stitchandprint.com

local (530) 343-6091
toll-free (888) 323-6091

Air Tractor's AT-802F

Hits The Spot!



"The ideal fire bomber to support ground crews. The 802's can get to the drop point quickly and make a precise drop of LC Retardant exactly where it needs to be – ahead of, behind, or around the ground troops – a capability that is vital to their entry, exit, and protection. From dropping on an area for bulldozers to working trail or fire breaks to getting equipment in to hitting hot spots, the 802 is a perfect fit."

AT-802F Pilot

The versatile 802F – the first airplane designed from the ground up to be a firefighter – is making firefighting operations more efficient, helping to make it safer for smoke jumpers and ground troops, and stopping many fires before they have a chance to do any real damage.

"Needless to say, the ground troops are some of the 802's biggest fans."

AUTHORIZED DEALERS

**Queen Bee
Air Specialties**
Rigby, ID
United States
(208) 745-7654

Avialsa
Valencia, Spain
34-96-2660389

Field Air (Sales) Pty. Ltd.
Victoria, Australia
61-353-394-222

Conair Aviation Ltd.
Abbotsford
B.C. Canada
(604)855-1171

MMCS
Augsburg, Germany
49-821-705050

Tradelink, Inc.
Latin America
W. Europe/N. Africa
(817) 491-2442

Mokoro Safaris
Parys, South Africa
27-568-181-703



Air Tractor, Inc.

P.O. Box 485 • Olney, Texas 76374
(940) 564-5616 • Fax: (940) 564-5612
www.airtractor.com